PumpkintownSC.com

UPSTATE EXPLORER SERIES



Summer Mission Pack

10 outdoor missions for curious kids, ages 3 to 12

This pack belongs to _____

- 10 missions with two levels each
- Summer Critters Spot-It sheet
- Explorer log
- Summer bingo card
- Where to try it in the Upstate
- Completion certificate

Before you head out

A quick guide for parents, grandparents, teachers and anyone else tagging along.

How the pack works

Each mission has two versions. **Little Explorers** is for ages 3 to 6 and works great with a grown-up helping. **Trailblazers** is for ages 7 to 12 and asks kids to observe, record and compare.

You do not need to finish them in order or in one day. Most missions work in a backyard, a neighborhood park or a state park.

What to bring

- This pack and a clipboard or hard book
- Crayons and a pencil
- Lots of water and a salty snack
- Sunscreen, a hat and bug spray
- Water shoes for creek missions

Summer safety notes

- **Waterfalls are dangerous.** Never climb on rocks or swim near the top of a waterfall. Stay on marked paths.
- **Creek rules.** Only wade where it is calm, shallow and allowed, with a grown-up right beside you.
- **When thunder roars, go indoors.** Summer storms pop up fast in the afternoons.
- **Beat the heat.** Head out early, take shade breaks and drink before you are thirsty.
- **Check for ticks** and chiggers after walking through grass.
- **Leave critters wild.** Look, draw and let them go exactly where you found them.

Make it stick

Let kids lead. Ask "What do you notice?" before giving answers. When a mission is done, have them check the box and mark it on the Explorer Log. Finish 7 or more missions to earn the certificate at the back.

1 Creek Critter Search

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

With a grown-up, gently lift a small creek rock. What lives under it?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Tally what you find, then set each rock back exactly the way it was.

Turn rocks toward you and put them back gently. Salamanders hide underneath.

Salamanders	
Crayfish	
Insects or larvae	
Snails	
Tiny fish	

Draw what you found

2 Firefly Night

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

At dusk, count the fireflies you see blink.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Watch for 5 minutes. Tally flashes. Do some flash high and some low? Fast or slow?

Flashes in 5 minutes	
High or low?	
Fast or slow?	

Draw what you found

3 Cloud Spotter

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Lie on your back. Draw a cloud that looks like an animal.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Find each kind of cloud. Puffy cumulus, wispy cirrus, flat gray stratus.

- ☐ Cumulus (puffy) _____
- ☐ Cirrus (wispy) _____
- ☐ Stratus (flat and gray) _____
- ☐ Building storm cloud _____

Draw what you found

4 Shade Detective

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Stand in the sun, then in the shade. Which feels cooler?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Use a thermometer to compare sun, shade and near water. How big is the difference?

In the sun	
In the shade of a tree	
Near water	

Draw what you found

5 Butterfly Count

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Make a mark for every butterfly you see.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Tally by color. Find the yellow and black tiger swallowtail, South Carolina's state butterfly.

Yellow and black	
Orange	
White or yellow	
Blue or black	
Other	

Draw what you found

6 Night Sound Map

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Sit outside after dark with a grown-up. Draw one sound.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

You are the X. Mark each night sound: crickets, katydids, frogs, owls.



7 Sink or Float

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

At the lake shore, guess if a leaf, stick and pebble will sink or float. Try it!

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Test 5 natural things. Write your guess first, then the result.

Item 1: guess / result	
Item 2: guess / result	
Item 3: guess / result	
Item 4: guess / result	
Item 5: guess / result	

Draw what you found

8 Web Architect

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

In the morning, find a spider web. Draw it.

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Count the spokes on an orb web. Is the spider in the middle or hiding at the edge?

9 History Detective

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Visit a tunnel or covered bridge. Is it warm or cool inside?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Stumphouse Tunnel was dug by hand in the 1850s for a railroad that was never finished. Sketch the entrance.

10 Melt Race

☐ Mission complete

Little Explorers 3 to 6

Put one ice cube in the sun and one in the shade. Which melts first?

Trailblazers 7 to 12

Time both cubes. How many minutes faster did the sunny one melt?

Sunny cube melted in	
Shady cube melted in	
Difference	

Draw what you found

Summer Bingo

Cross off each square when you spot it. Get five in a row, then try for a blackout.

Firefly	Dragonfly	Butterfly	Cicada shell	Frog
Turtle on a log	Fish	Spider web	Animal-shaped cloud	Wildflower
Bee	Ant	Summer Explorer	Big shade tree	Wet footprint
Feather	Pinecone	Hummingbird	Grasshopper	Snail
Something yellow	Sunset	Creek	Mushroom	Splash

Little Explorers: a grown-up can read the squares aloud. Trailblazers: try to get a blackout in one outing.

Spot-It: Upstate Summer Critters

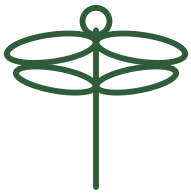
Eight summer animals you can find in Upstate yards, creeks and ponds. Color each one when you spot it.



Firefly

A beetle that flashes its light to talk to other fireflies. Look at dusk in early summer.

☐ Found it



Dragonfly

Four wings that each move on their own. A champion mosquito catcher.

☐ Found it



Tiger swallowtail

Yellow with black tiger stripes. It is South Carolina's state butterfly.

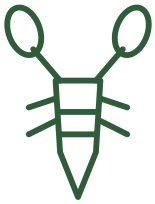
☐ Found it



Salamander

Our mountains have more kinds of salamanders than almost anywhere on Earth. Look, then set the rock back gently.

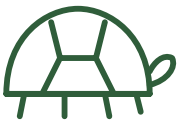
☐ Found it



Crayfish

A tiny freshwater lobster. It zips backward with a flip of its tail.

☐ Found it



Box turtle

A land turtle that can close its shell like a box. Admire it, then let it go on its way.

☐ Found it



Green frog

Listen at ponds for a call that sounds like a loose banjo string being plucked.

☐ Found it



Cicada

Sings loud buzzing summer songs. Look for empty shells stuck to tree trunks.

☐ Found it

Where to try it in the Upstate

Every mission works close to home, but these spots make it easy. Find full family guides with distances, restrooms and parking tips at **pumpkintownsc.com/kids-adventures**.

#	Mission	Try it at
1	**Creek Critter Search**	Shallow, calm creek edges at state parks where wading is allowed; ask at the park office
2	**Firefly Night**	Your own backyard or a campsite at Oconee State Park
3	**Cloud Spotter**	Caesars Head Overlook; any open field
4	**Shade Detective**	Unity Park, Greenville; Cleveland Park, Spartanburg
5	**Butterfly Count**	Hatcher Garden, Spartanburg; Conestee Nature Preserve, Greenville
6	**Night Sound Map**	Your backyard, or camping at Oconee State Park or Table Rock State Park
7	**Sink or Float**	South Cove County Park on Lake Keowee; Lake Hartwell State Park; Devils Fork State Park
8	**Web Architect**	Nalley Brown Nature Park, Easley; Lake Placid Trail, early morning
9	**History Detective**	Stumphouse Park and Issaqueena Falls; Campbell's Covered Bridge
10	**Melt Race**	Your driveway, or the splash pad at Va-Du-Mar McMillan Park or Tyger River Park

Trail conditions, hours and access can change. Check with the park before you go.

My Explorer Log

Write down where and when you finished each mission.

#	Mission	Where	Date	Done
1	Creek Critter Search			☐
2	Firefly Night			☐
3	Cloud Spotter			☐
4	Shade Detective			☐
5	Butterfly Count			☐
6	Night Sound Map			☐
7	Sink or Float			☐
8	Web Architect			☐
9	History Detective			☐
10	Melt Race			☐

My favorite summer discovery

What I want to find next summer:

PUMPKINTOWN SC · UPSTATE EXPLORER SERIES

Certified Summer Explorer

This certifies that

_____

completed ____ of 10 Summer Missions in the Upstate of South Carolina by looking closely, listening carefully and exploring outside.

_____ _____

Explorer's guide Date

Next adventure: the Fall Mission Pack at pumpkintownsc.com/kids-adventures

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