

Young people in Europe's Protected Areas

EUROPARC's Junior Ranger Programme





EUROPARC Federation

Who are we?



EUROPARC is the network of protected areas of Europe. We are the largest and most established network of its kind. We want to ensure the conservation and sustainable management of Europe's natural heritage, through working together to develop and improve standards.

EUROPARC's membership is made up of different kinds of protected areas, environmental agencies and NGOs across 36 countries. All have an interest in finding the best ways possible to manage living working landscapes and protect nature and marine areas. Such areas include internationally recognised sites; world heritage sites, European N2000 sites and national, regional and locally designated places. These areas together form the foundation of society's life support systems upon which we all depend.

EUROPARC is the representative body and advocate on behalf of Europe's protected areas. We are looking to improve our members' interests, and work to ensure the values and benefits of protected areas are reflected in European commission policies.

With expenditure on nature conservation and the management of protected areas under increasing pressure from national governments, EUROPARC provides a unique and important international forum; to share professional experience, learn from each other on creating efficiencies and synergies to collaborate on work that will develop sustainable protected area management.

EUROPARC members have access to a living library of like-minded members in 36 countries. The solution to a problem or challenge you are facing is very likely to be found across the network!

Young People are our Future.

Young people make up nearly 20% of Europe's population. They are the decision - makers of tomorrow. It is important they are given the opportunity to consider how the present management of our environment will affect them, so they can express their thoughts, opinions and get involved in the issues that will eventually impact them.

Yet today's young people lead busy lives! School, for teenagers is all consuming and the social pressures and constraints are enormous. The teenage world revolves around what friends and everyone around think of them. Trying to get young people interested in the environment can be difficult as it involves changing perceptions and attitudes, something that requires a lot of time and effort.

Being on the crowded continent of Europe, the need to develop a sense of connectivity of shared natural resources is imperative. Developing a mutual understanding and improved ability to cooperate and collaborate with differing cultures is inherent in the work of the EUROPARC Federation. We believe international cooperation is fundamental to manage our European natural heritage. Making sure young people have a role in that has been an important component of our work.

Junior Rangers Young People in Natural Places



The Junior Ranger programme is an initiative, to which all protected areas member of EUROPARC Federation are invited to participate thereby creating a valuable sharing and learning network amongst those running youth activities. EUROPARC coordinates the programme at European level, distributing information, providing support to protected areas, organising events and training for Rangers as well as an international camp for youth from across Europe.

Our network connects Junior Ranger programmes for 12-18 year olds in protected areas across Europe. We recognise that most protected areas operate educational and interpretive programmes for younger children, therefore the EUROPARC Junior Ranger programme focuses on those in the older age groups who tend to drop out of environmental activities.

Such Junior Ranger programmes we have found:

- Are good for the Park
- Are good for the development of the Ranger Service (or park staff)
- Facilitate social cohesion by improving relations between the park and the local community
- And can make positive, confident and healthy young people

Young people can make a great contribution to their local community when encouraged to participate in nature orientated events. The local protected area and Ranger Service can act as an important catalyst. Being a respected participant in Junior Ranger activities enables young people of the community to feel they have a role to play and can see their actions having an impact on improvements to their areas, as well as building strong interpersonal skills that will contribute to better relations in education, business and society.

Young people are the future of protected areas in Europe, and our Ranger Services are one of protected areas most visible frontline services.

By bringing young people and Rangers together, in the Junior Ranger programme, we want to enable young people to respect and care for their local protected area, whilst also learning the valuable role Rangers play in the conservation of nature.





Young people in my park Where to Start?

It can be a daunting prospect starting new activities. The usual concerns over time, money, staff capacity and skills are often in the forefront. However it is worth remembering the longer term benefits and that a well structured youth activity will not only meet park management objectives but also build community relations and ambassadors for the protected area well into the future. Many others with the same concerns and lack of resources have successfully embedded youth activities into their fields of work.

But there is help out there! EUROPARC members can always contact EUROPARC for support. We can assist in helping you plan the activities and/or by putting you in touch with our other partners with years of experience. You can benefit from the lessons they have learned already saving you time and money!

Regular contacts with EUROPARC, for feedback, to share experiences and to get updates, will help the park to be connected to the rest of the network, and to benefit from it.

The EUROPARC Junior Ranger programme is aimed at youth residents within or close to the protected area. The number of participants depends on park resources and energies, but a good way to start is to create partnerships with local schools or environmental associations and obviously via communication media and direct contacts with parents and friends.

EUROPARC recommends a variety of content related to learning about and participating in activities of the protected area. We do not prescribe programmes but can offer some extra tips, to improve or develop your model.

By joining the European network, you can then use Junior Ranger logos, have access to our resources and participate in network events and camps.



REQUIREMENTS and RECOMMENDATION

To join the Junior Ranger network we ask:

A **5 - days programme** per year is the minimum required expected: it can be one week, or different days activities throughout the year.

Activities should provide **real nature conservation work** experiences, and possibly also include cultural and social topics. Most of them should be done outdoor in nature.

Parks running Junior Ranger activities must be a **EUROPARC member***. We will provide a tool-kit to help you get started.

Once part of the network, we ask that you liaise with the Federation, and give regular feedback; as this helps us develop the programme, provide training and find funding. Furthermore the EUROPARC annual conference, the website, the EUROPARC Junior Ranger Facebook page and the International camps offer a good international platform for networking.

We certainly recommend that over time Junior Ranger programme should become part of the ordinary park

work e.g. environmental education department, possibly managed by Ranger Service, or equivalent, in collaboration with other departments of the Park Authority;

- The activities should have a **regular frequency**, and be well distributed all over the year.
- A **camp 2-5 days** organised at park level is a great opportunity to complete and integrate the activities of the year.
- The **cooperation with schools** and other local associations for example Scouts should be encouraged.
- When possible, **provide uniforms t-shirts, caps**, using the **EUROPARC Junior Ranger logo** (only for members). This contributes to increase the ownership of the programme and to raise the sense of being part of a wider network. These can often be sponsored by local businesses.
- A **certificate or award** can be adopted by the park, and distributed to the Junior Rangers at the end of each year activity as this can help develop a real sense of achievement and community spirit.
- Involvement of parents, partners and local communities is encouraged.
- Involve the Junior Ranger in getting part of the **international network**: writing articles, news, and sharing pictures and ideas via Facebook or Twitter.
- Participate in the **networking and training opportunities** offered: events for Rangers, international camps, workshops and conferences.

The importance of a European network?



Young people are innately curious. They want to have access to new, different and exciting opportunities. Further they are a more socially mobile and language-able generation than ever before and they value the chance to meet and learn from other like-minded European teenagers.

International Junior Ranger camp is often a life-affirming experience for many young people across Europe. There, they will learn about European nature, environmental issues and experience cultural and social aspects. Young people will discover a new protected area, be given responsibility to represent their park and their country, as well as contribute to the conservation of another protected area in a different part of Europe.

The camp enables EUROPARC to invest in important conservation messages about how nature knows no boundaries across Europe and through cultural exchange to highlight the value of good citizenship.

The camp too offers the opportunity for Rangers and mentors, who accompany their Juniors to exchange ideas and experience with colleagues from across Europe, assisting in developing new skills in Ranger staff.

The International Junior Ranger Camp, coordinated each summer by EUROPARC is hosted by one of the network members. EUROPARC supports each camp host, who is expected to be running Junior Ranger programmes already, helps seek funds and attends the camp to assist with leading. A camp help guide is provided as well as a set of guiding principles to ensure a positive, safe and encouraging environment for the international young people.



Diversity is an important aspect of our wide network of protected areas, and crucial part of its richness in our Junior Ranger programmes and camps.

Through the EUROPARC Junior Ranger programme and camp, we can provide the chance for Europe's young people not just to learn about Europe's protected areas but more importantly to appreciate that they are the Future...it's in their hands!



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