

Canada in the South

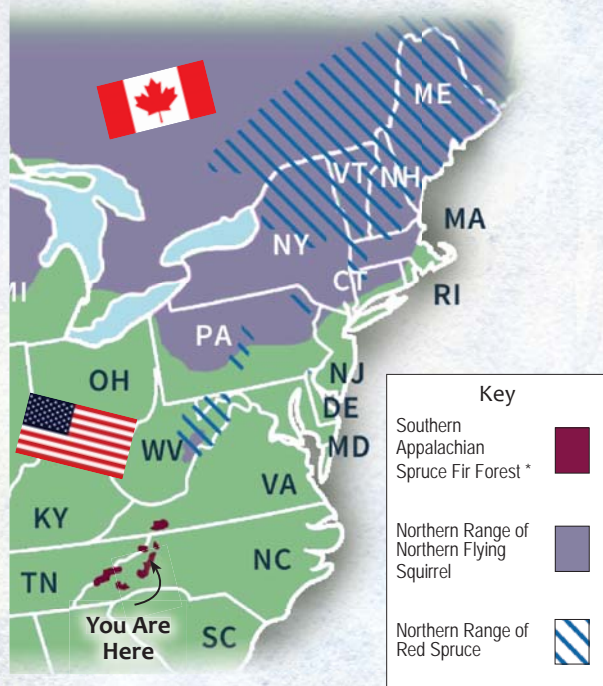
For every 1,000 feet of elevation gain, there is a decrease of 3 degrees in temperature. Many of the plants and animals that live here in this Southern Appalachian Spruce Fir Forest thrive in cooler environments and can't survive the heat of lower elevations. These species typically live in southern Canada and the northern United States.

Red spruce trees and northern flying squirrels are at home in the Southern Appalachian Spruce Fir Forest. What are three northern states that you could go to and see both red spruce trees and northern flying squirrels?

1. _____

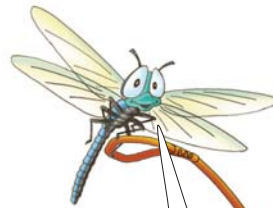
2. _____

3. _____



*Although this forest on Mount Mitchell resembles forests in southern Canada, Southern Appalachian Spruce Fir Forest is a unique ecosystem.

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kidsinparks.com
and get **FREE** prizes!



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Kids in Parks...

Providing a network of fun-filled adventures that get kids and families active outdoors and connected to nature.



TRACK Trail Partners



Kids in Parks Founding Partners



Potato Knob
6,373'

Clingman's Peak
6,560'

Mount Mitchell
6,684'

Mount Craig
6,647'

You Are Here

South

North

Who Shares the Island in the Sky?

Mount Mitchell is the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River. Because it is so tall, it is colder than lower elevations and is home to many interesting plants and animals that depend on cooler temperatures. Let's explore what kind of life this unique ecosystem shares.

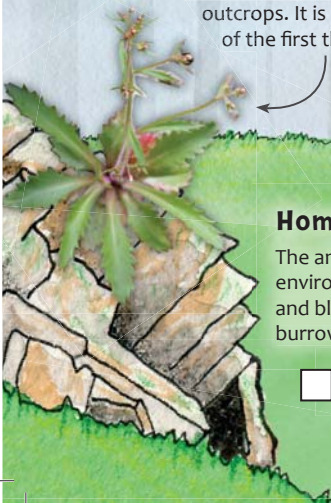
☐ "Boomer"

Red squirrels are nicknamed "Boomers" because they can be very noisy. They make noises if they are annoyed, when an intruder is near (like you!), and to protect their food supply.



☐ "Rock Breaker"

Michaux's Saxifrage, a plant named after the French botanist André Michaux, earned its nickname "Rock Breaker" because it can be found growing on rock outcrops. It is a **pioneer plant**, meaning that it is one of the first that can grow in an area with little soil.



Homes for Hardy Animals

The animals that live in this harsh, cold environment, including red squirrels, bobcats, and black bears, shelter themselves in holes and burrows. Can you find a good animal home in...

☐ a rock

☐ a log

☐ a tree

☐ Pointy Trees

Much of this environment is too harsh for trees that can be found at lower elevations. Have you ever noticed that conifer trees, like firs and spruces, are shaped like pyramids? The narrow top helps prevent heavy snow from building up on branches. The shape also helps the tree stay upright in heavy winds.

☐ Friendly Fir

Look for needles that are flat and round at the tip. The only place in the world that **Fraser fir** trees grow naturally is in the Spruce Fir Forests of Southern Appalachia. Seeds and buds from the tree are eaten by red squirrels.



☐ Spiky Spruce

Look for prickly needles that grow from all sides of the twigs and branches. **Red spruce** needles are short and curve inward toward the branch. Red squirrels eat seeds and buds from this tree.



☐ High Flying Birds

Bird watchers have recorded over 90 species in the park, including many that are usually found in colder northern states. Find a quiet place and listen for one whole minute. Do you hear any bird songs? Check out the museum to listen to the unique birds found here.



☐ Dark-Eyed Junco

Look for a grey bird with white outer tail feathers that flash in flight. They mostly eat seeds and can be found foraging on the ground.

☐ Spongy Ground

Walk through the forest on a trail like the Balsam Nature Trail. Jump up and down on the dirt. How does it feel? The spruce and fir needles take a long time to decompose because of the cold weather which makes the soil bouncy.

