



Rocky Gap Run

One Stream, Two Very Different Worlds

**Want to share your experience on social media?
Send any pictures or videos to the Duty Ranger cell phone:
240-357-4404. Don't forget to include your Team Name!**

Welcome! You have arrived at the entrance to the Rocky Gap State Park Campground. This quest will explore the stream you just crossed, called Rocky Gap Run. Once you have obtained your team's backpack at the Campground Office, carefully follow Campers Hill Road, and make a left at the mowed trail before you reach the stream. Each Park Quest station that you come across will offer an activity and an associated, optional podcast for more information.

Station 1: Meadow Migrations

Did you notice the turtle crossing signs as you entered the campground? Turtles, and other animals, move seasonally, or "migrate" between the forests and meadows to Rocky Gap Run and Lake Habeeb to find food, mates, shelter and possibly to lay eggs!

How can we help?

We need to always be on the lookout for critters crossing the road. They are likely on an important mission, much like yourselves! To avoid accidents, turtles can be carefully moved to the side of the road in which they are traveling (only experienced adults should handle snapping turtles).

Activity: Play the Monarch Migration game available in your backpack.

Station 2: Productive Pollinators

Gaze upon the meadow next to you. This "Grow Not Mow" area is purposefully left as a meadow to support native wildflowers and important pollinating insects, such as bees and butterflies. Depending on the time of year, you may be able to witness a variety of plant and animal interactions. Insects and other animals need the plants for food and shelter. The plants need the animals to help spread pollen and reproduce more plants. Many species would not be able to survive without the other.

How can we help?

Only plant native flowers and plants around your home. Your local wildlife will thank you! Your local nursery can help you select the best native species for your region.

Activity: One animal in particular, the Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly (our Maryland State Insect), needs this exact area of Rocky Gap to survive. A warming climate continues to push the species north to seek cooler temperatures. Rocky Gap maintains the last known colony of wild Baltimore Checkerspots in Allegany County. This butterfly could not survive without the white turtlehead plant. Using the Baltimore Checkerspot fact sheet and the hand lens provided in your backpack, carefully examine the white turtlehead exclosures for signs of Baltimore Checkerspot Butterflies and other pollinating insects.



Station 3: Which Watershed?

It may seem hard to believe way out here in the mountains, but Rocky Gap is actually in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed! Rocky Gap Run, beyond Lake Habeeb, flows into Evitts Creek, which flows into the Potomac River in Cumberland. The Potomac River then flows past Washington D.C. and into the Chesapeake Bay at Point Lookout State Park.

How can we help? Make sure all trash and waste water are disposed of properly, because everything will eventually make its way downstream. As a family, volunteer to help with a local stream clean-up near your home.

Activity: Study the Chesapeake Watershed map provided in your backpack. Can you identify where you live on the map? This is called your “Watershed Address.”

Activity 4: What Lies Beneath

As Rocky Gap Run meanders through the forest, note the ripples, leaf packs and undercut banks of the stream. These are ideal places for critters called benthic macroinvertebrates to call home, and they are important indicators of stream health! Everything from worms, to dragonfly larva, to crayfish can tell us something about our water quality.

How can we help?

Just like in activity 3, by keeping our waterways free of pollutants we are helping to keep our streams healthy. Since most of these critters like living under rocks, it is also important to leave rocks in their place and make a minimal impact when exploring streams.

Activity: Using the benthic macroinvertebrate kit and instructions provided in your backpack, perform a stream study to determine the health of Rocky Gap Run on the day of your visit.

**Congratulations! You have completed your Quest.
Return along the same path and check out at the Campground Office to receive your stamp!
Looking for more adventure? Continue with the Bonus Quest below!**

Bonus Quest: This quest will explore Rocky Gap Run from a different view - downstream from Lake Habeeb! To get there, exit the campground and TURN RIGHT on Pleasant Valley Road. Then, TURN RIGHT on Lakeshore Drive, and make the next LEFT TURN on Old Hancock Road toward the Casino Resort. Stay on this road until it dead ends at a parking lot. This is the Touch of Nature area of Rocky Gap. Look for the Park Quest box at the bulletin board for additional information. Take your passport with you, as your stamp will be in the gorge.

The Bonus Quest involves a challenging, steep trail with some rock hopping. Make sure you have sturdy footwear. Do not plan on having cell phone reception as you hike into the gorge. The trail head begins along the paved “authorized access only” road. Continue on foot along that road and the Evitts Mountain Homesite Trail entrance will be on your left. Begin your descent into the gorge via the Evitts Mountain Homesite Trail. White paint blazes on the trees will help guide you along the correct path.

Before long you will reach Rocky Gap Run. How does this part of the stream differ from upstream? How is the environment different? Upstream we manage the area for wildlife that need the stream and upland wetlands to survive. Downstream, we are managing the conditions of the stream for another important species. Look for your stamp contained in a weatherproof case, near the footbridge for the answer!

When you have finished exploring, you may head back to your vehicle by following the same trail back out of the gorge. (For extra hardy families, the trail continues across the footbridge but becomes very challenging, climbing 1,000 feet in a mile, following the ridge of Evitts Mountain, past Evitts homesite, and eventually reaching the Pennsylvania border. It is an out and back hike, requiring good physical fitness and several hours, but it does afford great views at the end!)

**Congratulations! You have completed your Bonus Quest!
We hope you enjoy the rest of your visit to Rocky Gap!**