

Rocky Mountain National Park, COLORING AND ACTIVITY BOOK



LEARNING ACTIVITY WORKSHEETS

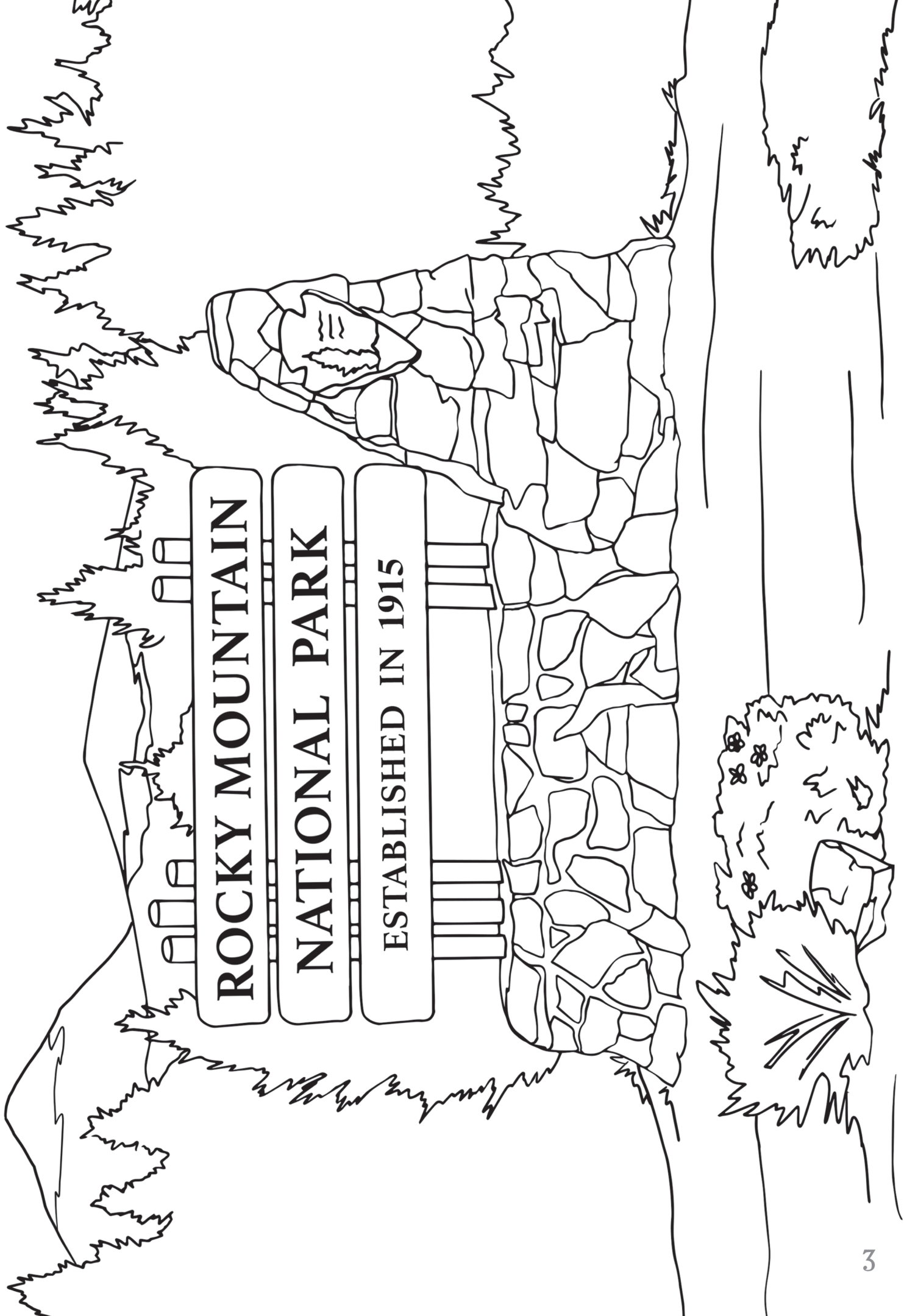
BOOK 1 - ROCKY MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

NATIONAL PARK MYSTERY SERIES

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Illustrated by
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NATIONAL PARK
➡ **MYSTERY SERIES™** ⬅



Fun Facts About Rocky Mountain National Park

#1 - Rocky Mountain National Park is abbreviated RMNP. Some people use it as a nickname. Other nicknames include: ROMO, Rocky Mountain, Rocky, and The Park.

#2 - The park is 415 square miles. That's about three times the size of the city of Denver.

#3 - RMNP has over 150 lakes, 350 miles of trails, and over 450 miles of streams.

#4 - There are over 60 mountain peaks in RMNP. Longs Peak is the highest, at 14,259 feet.

#5 - About 4.5 million people visit RMNP each year.

#6 - RMNP is the 26th largest of our national parks. It's bigger than Mt. Rainier (#30) but smaller than Grand Teton (#25).

#7 - Trail Ridge Road is the highest contiguous highway in the lower 48 states.

#8 - The Continental Divide runs through the approximate middle of the park, dividing it into a west side and east side. On the east side, all the waters flow east toward the Mississippi. On the west side, the snowmelt flows down the mountains toward the Pacific Ocean.

A Few Notable Locations

Lumpy Ridge: Just north of Estes Park, this part of RMNP is named after the knobby granite rocks that soar into the sky. Rock climbers journey to Lumpy Ridge from all over the world to climb. Perhaps its most notable formation is the Twin Owls, which plays an important role in *Mystery in Rocky Mountain National Park*.

Bear Lake: Located on the east side of the park, Bear Lake is considered by some to be the heart of RMNP. It's perhaps the best trailhead for visiting alpine lakes and waterfalls.

Trail Ridge Road: This road weaves its way through the forests, above the treeline, to miles of uninterrupted green alpine tundra. It's a great place to see marmots, elk, mountain goats, and pika.

The Wild Basin: This southern region of the park is full of streams and waterfalls, and has some of the best remote campsites (but you'll have to hike many miles to get to them).

Moraine Park: This is a broad meadow where the Big Thompson River cuts through the valley floor, and where elk herds congregate.

Mummy Range: This mountain range stretches across the northern region of the park. This is one of my favorite places to escape from the crowds and fish the North Fork of the Big Thompson River.

Unique Ecosystems

Rocky Mountain National Park contains several very different ecosystems. An ecosystem is an area where the land features, weather, wildlife, plants, and other organisms have developed a unique system of relationships. For example, there are plants that grow high in the alpine tundra that grow nowhere else in the world, providing food for the marmots and pika, and are fertilized by their droppings (scientific word for poop).

Riparian: A riparian ecosystem grows up around a stream, river, or wetland. In RMNP, you'll find a lot of willow brush growing along creekbanks and throughout wetlands. These plants provide habitat for the bugs that hatch and feed the trout. Beaver, moose, and even river otters, live most of their lives in the riparian zones of RMNP. Riparian zones can be found within or cutting through the other ecosystems found in the park.

Montane: Moraine Park, Upper Beaver Meadows, and the Lumpy Ridge area are all good examples of Montane ecosystems. Here, you'll find broad meadows, meandering creeks, and trees like ponderosa pine, aspens, and junipers. Montane areas can be quite dry and brown in the summer. You'll even find cacti on the south-facing slopes of hills and mountains.

Subalpine: This ecosystem is packed with evergreen trees: spruce, lodgepole pine, and fir. This ecosystem is located immediately below the treeline. It's noticeably colder up here and more humid. Many of the park's most stunning lakes are located in this zone. Bear Lake, Emerald Lake, and Glacier Gorge are all located subalpine ecosystems.

Alpine Tundra: This ecosystem is located above treeline, starting at around 11,000'. Up here, it can be frigid in July - and foggy. You'll find a lot of rock, and a lot of green, yellow, and orange lichen grown on their surface. Tundra is extremely fragile, and can take hundreds of years to recover from being trampled. Most flora (scientific name for plants) grow close to the ground; however, there are some beautiful wildflowers found in this ecosystem. Keep your eyes out for the camouflaged White-tailed Ptarmigan that hide in plain sight.



Flora and Fauna

Flora: If you want to see some brilliant wildflowers, visit RMNP in late-June through July when the winter snows have melted and soaked the mountainsides with moisture. There are hundreds of flowers, trees, and other plants that grow throughout the park. Below you'll find three of our favorites.

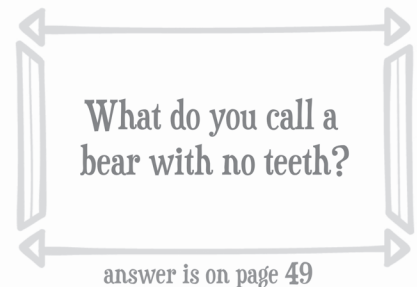
- **Indian Paintbrush:** These are slender plants that resemble a paintbrush. Found in montane and subalpine zones, these are typically red and orange. But you can also find yellow, white, and magenta. What appear to be their flowers, are actually colored leaves.

- **Columbine:** This is the state flower of Colorado. If you hike above Sky Pond, you will find meadows above the treeline filled with purple and white columbine.

- **Alpine Springbeauty:** This flowering plant grows in the tundra. To survive the harsh conditions, it drills a long taproot fifteen feet down through the rock and gravel.

Why are there so many dead trees in RMNP?

In recent years, the park, and many of the forests in the mountain states, have suffered from an epidemic of mountain pine beetles. These are a native beetle that lay eggs under the tree bark. When their eggs hatch, the larvae eat away the living layers of the tree.



Fauna: There are days in RMNP that feel like a trip to the zoo. Here are 15 animals to be on the lookout for while visiting the park.

1. Moose
2. Elk
3. Mule Deer
4. Abert's Squirrel
5. Steller's Jay
6. American Dipper
7. Mountain Bluebird
8. Yellow-bellied Marmot
9. Bighorn Sheep
10. Pika
11. Mountain Goat
12. Black Bear
13. Beaver
14. Bald Eagle
15. Snowshoe Hare

Wildlife Fun Facts

Why do the elk look so shaggy? In the spring and early summer, elk molt, shedding their winter coats. In the autumn they grow a thicker coat to keep them warm.

Why do some elk look like they have collars? These collars you see are radio transponders that help park scientists track the movements and habits of the elk population in RMNP.

Magpies: In Colorado, you'll find we have a large black and white and blue birds called magpies. They are loud and can be very territorial. In the spring, you'll spot them catching a ride on the back of elk. The birds pick through the elks' molting fur looking for ticks and other tasty bugs.

Marmots and Pikas: While marmots hibernate, Pikas stay wide awake during the winter months, and feed off of "haystacks" of grasses that they stashed under rocks during the warmer months.

Matching

Draw a line to connect the description with the correct answer.

Pikas gather and stash grasses to make these.

Name for the collars around the necks of some elk in RMNP.

A large black and white and blue bird that sometimes can be seen riding on the backs of elk.

What is killing so many trees in RMNP.

This ecosystem can be quite dry and brown during the summer months.

This ecosystem can cut through the other ecosystems found in the park.

Animal poop.

Famous climbing destination in RMNP.

Best two months for seeing wildflowers in RMNP.

State Flower of Colorado.

State Fish of Colorado.

Tundra plant with a long taproot.

Largest animal in RMNP.

Moraine Park is on this side of the continental divide.

The Big Thompson River flows through this location, making it a good good example of a montane ecosystem with a riparian ecosystem cutting through it.

Lumpy Ridge

Columbine

Moraine Park

East

Moose

Haystacks

Riparian

Montane

Mountain Pine Beetle

June and July

Transponders

Greenback Cutthroat

Magpie

Droppings

Alpine Sweetbeauty

A gummy bear!

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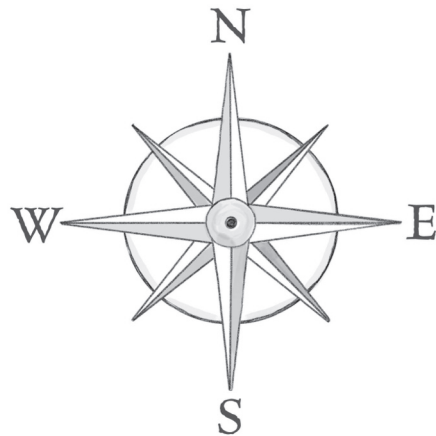
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ABOUT AARON JOHNSON, AUTHOR OF NATIONAL PARK MYSTERY SERIES




As I've hiked throughout different national parks and my home of Colorado, I've imagined stories about young boys and girls searching for treasure and, in the process, discovering the best treasure of all: the beauty of wild places. I've been inspired by my own searches for a treasure in the gorges and caves of Ohio, and by my dad, who discovered an ancient Native American settlement when he was just a teenager.

I've always loved stories, but I didn't always love reading. That changed in sixth grade when my teacher, Mrs. Jones, gave me a copy of *The Book of Three* by Lloyd Alexander. I hope that the books in my series awaken a love for reading in kids just as that book did for me.

I believe that the best way to care for our natural treasures is first to develop a deep connection with them. I hope you have been able to do so in these pages, and that you'll be able to get outside to develop an even deeper affection for the outdoors and national parks near you.



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