

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Weir Farm National Historic Site
Connecticut



Junior Ranger Pond Pack



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Be a Junior Ranger

At Weir Farm National Historic Site, you can be a Junior Ranger! Learn about the only national park dedicated to American painting and have fun in the process!

In order to earn the Junior Ranger Badge, you must complete one of the two Junior Ranger activities. By completing both activities, you will earn the special Weir Farm Junior Ranger Patch. You must show both completed booklets to receive the patch. These are the activities to choose from:

1. Junior Ranger Letterboxing

Use the clues in this booklet to navigate the landscape and locate stamps in hidden locations. Five containers, or letterboxes, have been hidden at various locations throughout the park.

2. Junior Ranger Pond Pack

Take this pack with you on a hike around Weir Pond. Use the supplies inside to sketch, measure and identify trees, and search for wildlife. This activity is a combination of art and nature-related tasks.

You've Chosen the Pond Pack!

What is it?

This is an art and nature activity to complete as you hike around the Weir Pond. You will learn about the natural and man-made environment as you use your senses to explore the farm and forest.

How do I do it?

- 1) Open up your backpack! It contains all the necessary items for your hike. In it you will find a trail map, Field Guide, sketchbook, pencils, tape measure, magnifying glass, and bug box.
- 2) Follow the directions in this booklet and at each stop, complete the corresponding activity, while making notes in this booklet and sketches in your sketchbook.
- 3) After your hike, return your backpack to the visitor center and show your work to a park ranger to earn your Junior Ranger Badge.

What are the rules?

Please remember everything at a national park is protected for the enjoyment of generations to come, so please do not pick flowers, climb trees or stone walls, or take things back home with you. That's why you have a sketchbook! Please use it to record memories of your visit here, just like the many artists who explored, and still explore, this landscape today.

Stop #1

Behind the Weir House

Begin your journey near the Weir Studio, looking out over the Weir Barn, the farm buildings, and Weir Orchard. Look over the area to find ways that people have changed the land.

- *How many buildings do you see?*

- *Why do you think someone built the stone walls?*

- *Imagine what the land may have looked like before it was a farm. How would it be different?*

Farming changed the land, not only with things built by people like stone walls, but also with the planting of orchards and gardens. Look for flower gardens, fruit trees, lawns, and other features around the landscape planted or created by people.

Take a moment to sketch the landscape that you see.
Be sure to include man-made features that were added to the landscape.

Stop #2

Entering the Forest

Follow the mown path past the Secret Garden through the Weir Orchard and then across Nod Hill Road. Walk down the trail you see toward Weir Pond. Stop when you are far enough in the forest that you can no longer see any open meadows. Look around.

- *What are three ways the forest looks different from the meadows?*

- *What clues do you see that tell you how the land was used in the past?*

- *This forest used to be a farmer's field just like the meadows that you saw earlier. How can you tell?*

Take a moment to sketch the landscape that you see.
Be sure to include man-made features that were added to the landscape.

Stop #3

On the Trail to Weir Pond

Continue down the trail. Look at the size of the trees in the forest.

Take out the measuring tape from your backpack. Go to the largest tree that you can see and measure around the trunk. Then, find four more trees to measure. Record your measurements here: Tree 1_____ Tree 2_____ Tree 3_____ Tree 4_____ Tree 5_____

- *Are most of the trees large, medium, or small in size?*

- *What do the size of the trees tell you about the age of the forest?*



- *Think about the plants you saw behind the Weir House. How do the plants in the forest look different from the plants near the house?*

Look at the variety of leaf shapes. Do the same for tree bark. Please be careful that you don't pull any leaves or bark off the trees—they are alive, and pulling parts off of them can damage their health.

- *How many different types of leaves and bark can you find?*

Make bark rubbings, leaf rubbings, and sketch the different leaf patterns. Use your guide book to identify the different kinds of bark and leaves. Then, label each kind in your sketchbook.

Stop #4

On the Dam

Continue down the trail and as you approach Weir Pond, stay to your left to follow the “Pond Path.” Walk along the pond until you reach the dam. Look for the white quartz rock that Mr. Weir placed on the dam.

- *Do you think this pond is an original part of the forest or was it built as part of the farm? What makes you think it is one or the other?*

- *You are standing on the dam that Julian Alden Weir built to create the pond in 1896. That’s over one hundred and ten years ago! Why would someone dam a stream to create a pond? How would Mr. Weir have used the pond?*

Now that you are at the pond, close your eyes for about a minute. Listen to all of the sounds you hear and keep count.

- *How many and what kind of sounds did you hear (birds, wind, water, people)?*

- *How many of those sounds were made by people?*

- *What sounds would you not have heard when Mr. Weir was living here?*

- *What sounds would you like there to be in the forest in the future?*



Write out a list of the sounds you heard in your sketchbook. You may not be able to see what you hear around you, but use your imagination to draw the ‘soundmaker’ next to the sound you have listed in your sketchbook.

Stop #5

The Far Side of Weir Pond



Continue to follow the trail around the pond and stop once you get to the opposite side of the pond. Look out over the pond.

- *How has the view changed as you are looking across the pond in the opposite direction?*

- *Mr. Weir created the pond to increase the aesthetic appeal of the farm—that means he wanted to make his farm look beautiful to the eye. Which of the views do you like better?*

- *Do you think Mr. Weir should have left this area forested? Why or why not?*

- *Should Mr. Weir have done something different to this area? If so, what?*

- *What would you have done to change this forest?*

Mr. Weir added the pond to the farm to make it look beautiful to the eye.
What would you have added to the landscape of the farm? Draw it in your sketchbook.

Stop #6

The Return Trail

Continue around the pond and into the forest. Have you seen any animals or animal signs (droppings, tracks, fur, feathers, nests)? Find a comfortable spot to sit quietly and try to spot an animal or locate an animal sound. Take out the magnifying glass and bug box from your backpack and examine the forest more closely. Please only examine items already on the ground, you don't want to hurt the living forest!

Look at leaves, bark, sticks, or other items you found on the ground and draw them as they look under the magnifier.

- *Can you find bugs to look at in the magnifying bug box? How many different kinds can you find?*

- *Can you identify them? Use your guide book for help.*

Draw a magnified view of the objects you have studied under the magnifying glass and bug box. Then please put them back where you found them.



