

# Junior Ranger Handbook

National Park Service  
Gulf Islands National Seashore

Mississippi and Florida



This booklet belongs to:

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My age:

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# How to Become a Junior Ranger

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this number of activities in the booklet.

This booklet is designed for Junior Rangers who are 6 to 11 years old, but anybody can participate!



2. Attend a ranger-guided program. Have the ranger sign your booklet, and write down one thing you learned.

If you can't attend a program, watch the park movie at the visitor center.

Program Title:

Ranger Signature:

What did you learn?

3. Complete ONE of the projects listed below and get an adult's signature when you are finished.

- Pick up at least 10 pieces of trash in the park and put them in a trash can (or recycle them if you can).
- Reuse something you have already used in a different way (example: reuse your empty soda bottle as a water bottle).

Adult's signature:

4. Present your booklet to a ranger after you have completed steps 1, 2 and 3. After your booklet is reviewed you will be awarded your junior ranger badge!

# Explore your Park Safely!

Junior Rangers know that safety comes first when they explore.  
Circle the safety rules that are important to your visit today.



Remember that all plants and animals in the park are protected! Please do not pick any plants and never take animals from their homes. You may take seashells, but make sure there are no hermit crabs or other creatures living inside of them.



Keep wildlife wild! Please do not get too close to wild animals and never feed them. Humans have been scratched and bitten while trying to feed or approach park animals. Human food is not healthy for animals.



Protect yourself from the heat and sun! Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. Wear a hat and sunscreen.



Forts are fun to explore, but they are often dark and it can be easy to trip and fall. Walk carefully instead of running inside the fort.



Be safe when you go swimming! Never swim alone and pay attention to the beach safety flags. A purple flag means there may be jellyfish, stingrays or sharks in the area. A red flag means there may be strong surf and/or undercurrents and you have to stay out of the water. A green flag means it is safe to swim but be smart and swim with a buddy.

# Investigate an Arrowhead

The arrowhead is the symbol of the National Park Service.

You will see this arrowhead in every National Park Service site you visit. It is found on park ranger uniforms, on signs, in visitor centers and lots of other places.

Test your investigation skills!

**Step 1.** Find an arrowhead symbol in the park.

**Step 2.** Where did you find it?

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**Step 3.** Look carefully at the arrowhead symbol. Every object in the arrowhead represents a feature protected within all National Park sites. Take a close look at the arrowhead and see if you can figure out the answers to the following questions.

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents all plants.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents all animals.
3. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents land formations.
4. The \_\_\_\_\_ represents history.

# What does a Park Ranger do?

This is a hard question, so think carefully. Park Rangers care for and protect close to 400 National Parks. National Parks are found all over the country and are some of the most beautiful, interesting and historically important places in the nation.

How many have you visited? \_\_\_\_\_

Maybe you will become a Park Ranger when you grow up! Draw an "X" by the jobs you would like to do.

Rangers  
fight forest fires.

Rangers  
answer visitors' questions.

Rangers  
teach people fun skills,  
like how to throw a cast net, find  
birds, snorkel or identify stars.

Rangers  
protect endangered species.

Rangers  
teach about the past.

Rangers  
protect animals.



Rangers  
collect user fees.

Rangers  
keep parks clean.

Rang-  
ers

Rangers  
protect old buildings.

Rang-  
ers

Rangers  
patrol parks in boats and cars.

Rang-  
ers design web  
pages

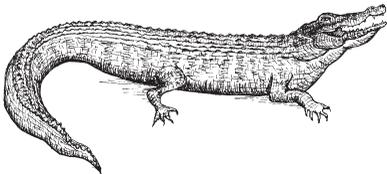
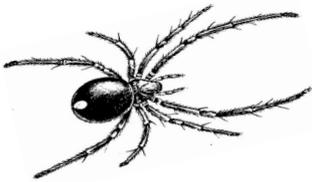
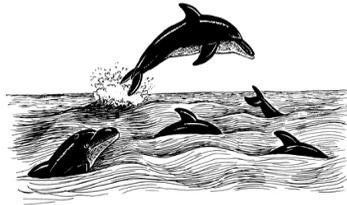
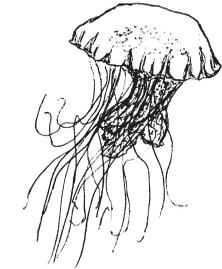
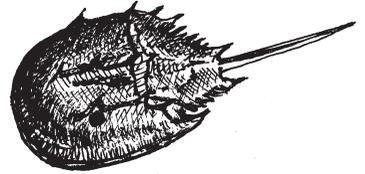
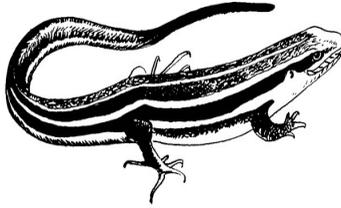
# Wildlife Search

It's great to watch animals in their natural habitat. What are three things animals find in their habitats that they need to survive?

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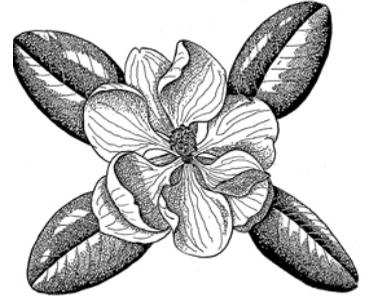


Circle the animals you have seen in the park!

# Seashore Tic-Tac-Toe

Gulf Islands National Seashore is a great place to explore! The park is full of interesting things to see, smell, touch and listen to.

Test your exploration skills and try to find at least three items in a row (vertically, horizontally or diagonally) to make tic-tac-toe. Draw what you find.



A plant taller than you	An animal	Something that smells
An animal that flies	Something that feels smooth	A flower
Something beautiful	Something that sounds good	An animal track

# Seashore Animal Riddles

Gulf Islands National Seashore has many kinds of animals. A few of our wild creatures are scary to some people.

Junior Rangers know that even animals we may not like are important to nature. All animals are part of the food web. They eat plants or animals and then are often eaten by other animals.

See if you can figure out these mystery creatures by solving these five riddles. Write down your answer to the “Who am I” question. If you get stuck, turn the page upside down to get the answers. You may be surprised by what you discover!



## Riddle #1

1. Most of my brain is used for my sense of smell.
2. I am a good hunter and can swim very fast. I hunt for fish, crabs, and other marine creatures.
3. I have rows of sharp teeth that I use to tear apart my prey.

Who am I?

## Riddle #2

1. Only the females of my kind will bite you.
2. Some birds love to eat me.
3. My wing beats 300 - 600 times per second.

Who am I?

# Seashore Animal Riddles

## Riddle #3

1. My body is 98% water.
2. Sea turtles love to eat me for food.
3. I am not a strong swimmer. If you bump into me in the water I may sting you. My stinging cells allow me to catch my food.

Who am I?

## Riddle #4

1. I have 8 legs.
2. All of us can bite but only 2 of my kind (in this area) are venomous.
3. Insects are what I enjoy eating the most. I catch them by setting out a sticky trap.

Who am I?

## Riddle #5

1. I have a very good sense of smell.
2. I am frightened of your large size and strange smell. I will crawl away and hide if I know you are coming down the trail.
3. You will never see me blink because I have no eyelids. My body is covered in scales.

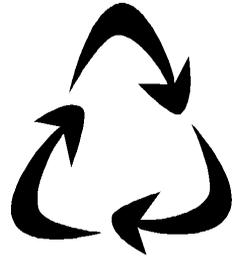
Who am I?

Answers: #1. Shark,  
#2. Mosquito, #3. Jellyfish,  
#4. Spider, #5. Snake.

# Trash! Litter! Marine Debris!

Sometimes people are careless with their trash and leave it on the ground or in the water. The National Park Service tries hard to pick up all the trash, but we could use your help!

Help us keep the park clean and safe by picking up a small bag of trash. You can use an old shopping bag or ask for a trash bag at a visitor center. Be careful not to pick up sharp objects or unidentifiable trash unless an adult is with you.



As you pick up the trash, write down what kind and how many pieces of trash you find.

## Trash from beachgoers, hikers, boaters and picnics

\_\_\_\_\_ Bags/Food Wrappers

\_\_\_\_\_ Beverage Cans/Bottles

\_\_\_\_\_ 6-Pack Holders

\_\_\_\_\_ Other

## Trash from fishing

\_\_\_\_\_ Bait Containers

\_\_\_\_\_ Buoys/Floats

\_\_\_\_\_ Fishing Line

\_\_\_\_\_ Fishing Lures

## Trash from smoking

\_\_\_\_\_ Cigarette butts

\_\_\_\_\_ Cigarette packaging

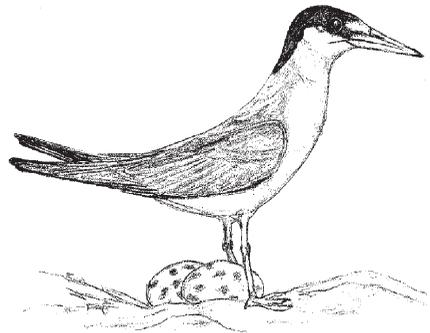
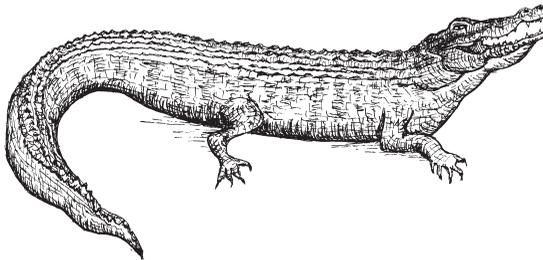
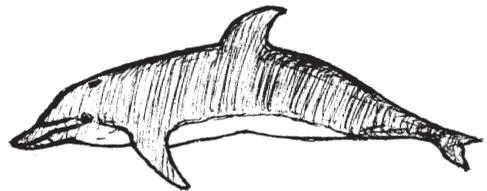
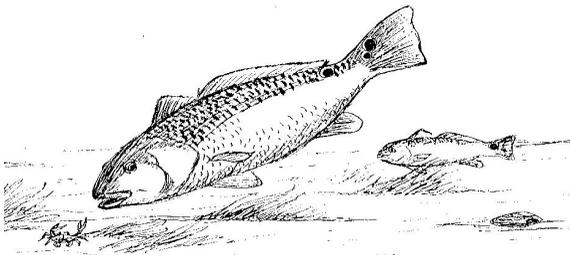
How can the National Park Service stop or reduce the amount of littering?

Show you care by not littering! You CAN make a difference! Thank you for your help!

# We All Live Downstream

Most of Gulf Islands National Seashore is underwater. Rivers flowing through much of the central United States eventually flow into the Gulf of Mexico. Trash, chemicals and other pollutants can flow into the park from areas hundreds of miles away. Clean water is not only beautiful, but is also necessary for people and animals to survive.

Circle your favorite park animal from the four shown below.



How does pollution affect the animal you circled?

What can you do to keep pollution out of park waters?

# Beautiful Barrier Islands



Sea Oats

Did you realize the beach looks a little different every time you visit? The wind you feel and the water you see move the island one sand grain at a time. The shoreline of a barrier island naturally moves over time. Sand moves along the beach every minute of every day around the clock.

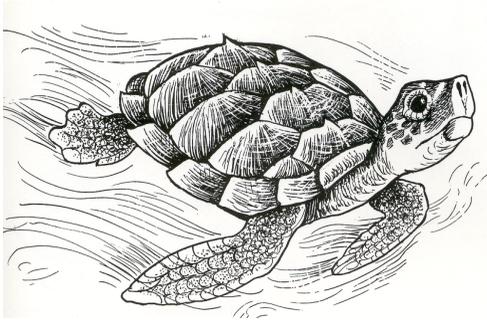
Try this experiment to see how the island moves.

1. Stand at the very edge of the beach where the tide can wash gently over your feet and ankles. See if you can stand still for 2 full minutes.
2. What happened to your feet during those two minutes? Did they move?
3. Why do you think this happened?
4. What do you think can happen to roads, forts, houses and hotels that are built on the beach?

Sea oats are plants that live on barrier island beaches. The roots of this plant can go down 30 feet and help hold the sand on the island together. To protect your island, use boardwalks and don't walk on the dunes and plants.

# Sea Turtle Search

Search for the words that are underlined in the story.



Sea turtles are amazing reptiles that live in the Gulf of Mexico.

Leatherback, Kemp's Ridley, Loggerhead and Green sea turtles visit Gulf Islands National Seashore.

Barrier islands are important nesting sites for turtles to lay their eggs in the sand. Baby sea turtles, called hatchlings, are usually about 2 inches long.

All species of sea turtles are threatened or endangered. Endangered means that an animal is in danger of becoming extinct.

h d p l a s t i c k e t s  
e e i a k o e g m c r e t  
d r g r e e n a r a c h h  
a e g t m i l a s b t a r  
e g a h p i s h s r r t e  
h n d r s g a b l e e c a  
r a r s r i h l p h t h t  
e d a t i e f t r t r l e  
g n x a d i i y l a g i n  
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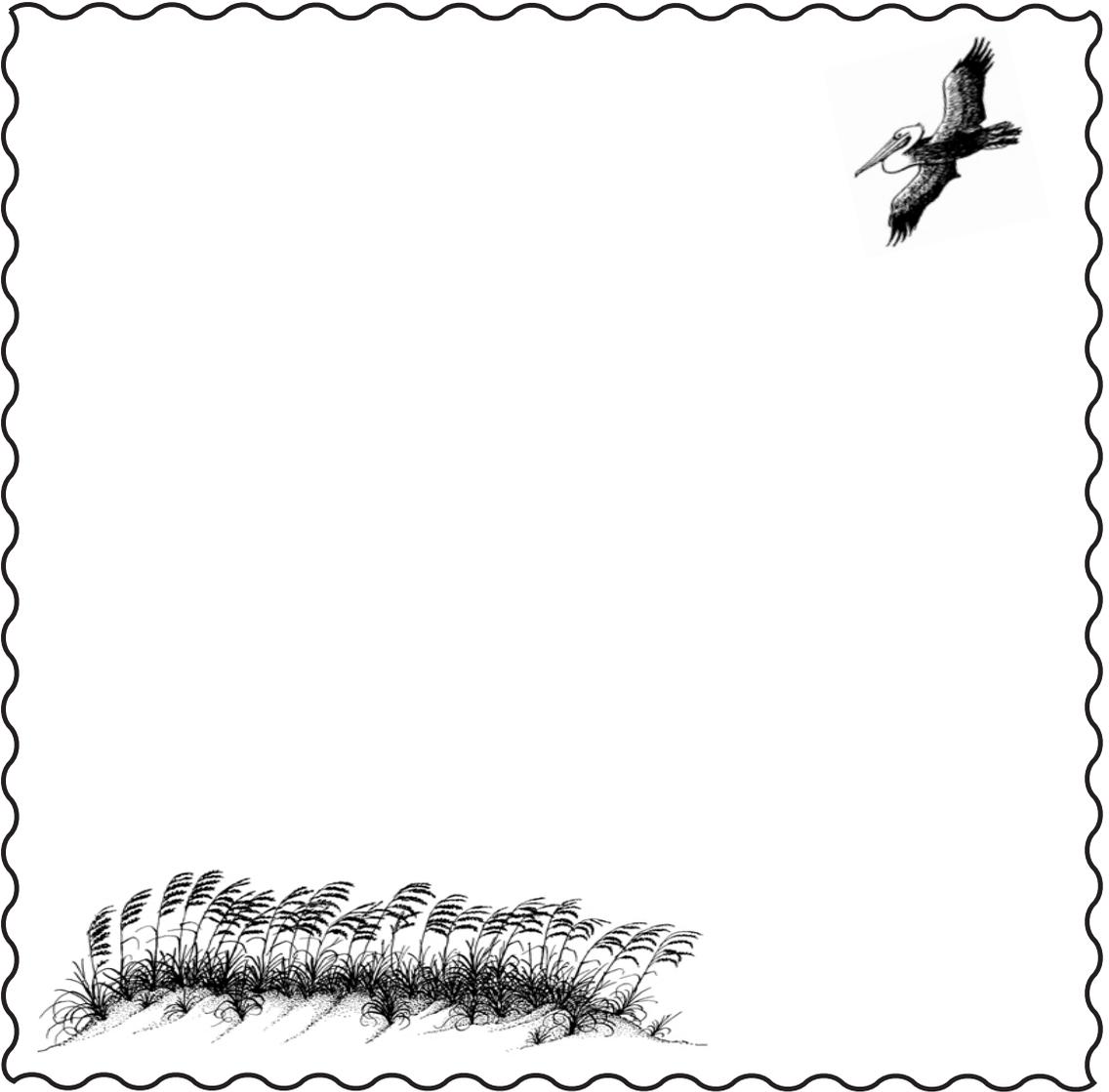
Did you know that plastic bags look like food (jellyfish) to a sea turtle? If a sea turtle eats plastic it will die. You can help by picking up all your trash after a visit to the park.

# My Favorite Seashore Memory

What is your favorite memory of your visit to the park?

Write a story about or draw a picture of a special place, animal or activity.

Use all your senses to think about what things looked, smelled or sounded like.



# Hermit Crab Field Study



## Hermit Crab Facts:

- \* Hermit crabs have soft bodies. They find empty shells made by other animals to crawl into for protection.
- \* There are hundreds of species of hermit crabs throughout the world. Some live in water and some live on land.
- \* Seashore hermit crabs are eaten by fish, other crabs and birds.

Park scientists do field studies on animals, and so can Junior Rangers. You can learn from hermit crabs by observing them. Remember to be kind by gently putting them back where you found them.

**Did you know it is against park rules to take living animals like hermit crabs? Please help the hermits by not taking them away from their homes!**

1. Find a hermit crab. (Search around the shallow water on the beach.)  
Where did you find it?
2. Is it still alive? \_\_\_\_\_ To see if a crab is still in the shell, place the shell on the beach and draw a circle around the crab in the sand. Be patient and watch to see what happens.
3. What kinds of claws does it have? Why do you think it has claws?
4. How big is it? Is it bigger or smaller than your hand?

# Living with Hurricanes

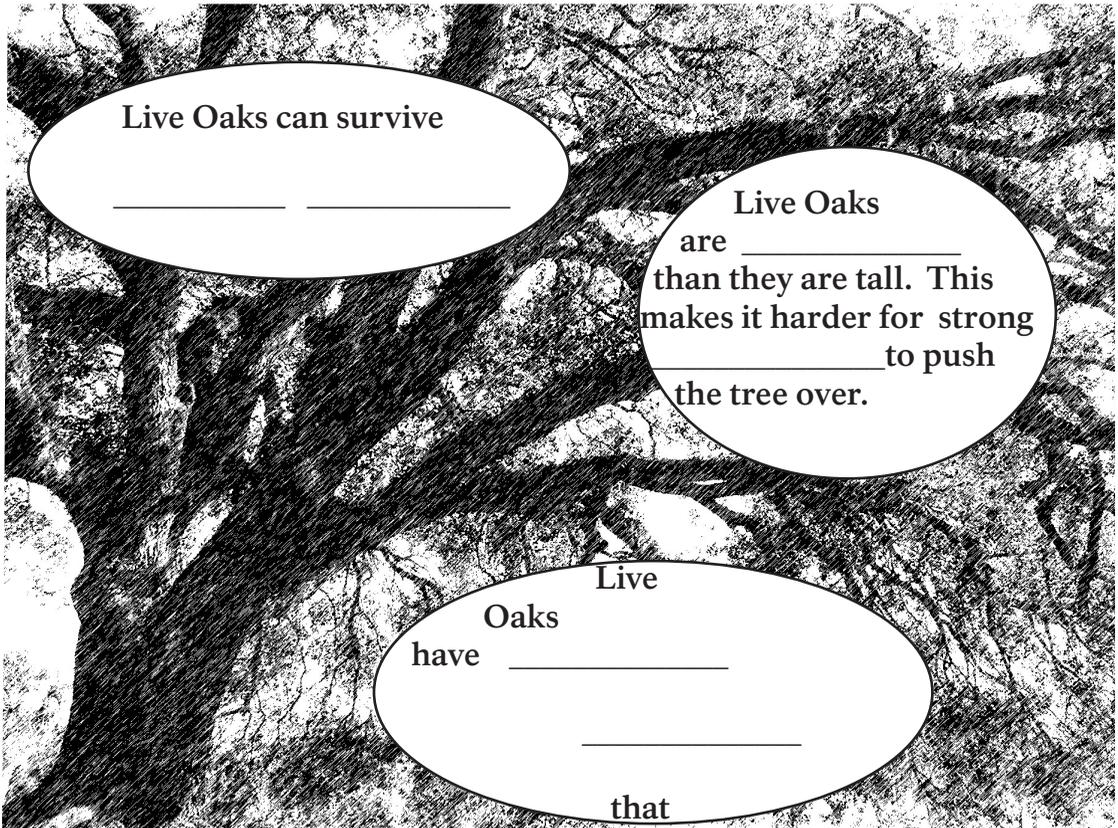
Hurricanes are tropical storms that bring powerful winds, high water, rain, thunder and lightning. Hurricanes can be scary, but they are part of the natural world. The Live Oak is a kind of tree that has adapted to survive hurricanes. Unscramble the words and complete the sentences below to learn more about these amazing trees.

onstrg      sotro  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

lats      rpsya  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

dnwis  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

rdiew  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Live Oaks can survive  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

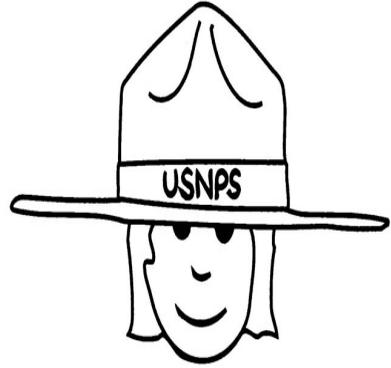
Live Oaks  
are \_\_\_\_\_  
than they are tall. This  
makes it harder for strong  
\_\_\_\_\_ to push  
the tree over.

Live  
Oaks  
have \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
that

# Interview a Park Ranger

Park Rangers have important jobs. At Gulf Islands National Seashore Park Rangers help protect the historic forts and the plants and animals that live in the park. Rangers help make sure you have a safe, fun visit to the park and do research to learn more about the park.

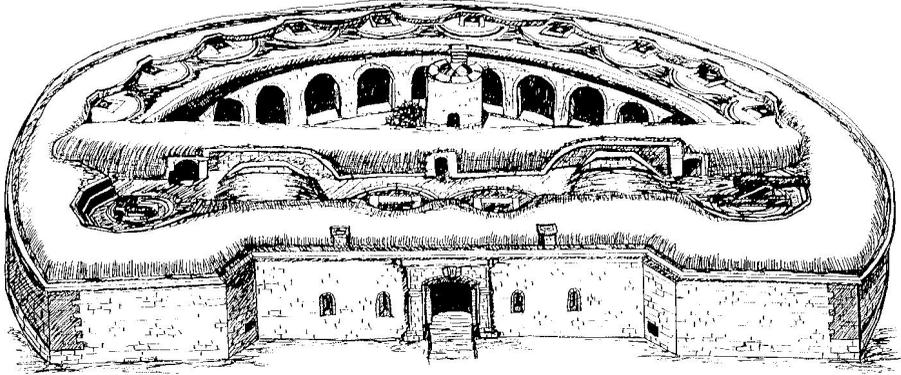
As a Junior Ranger it is important to know what park employees do. Find a Park Ranger or Park Volunteer and ask them these questions.



1. What is the name of the park employee?
2. What is their favorite place in the park?
3. What job do they perform at Gulf Islands National Seashore?
4. What tools do they use to do their jobs?
5. Why is their job important to the park?



# Fort Discovery Hunt



Gulf Islands National Seashore has a lot of forts. The forts were built to help protect our country over a hundred years ago. Circle the name of the fort you are visiting today.

Fort Massachusetts

Fort Pickens

Fort Barrancas

Advanced Redoubt

Although all the park's forts look different, they actually have many things in common. Circle the names of the fort features you can find!

Sallyport (front door)

Cannons

How many are there? \_\_\_\_\_

An arch made out of brick

A hidden or locked room where  
gunpowder was kept

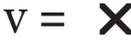
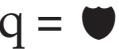
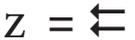
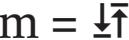
Who built the fort you visited?

# A Soldier's Life

Soldiers during the Civil War sometimes used secret codes to get important messages to other soldiers.

They used secret codes so their enemies would not discover their plans. See if you can decipher this code and learn about what a soldier's life was like.



a = 	h = 	o = 	v = 
b = 	i = 	p = 	w = 
c = 	j = 	q = 	x = 
d = 	k = 	r = 	y = 
e = 	l = 	s = 	z = 
f = 	m = 	t = 	
g = 	n = 	u = 	

The bugler sounded   e   \_\_\_\_\_ at sunrise. We had a \_\_\_\_\_



day of \_\_\_\_\_ in the sun. It's nice to be in the \_\_\_\_\_.



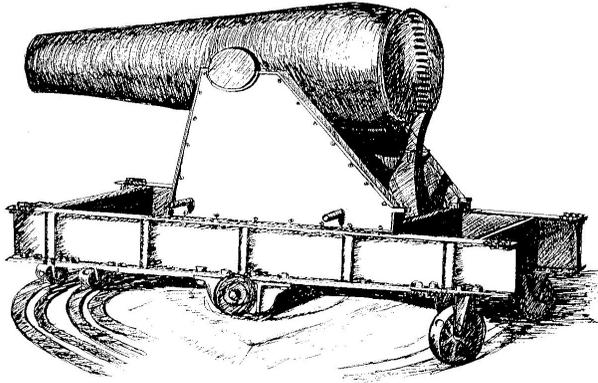
My favorite time of the day is \_\_\_\_\_ time and \_\_\_\_\_. Taps was



sounded at sunset and my \_\_\_\_\_ never looked so good!



# Cannon Talk



You can find a 15-inch Rodman cannon at Fort Massachusetts in Mississippi and Fort Pickens in Florida.

This cannon weighs over 50,000 pounds!

**Wormer** – inserted in the gun's barrel and twisted, it removes the remains of cartridge (powder) bags and other debris. It looks like a double cork screw fixed to a long handle.

**Sponge** – covered with lambskin and dipped in water, it is used for cleaning and cooling the barrel. After firing it was important to make sure there were no sparks inside.

**Cannon Ball** – cannon balls can be either a solid iron shot or hollow shell with a charge inside. A shot fired from a 15-inch cannon weighed over 400 pounds.

**Ramrod** – a wooden cylinder that pushes the powder charge and cannon ball to the back of the barrel.

**Shell Hook and Carrying Bar** – used for lifting and carrying cannon balls.

**Handspike** – used to move the carriage and to lift the barrel.

# Artillery Match Up

Draw a line from the name to the matching piece of artillery!



Shell Hook and  
Carrying Bar

Cannon Ball

Wormer

Ramrod

Sponge

Handspike



# My Seashore Visit

Write a letter to a friend about your visit to the park. If you want to mail it, cut out this page on the dotted line.

Date:

Dear

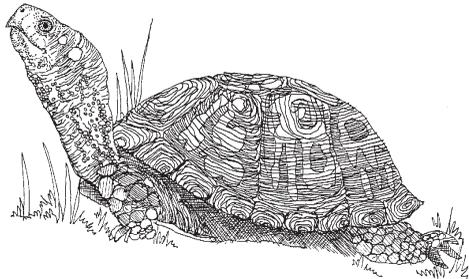
I am visiting the park with \_\_\_\_\_. I learned that Gulf Islands National Seashore is home to many \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. I saw \_\_\_\_\_.

My favorite thing I did was \_\_\_\_\_. I also learned that \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ smelled really \_\_\_\_\_.

I was surprised by \_\_\_\_\_.

Your friend,



# Gulf Islands National Seashore

## Junior Ranger

Certificate of Achievement

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As a Junior Ranger, I will:

- Explore the wonders of National Parks and the nature and history all around me.
- Learn the importance of living things.
- Teach others what I have learned.

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Park Ranger

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Date

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior



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[www.nps.gov/guis](http://www.nps.gov/guis)

**This Junior Ranger booklet was written and designed by Park Rangers Amanda Carrigan-Grissom and Terry Wildy, with help from the interpretive staff at Gulf Islands National Seashore. Gulf Islands National Seashore does not endorse the organization and enterprise listed below, but we wish to thank them for their generous support in producing this publication as a visitor service.**

**International Paper Foundation**

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