

A Note to Caregivers

We hope that you and your child enjoyed the Junior Ranger experience. These activities were designed to introduce young explorers to the natural wonders of Sky Meadows State Park. There are many other opportunities for self-guided exploration every day at the park. Make the most of your field explorations with our **Discovery Backpacks**. These backpacks are stocked with the guides and tools you'll need to spend a day of self-guided discovery at the park.

We have three different Discovery Backpack themes that allow you to explore the various natural and cultural wonders of Sky Meadows State Park:

Beginning Birding
Insect Investigation
Woodland Wonders

Each Discovery Backpack includes field guides, maps, activity cards and other tools that will help you enjoy a day of exploration. Backpacks are available at the Visitor Center on a first-come, first-served basis. There is **no charge** to check out and use a Discovery Backpack, however, an adult 18 years or older must be present to sign for the backpack.

For more information on the programs, events, and services available at Sky Meadows State Park, please visit our website at www.virginiastateparks.gov or call the park at (540) 592-3556.

Sky Meadows State Park
11012 Edmonds Lane
Delaplane, VA 20144

Junior Ranger Program

Sky Meadows State Park



This Book Belongs To

Junior Ranger In Training

For Children Ages 5-12

V. 8/2024

Attend a Program or Speak with a Ranger

*For a list of programs stop by the Visitor Center

Name of Program or Ranger: _____

Date: _____



The Junior Ranger Oath

I, (say your name), pledge to be a good Junior Ranger, to continue to learn about Sky Meadows State Park and protect it from harm. I will help others have fun learning about the history of the park, the plants and animals that live here. I will do my part to obey the park rules and act in a safe manner while visiting here.

Congratulations! You are now a Sky Meadows State Park Junior Ranger.

An Acknowledgement to those Enslaved at Mount Bleak

During the time the Settle family resided on the Mount Bleak Farm, the United States had not yet **abolished** slavery. We would like to **acknowledge** the many **contributions** of the 14 documented enslaved individuals who resided on the property. This community included children, mothers, fathers; young and old. These individuals worked to harvest crops, cooked beside the hearth, and even cared for the Settle children. While their names have been lost to history, their memory and challenges serve as a **valuable** lesson today.

Abolished: To put an end to or stop.

Acknowledge: To accept or admit.

Contributions: To play a part or a gift.

Valuable: Something of great worth.

Sky Meadows State Park

Junior Ranger Program



-Easy

(Recommended for ages 5-6)



-Moderate

(Recommended for ages 7-9)



-Difficult

(Recommended for ages 10-12)

To earn your Junior Ranger badge, complete one set of activities (follow the guide above for difficulty) and attend one educational program. When you're done, bring the booklet to the Visitor Center. A Ranger will check it and officially swear you in!



Popular Poplar

Long ago, there stood a tall poplar tree near Ashby's Gap, a valley visible from the back of Mount Bleak. This tree was a popular landmark in the area, and Abner Settle, inspired by this beautiful tree, wrote the poem '*The Old Poplar*', shown below. **After reading Abner's poem, spend some time in nature and write your own poem based on something you observe.**

The Old Poplar

Your Poem:

Come, come, my Harp let us hide away,
Where the mountain gale is free,
Come, let us go where the zephyrs play,
In the boughs of the Poplar Tree.

I love this tree, 'tis the same old tree,
I marked in my youthful day,
And here on the aged side I see,
Loved names that are far away.

Wind, tempest, and storm, it long hath stood
Like a legend famed of yore,
'Tis loved and read, the true and good,
Often time and o'er and o'er.

Though the lightning flash, seethed its,
breast It's ambient boughs are green.
The anchor robed in its Marshall Dress
Is still on his war horse seen.

Long may it stand, green flourishing gay
Our loved old Poplar Tree.





Sentence Scramble

Amanda Edmonds was the niece of Abner Settle, the first owner of Mt. Bleak. Throughout the mid-1800s she kept a diary. This diary is where much of our historic information about the Settle family is found. Below is an paragraph from Amanda's diary.

Use your knowledge of the parts of speech to complete the Sentence Scramble activity.

Tuesday, February 4, 1862

A joyous (**adjective**) and sad (**adjective**) day, sunshiny enough to bring the hot chocolate (**noun**) out. Yes, we had quite a bakery (**noun**), the carrot cakes (**plural noun**) are too giggly (**adjective**) to admit planting (**verb**).

Parts of Speech:

Noun - A person place or thing (ex. **mountain, sister**)

Plural Noun: Multiple people, places, or things (ex. **mountains, Paris**)

Adjective - Describes a noun (ex. a **blue** house, a **funny** person)

Verb - A word that shows an action (ex. **running, jumping**)

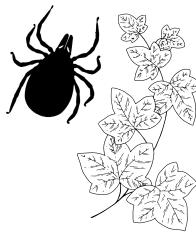
Your Sentence Scramble:

*Friday, February 10th, 1865: We are having a _____ (**verb**) sleighing time now. _____ (**noun**) fell to the depth of _____ (**number**) Tuesday, and _____ (**verb**) the earth with her spotless _____ (**noun**). Sleigh bells are _____ (**verb**) and merry maids are _____ (**adjective**) laughing. I have been more _____ (**adjective**) situated around the _____ (**noun**) with pleasant company than sleighing with anyone who offered.*

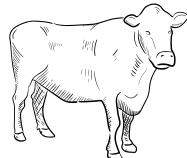
Leave No Trace Principles

- 1. Plan Ahead and Prepare:** Learn the park rules. Be sure to bring bug spray and sunscreen. Check the weather before you come, and dress appropriately.
- 2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:** When hiking, stay on the trails. If camping, make sure to camp on durable surfaces.
- 3. Dispose of Waste Properly:** Please do not litter! Put your trash in a trash can or take it with you when you leave.
- 4. Leave what you find:** Please don't take home any rocks, flowers, or other trinkets. Stop by the Visitor Center if you want a souvenir!
- 5. Minimize Campfire Impacts:** If you build a fire, keep it small and ensure it is fully out before you leave.
- 6. Respect Wildlife:** Be courteous toward wildlife and do not touch or feed them. If you have a pet with you, keep them on a leash and under your control at all times.
- 7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors:** Be kind to other people in the park. While on the trails, keep your voices hushed so that you and other people can enjoy the sounds of nature.

Activity Alerts



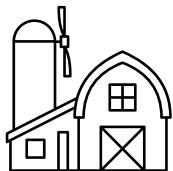
Our trails have **poison ivy and ticks**. When completing these activities, remember to keep your distance from animals and stay on the trail. Before you pick up a leaf make sure it isn't poison ivy and remember to do a tick check following your hike!



This park is the home to many **cattle**, and some of our trails run through pastures with them. If going through these pastures, please do not disturb the cattle and keep your pets leashed.

The Ranger's Toolbox

The rangers at Sky Meadows State Park do many cool jobs. They are **naturalists**, **farmers**, **astronomers**, **historians**, and more. To be a Junior Ranger, you need to practice these skills, too!



Farmer

A **Farmer** is someone who grows food and cares for animals and crops.



Naturalist

A **Naturalist** is a person who loves and studies nature, and helps others enjoy the outdoors.

Astronomer

An **Astronomer** studies the stars and planets. They help us understand outer space.

Historian

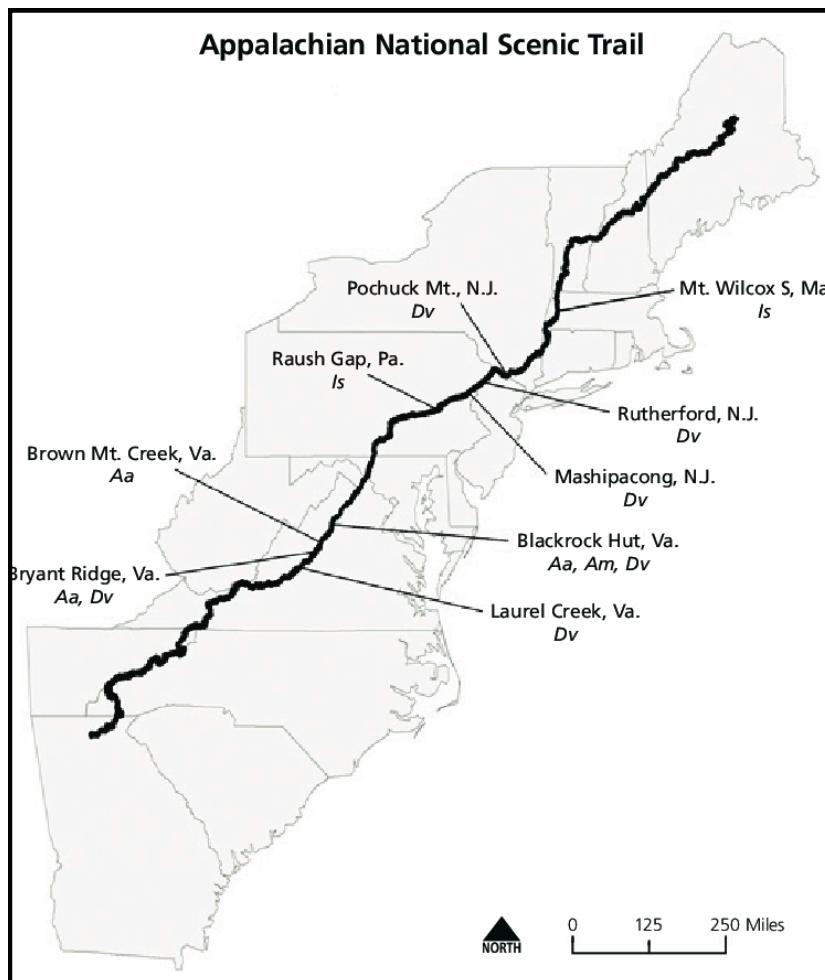
A **Historian** is somebody who learns about the past and studies different cultures.



The Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian Trail (AT) is one of the longest trails in the United States, stretching through 14 states and totaling over 2,000 miles. Benton MacKaye, the trail's founder, had a dream to create a trail spanning over the entire Appalachian Mountain Range. It took a dedicated group of individuals 16 years to complete MacKaye's dream, and the trail was finished in 1937. Sky Meadows State Park is one of only two Virginia State Parks to have the AT within the park.

You can reach the Appalachian Trail by using the North Ridge or Ambassador Whitehouse trails.



Read the Passage:

Who was the founder of the AT?

In what year was the AT finished?

Analyze the Map:

Which state do you think has most of the trail?

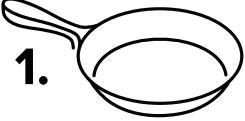
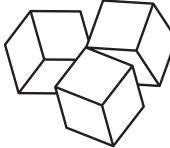
In what states does the trail begin or end?



Heating the Hearth

Kitchens today differ from kitchens in the 1800s. Back then, kitchens had no electricity, so people cooked over the hearth. They didn't have refrigerators to keep food fresh, so they used ice houses (like ours located under the washhouse). Today, kitchens have modern appliances like electric stoves, microwaves, blenders, and refrigerators that make cooking easier, safer, and faster.

Below are the cooking instruments found around the historic district of our park, along with what these tools would look like nowadays. Match the old cooking tools to their modern-day counterparts:

	Hearth and Skillet: Used to fry and sauté foods.
	Mortar and Pestle: Grinds herbs and grains.
	Cider Press: Chops and squeezes apples to extract juice.
	Dutch Oven: Used to bake all types of food.
	Ice Cellar: A place to store foods to keep them cold.

	Cooler
	Oven
	Food Processor
	Stove Top
	Juicer



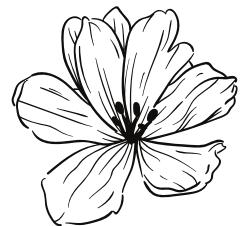
Bees and Buds

On a farm, bees and other insects are important for growing fruits such as apples! These helpers are called **pollinators** and fly from plant to plant collecting pollen and nectar.

Follow the pictures below to see how pollinators help plants grow!



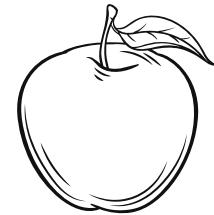
1. The bee flies to a flower to get food, called nectar.



2. While the bee sips nectar from the flower, pieces of pollen stick to its body.



3. Pollination happens when the bee visits another flower and rubs the pollen off.



4. The bee pollinates without even knowing it! The pollen helps the flower turn into a fruit.

Draw your favorite pollinator! (Bee, Butterfly, Bat, etc.)

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for children to draw their own pollinators.



Settle's Spot

Mr. Abner Settle was the original owner of our historic stone house, Mount Bleak. He co-owned a general store in the nearby town of Paris, Virginia. In the 1800s, general stores served as the modern day supermarkets, and stored everything from tools to groceries.

**Think about what you would sell if you owned a general store
and draw it on the shelves below:**





Paws & Prints

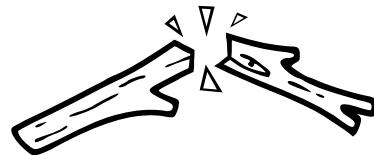
You've probably seen a picture of a skunk or a groundhog, but chances are, you might not have seen one in person. This is because animals generally avoid humans. Luckily, they leave behind signs that they've been in an area. By using these signs, we can find evidence of presence!



Tracks



Scat



Disturbed Land



Sounds



Bones

Take a hike on one of our trails and try to find three signs that animals have been in the area. What animal do you think they are from?

Sign Found:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Possible Animal:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Leaf Peeps

Below is a selection of leaves commonly found in our park. **Find a fallen leaf that calls to you and trace it below. Then, answer the following questions about your leaf.**



Red Maple



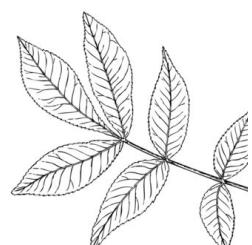
Black Locust

Describe the texture of the leaf (waxy, smooth, bumpy):

Describe the color of the leaf:

Describe any patterns you see:

Write what kind of tree you think the leaf is from:



Hickory



Pasture Cow-Culations

Here on the Sky Meadows farm, we have about 150 bovines (cows). Beef cattle eat grass for most of their life, it gives them a balanced diet! Cattle eat grass on land that often could not be used to grow other crops. In fact, 2/3 of grazing land in the U.S. cannot grow other crops. Cattle graze on large areas of land surrounded by fences, call pastures. Pastures are measured in acres and one acre is about the size of a football field.

The farmer wants to combine some of their pastures below. Look at each group of pastures. Add up each pasture to find out the number of total acres

20 1/2
Acres

37
Acres

54.65
Acres

15.50
Acres

21.35
Acres

Total Acreage = _____

Total Acreage = _____

25 3/4 Acres

What is the total acreage of all three pastures?

30 3/4
Acres

35 1/2
Acres

If the farmer had three times the number of total pastures, how many would they have?

Total Acreage = _____



A Story of Three Sisters

Read the excerpt below. This is a variant of the “Three Sisters of Corn” legend told by numerous tribal nations

A long time ago there lived three sisters. The eldest was the tallest, with sunlit, golden hair that flowed in the breeze. The middle was pretty but of average height. The youngest, though small in stature, was strong.

Although they loved each other dearly, the sisters could never find reason through their differences, leading them into fights. This upset their parents, who needed their daughters to tend to their fields. In despair, the parents wished that the sisters would finally stop fighting.

One day, when the sisters were arguing in the fields, they suddenly transformed into crops. The eldest grew into corn, tall with sturdy stalks which her middle sister needed for support, climbing up them as beans. The youngest sister turned into squash, using the shade from her two eldest sisters to grow in plenty. Though not the answer the parents were expecting to their prayers, the sisters learned that real love came from support. The sisters lived out the rest of their lives using their differences to work together and provide life to the land.

Story Courtesy of USDA National Agricultural Library

Why might the sister's continuous arguing be a problem?

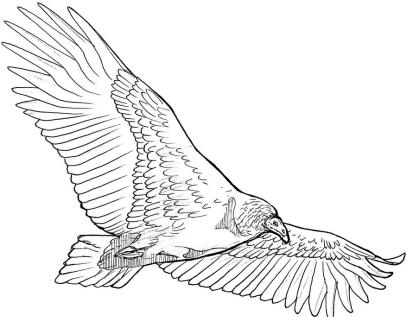
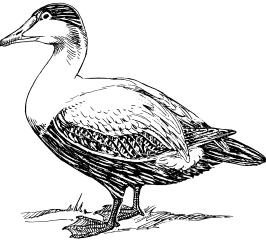
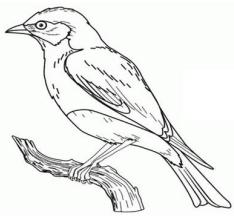
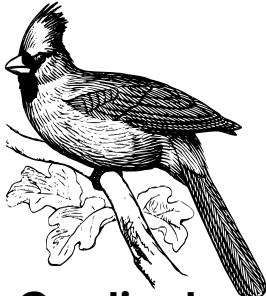
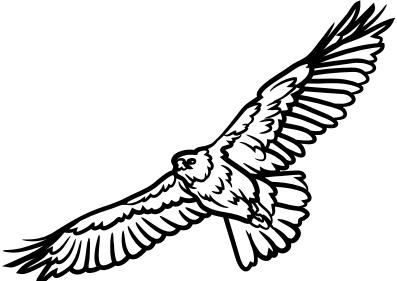
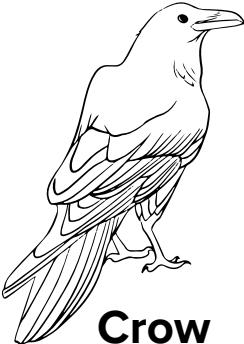
If the story featured a fourth sister, what crop would they be? How would they effect the other three?



Birding Bingo

Here at Sky Meadows, we have a partnership with the Shenandoah Valley Chapter of the Virginia Master Naturalists. They have installed and continue to monitor bluebird boxes. Because of these boxes and our diverse landscape, many birds-- like that of the bluebird, are commonly seen or heard at the park.

See if you can find any of the birds below on the Bingo Card. To win, complete one row vertically, horizontally or diagonally.

 Turkey Vulture	 Mallard	 Bluebird
 Red-Headed Woodpecker	 FREE SPACE	 Cardinal
 Red Shouldered Hawk	 Crow	 American Goldfinch



My Nature Journal

An important part of being a naturalist is observing the natural world and keeping track of what you discover. **Find something in nature to observe and write about it in your nature journal below.**

Date: ___/___/___

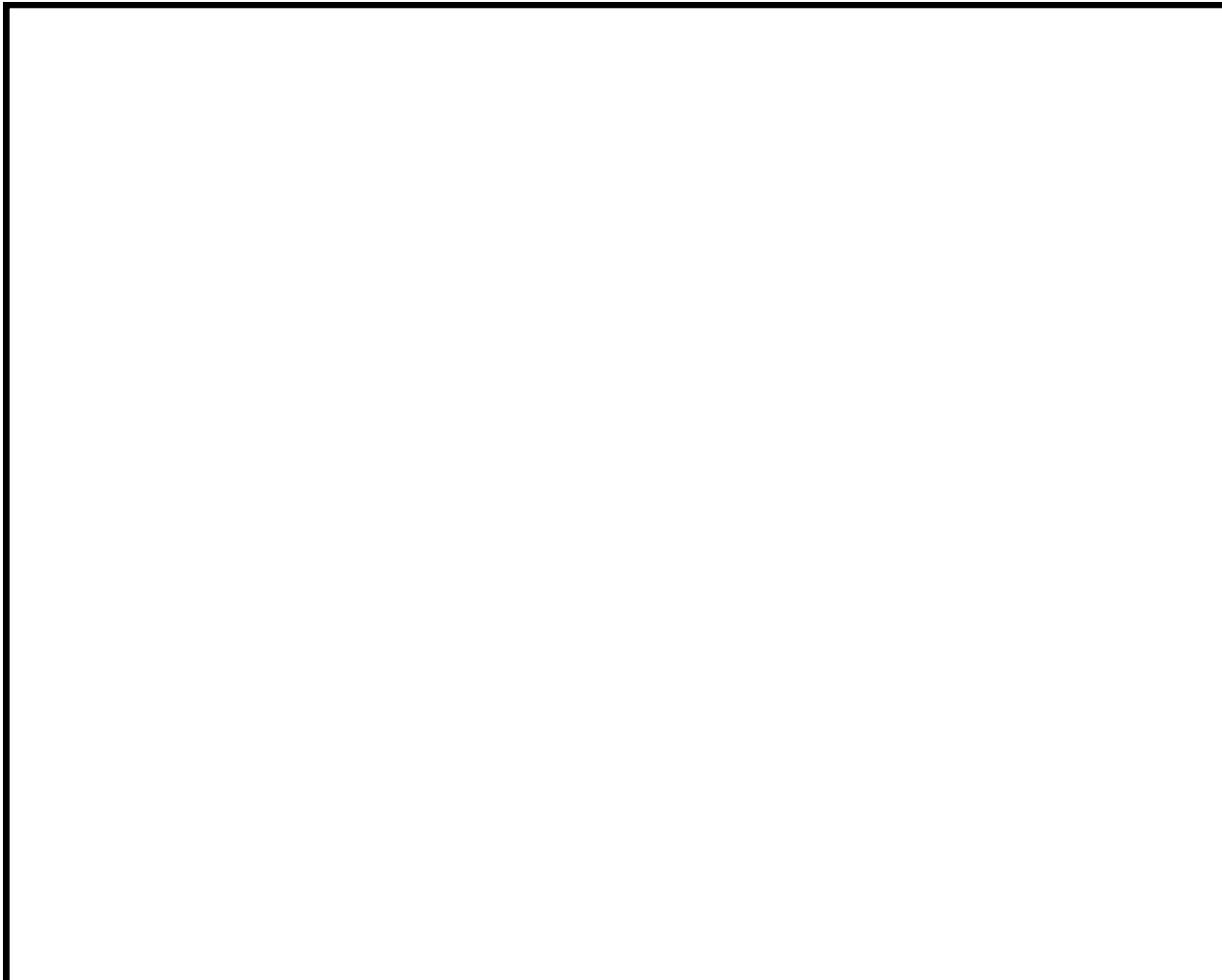
Time: ____:____

Where? _____.

Weather? _____.

What is it? _____.

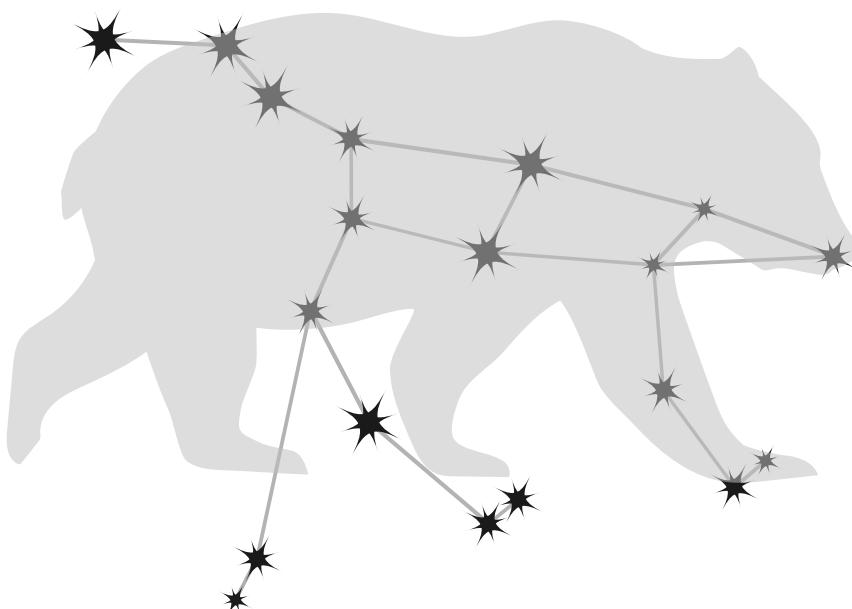
Draw a picture of your observation:





Starry Scribbles

A constellation is a group of stars that forms a recognized pattern or figure, such an animal. Pictured below is the constellation Ursa Major, represented by a **bear**. This constellation includes the big dipper, see if you can point it out!



Draw dots or stars on the page and connect them to make your own constellation:

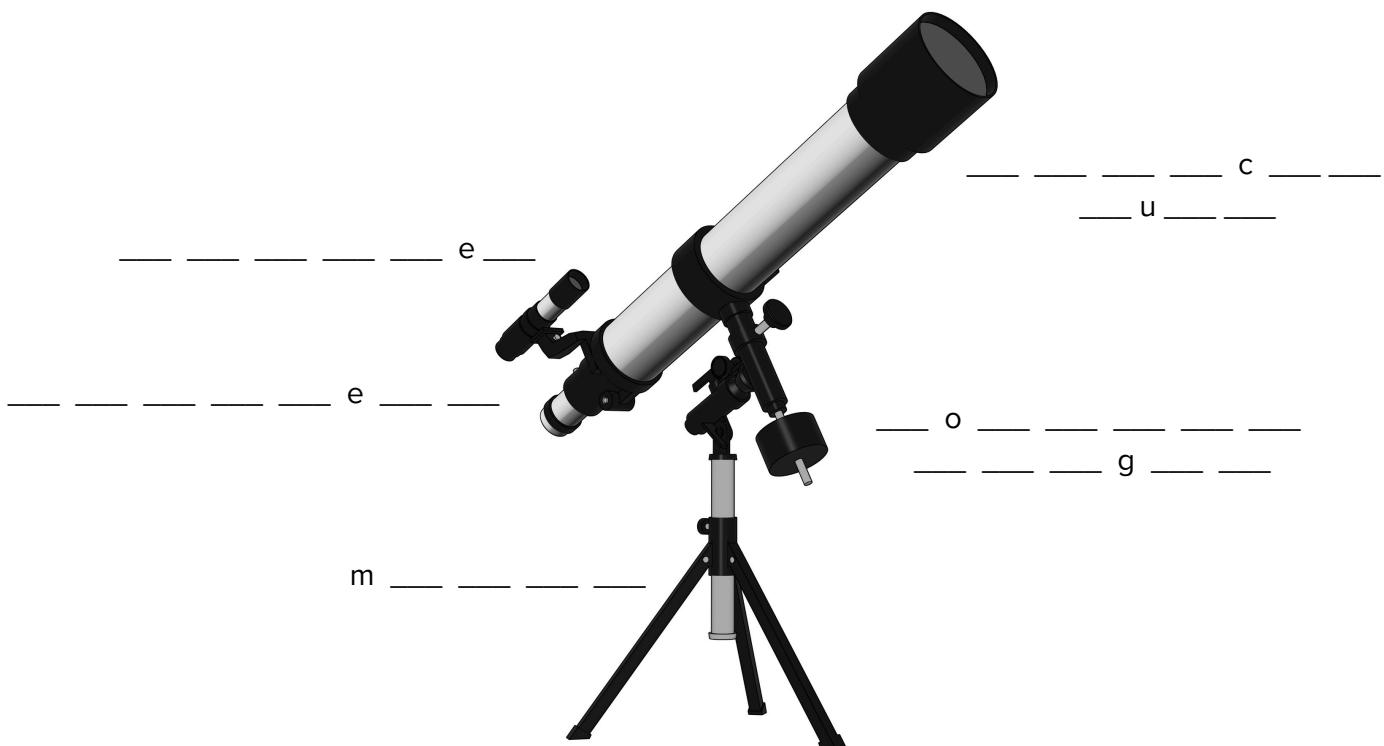


Tinkering Telescopes

A telescope is a tool used by astronomers to magnify far away objects, such as stars and planets. While there are many types of telescopes, the most common one is mounted on a tripod, as shown below.

Using the following model, try to match the parts of the telescope to the diagram:

Eyepiece Holds the magnifying lens.	Mount Rotates telescope. Often part of the tripod.	
Optical Tube Holds mirrors & lenses.	Focuser Used to change the focus of an image.	Counter Weight Keeps telescope positioned correctly.





Planetary Parallels

Before 2006, astronomers stated there were nine planets, however, Pluto has since been changed into a dwarf planet. The reason for this is its lack of **orbital dominance**--the amount of debris around a planet as it travels the sun. While dwarf planets and planets are similar, both orbit a star, dwarf planets tend to be smaller.

Planets also have a full **hydrostatic equilibrium**, meaning their gravity forms the planet into a sphere shape. Because dwarf planets are smaller, some lack this ability. Planets can also be terrestrial (rocky like Earth) or Jovian (gaseous like Jupiter), while dwarf planets can only be terrestrial.

Using the explanation above, make a ven-diagram comparing planets and dwarf planets:

