



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mississippi National River
and Recreation Area

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News Release

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Children, Nature and the Junior Ranger Program

National Junior Ranger Day, Saturday April 26, is a fitting close to National Park Week. The theme this year is "Kids in Parks" and at the Mississippi River Visitor Center from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m, kids will have an opportunity to become Junior Rangers or extend their Junior Ranger membership. To become a Junior Ranger children will participate in a phenology activity (phenology is the study of the relations between climate and periodic biological phenomena, such as bird migration or plant flowering); a fishing activity where kids will learn to identify fish, which lure to use and how to cast; and a herptile activity where they will view live snakes, turtles and a tiger salamander – all native to Minnesota. A giant turtle shell and shed snake skins will be available to provide a tactile experience. Parents and kids alike will also find hands on climate change exhibits challenging and fun.

Park Superintendent Paul Labovitz will be on hand to administer the Junior Ranger pledge and award badges. Several hundred kids have become Junior Rangers at this event over the last few years and continue to participate in the ongoing program.

The Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, the local unit of the National Park Service, has taken the traditional Junior Ranger program and expanded it to provide exciting opportunities for kids to not only become Junior Rangers, but to have year round activities to explore the natural and cultural history of the community. Twin City area Junior Rangers can earn the badge and then collect buttons for activities such as a fossil dig, a barge ride, touring historic locations such as Mill City Museum, or exploring the Minnesota Trail at the Minnesota Zoo.



Much has been written lately about opportunities, or lack thereof, for children to connect to nature. Richard Louv was possibly the most recent catalyst with his book "Last Child in the Woods." One of the ways the National Park Service has always worked to foster this important connection is through its Junior Ranger Program.

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