



## **RWL Case-Study – Junior Ranger Programme**

*A long-term programme offering residential involvement and holiday programmes for kids between 7-14 years in 41 natural protected areas in Germany.*

### **Country**

Germany

### **Name of the programme?**

Junior Ranger (in German: Das bundesweite Junior-Ranger-Programm in den Nationalen Naturlandschaften), it exists since 2008.



### **Age of the children involved?**

Between 7-14 years, at the moment (February 2014) ca. 1500 regional Junior Rangers per year all over Germany involved.

### **What is the frame?**

Children make a connection to the Natural and National Parks, learn about it and love to spend time there.

### **What are the goals of the programme?**

The programme was initiated by EUROPARC Germany and WWF Germany with the aim to enthuse children for nature and to establish an emotional approach to a common set of values. Nowadays, it is run in 41 natural protected sites in Germany by EUROPARC.

The vision of the programme is, that the Junior Ranger experience becomes a inherent part of the childhood of many children in Germany. The aim is to inspire children for biodiversity in the natural protected sites in Germany and to develop values, knowledge and competences through an emotional approach.

### **Which values are promoted?**

As this programme is implemented in different areas by different providers all over Germany, there is no consistent set of values which are promoted everywhere. Some of the values on the base of the programme include

a) According to the hand models self-transcending values:

- respect for nature and care for the state of our planet
- respect for future generations

b) According to PIRC and Schwartz' list of values:

- Protecting the environment



- Creativity
- Responsibility
- Ambitious
- Successful

### Which competencies are developed that empower learners to shape a sustainable future?

Critical Thinking	Interpretation, Thinking	Students will be able to identify connections and relationships (they will determine and report links and relationships between phenomena, events and concepts of different disciplines. They will understand the systemic nature, identifying similarities and differences, consistencies and inconsistencies, causes and effects).
Dealing with change	Flexibility	Students will be able to use their sustainability linked skills and knowledge in everyday situations.
The future begins to	Future, Challenge	Students will develop a sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; the ability to turn ideas into action (this involves creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The individual is aware of the context of his/her work and is able to seize opportunities that arise. It is the foundation for acquiring more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance).
You & Me & All the	World Problems, Relation	Students will be able to recognize their relationship to nature. Having nature experiences of different kinds will encourage them to reflect on their relationship to nature.
Dealing with change	Flexibility	Students will develop basic competences in science and technology. These refer to the mastery, use and application of knowledge and methodologies that explain the natural world. These involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual as a citizen).

### Which of the specific scientific concepts does the programme relate to?

This depends as well on the respective Natural Protected Site. In the National Park of Saxony Switzerland, **Cycles** and **Change** are main concepts in the various programmes offered. A day-programme called “Little Minimum” has been developed there and is run in the park since 1992 with primary school children: Little Minimum lives with lots of other tiny creatures in the rocks, plants and animals of the park. It is only happy when it is travelling, and it invites the students for a visit. During that visit it tells stories describing its adventurous journeys – e.g. through a root into a leaf, from the leaf into the stomach of a roebuck, from there through the antlers into a mouse, and so on. The students search and detect traces of these journeys. After a while they notice that Little Minimum and its friends tend to travel in circles. And they realize that it is possible to jump from one circle to the other. They find out that Little Minimum is happiest when ending up in compostable objects – and saddest when ending up in tins or plastic bags, where its big journey cannot continue. Back at school, teachers can use four different curriculum-based one-week extension packages about cyclic processes to continue the topic, and the class can join a Minimum Contest with a range of tasks.

### Which ecological problems are involved, if any, and how?



This mainly depends on the natural site – in the Wadden Sea, ocean acidification is a topic, in the lower mountain ranges e.g. in the Harz National Park, it is not. Climate change is a topic nearly in all sites, as well as biodiversity loss.

In the Junior Ranger programme in Saxony Switzerland National Park, the programme relates to biodiversity loss, change in land use and chemical pollution in the forest.



### **Transferability: Which different areas of life are involved and how?**

The area of life which is at the basis of the programme is the **natural environment**, dealing with flora and fauna. In the programme part “Junior Rangers in the Region”, the **learners community** is another prominent area of life, as they act on a local basis in the park, e.g. offering tours for other children.

### **What educational strategies (learning models, methods, etc.) are used in the programme?**

Education for Sustainable Development is the concept behind, although not everywhere put into practice yet. The methods are various, according to the different natural sites and the groups.

In the National Park in Saxony Switzerland the Junior Rangers programme works with 5 different school in the afternoon. The groups are never more than 10 children in Saxony Switzerland to enable an intensive work. The methods differ of the Rangers and their experiences, but they all take place outside, even in winter. Methods range from more creative games in the forest to building with wood and discovering the history, flora and fauna of the area.

Educational strategies used in other natural sites are for example guided tours of children for children which are part of the event calender of the respective site. To give knowledge further, in some cases also older Junior Rangers run the Junior Rangers group.





## How is the programme evaluated? How do you know the programme achieved its educational goals?

About 1500 Junior Rangers per year are active in Germany at the moment in 41 natural sites. There is currently no evaluation of the Junior Ranger programme, yet it is planned for the future.

Evaluation happens at the moment only orally during annual meetings with all the coordinators of the programme.

A hint, that the programme achieves its educational goals is that through the children also the parents are connecting themselves more to the nature sites and it becomes a part of the family life, of normality and routines.

*„We do not have a long-term evaluation of the Junior Ranger programme, but the children come again and again to our programme and their interest for nature is huge!“*

*Margitta Jendrzejewski, Junior-Ranger-coordinator in Saxony Switzerland (National Park)*



## Does the programme drive a behavioural change? How do you know that?

That the Junior-Ranger programme enables a behavioural change can be assumed because of the long-term involvement of the children and their own intrinsic motivation which is fostered through the volunteer-adventure character of the programme. The children are also encouraged to give their knowledge further – e.g. in some parks the Junior Rangers offer guided tours for other children. These events are integrated into the event-calender of the respective nature site. When the older Junior Ranger generation becomes volunteers in the natural site, they bring in lots of ideas into the park.

## Describe the programme.

The programme is run in 41 National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and Nature Reserves all over Germany. It is based on Education for Sustainable Development with various outdoor activities. Through adventures and fun the creativity and personality of the children is developed. The programme consists of four pillars in which various methods and offers are used which are compatible through certain quality criterias:





## 1. Junior Ranger in the Region

This takes place in different national nature sites (e.g. National Parks, Biosphere Reserves and Nature Reserves) where children come together in a group which learns and works in the respective site. To become a certified Junior Ranger (with a certificate and a badge) at least 30 hours have to be completed in the group. The children are supervised by the Rangers or people working in the Natural Sites. Also national camps are organised where about 300 of the regional Junior Rangers come together.

## 2. Junior Rangers on discovery tours

This touristic offer is for children and their families, who visit a natural site e.g. in their holidays or a day off. The aim is to motivate families and groups to come into a natural site and to deal with the topic of nature protection and biodiversity. In currently 11 natural sites you can buy an Junior Ranger explorer booklet (German: "Junior-Ranger-Entdeckerheft") with certain tasks and information which guide the journey through the natural park.



The didactic concept is although adjusted to the natural site a general one all over Germany. Through the booklet you can become a qualified Junior Ranger without the supervision of a Ranger or Outdoor Provider. Another offer is the discovery camps, which take place e.g. on weekends for children and families visiting the nature site.

## 3. Junior Ranger Web

This is an interactive online game aiming to those children living in cities or not having any contact to natural sites yet and which are not specifically interested in nature topics. The idea behind it is to raise the awareness of children for the German protected areas and encouraging them to seek adventures in their immediate environment. An interest in natural and environmental topics is stimulated by the positive interaction of fun and the acquisition of skills. The virtual landscapes were specially designed to match existing areas in the



"National Natural Landscapes" of Germany, in order to link the game to the real world.

The educational games provide access to these topics especially to target groups that have yet had little contact with nature.

#### 4. Additional Junior-Ranger projects

In different natural sites also other projects completing the Junior Ranger programme take place: As a transition for older Junior Rangers into the Volunteer programme in the parks, the Junior Rangers create their own little projects. This is like a journeyman's piece, for example the mapping of turtles in the natural site or developing a monitoring concept.

#### **Included resources / materials / tools.**

<http://www.junior-ranger.de/presse-und-service/publikationen/>

<http://www.junior-ranger.de/presse-und-service/pressefotos/>

<http://www.junior-ranger.de/presse-und-service/imagefilme/>

A map of the Junior Ranger programme in Germany is attached as a PDF.

#### **Photos or videos**

All pictures by A.Morascher/EUROPARC+WWF.