This past weekend, the North Carolina Science Festival celebrated the 2020 NC #StatewideStarParty. In celebration, our #NearbyNature this week will focus on the night sky! Follow the instructions in the image, and let us know what you spot in the night sky! ☽

On a night when the sky is clear, dress for the weather. Head outside and lay down on a blanket. Look up at the sky for two to three minutes to let your eyes adjust. What do you see? Can you spot: The moon, Bright stars, Dim stars, Satellites, Airplanes, Meteors, The Milky Way?

Find more info. on the Statewide Star Party here: https://www.ncsciencefestival.org/starparty
Throughout history, humanity has imagined shapes made out of the stars in the night sky. We call these constellations and often use them to tell which part of the night sky we're looking at. For today's #NearbyNature, look at the chart of this month's visible constellations from the Morehead Planetarium & Science Center: https://moreheadplanetarium.org/.../04/aprmay20starchart.pdf

Then, make delicious constellation cookies with constellations from the chart, or make up your own! The cookie recipe and instructions below are courtesy of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. 🍪💫

Additionally, check out this activity from the Asheville Museum of Science to make your own constellation tube! https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWilFgqbOWQc&feature=youtu.be
While it might be tempting to think of stars as fireflies that got stuck up in the sky, as Timon suggests in *The Lion King*, Pumba had it right: each one is just like our sun, a burning ball of gas, simply set billions of miles away. Today for our #NearbyNature, follow these steps from NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration to create your own unique star! You can also change the colors to represent blue supergiants, red giants, and brown dwarves - all different kinds of stars.

As you're observing the night sky, you may notice that the moon is just a sliver that falls over the horizon close to sunset. If you look for it over time, you will notice that it grows and shrinks. Astronomers call this waxing (growing) and waning (shrinking). For today's #NearbyNature, follow this Kids in Parks activity to map how the moon changes over the next week: https://www.kidsinparks.com/.../TRACKtivity.moon_.journal.201...

Share your Moon Journal with us when you've finished it:

How many stars have you seen this week? A handful, or dozens? The number of stars you see is dependent not only on weather but also on how much man-made light, or light pollution, is in your area. For our final #NearbyNature this week, submit an observation to Globe at Night. By measuring the brightness of your night sky and submitting observations, you can help us understand how much light pollution you're affected by - and how many stars you are missing because of it. Click here to get started: https://www.globeatnight.org/

For an explanation about what light pollution is, and its impacts, check out this video by National Geographic: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0FXJUP6_O1w