

NATURE



Scouts discover quite a lot about nature in the course of camping and hiking. They learn the properties of various trees, how to predict a coming storm, how to identify common birds, and where to find animal tracks.

This month we will try to enhance their knowledge of nature with some systematic learning-by-doing, and also show them how to conserve our nation's natural resources.

The Nature program feature reminds most people of the wilderness. But the natural world is everywhere, even in the heart of a big city. In almost any city park, the troop can find trees, plants, birds, and probably small mammals. So no matter where your troop is located, you can find nature just outside the meeting place door.

The big event will be a nature adventure. It might be a weekend campout or a one-day outing. Ideally, the site will have a varied ecology—woods, meadows, a pond—because the greatest variety of trees, plants, and wildlife can be found in such a place.

Activities for the nature adventure might include building a nature trail, collecting specimens for a troop nature museum, performing a conservation project, or learning how to identify birds, trees, or other natural phenomena.

SCOUTING OUTCOMES

This month's patrol and troop activities should give your Scouts

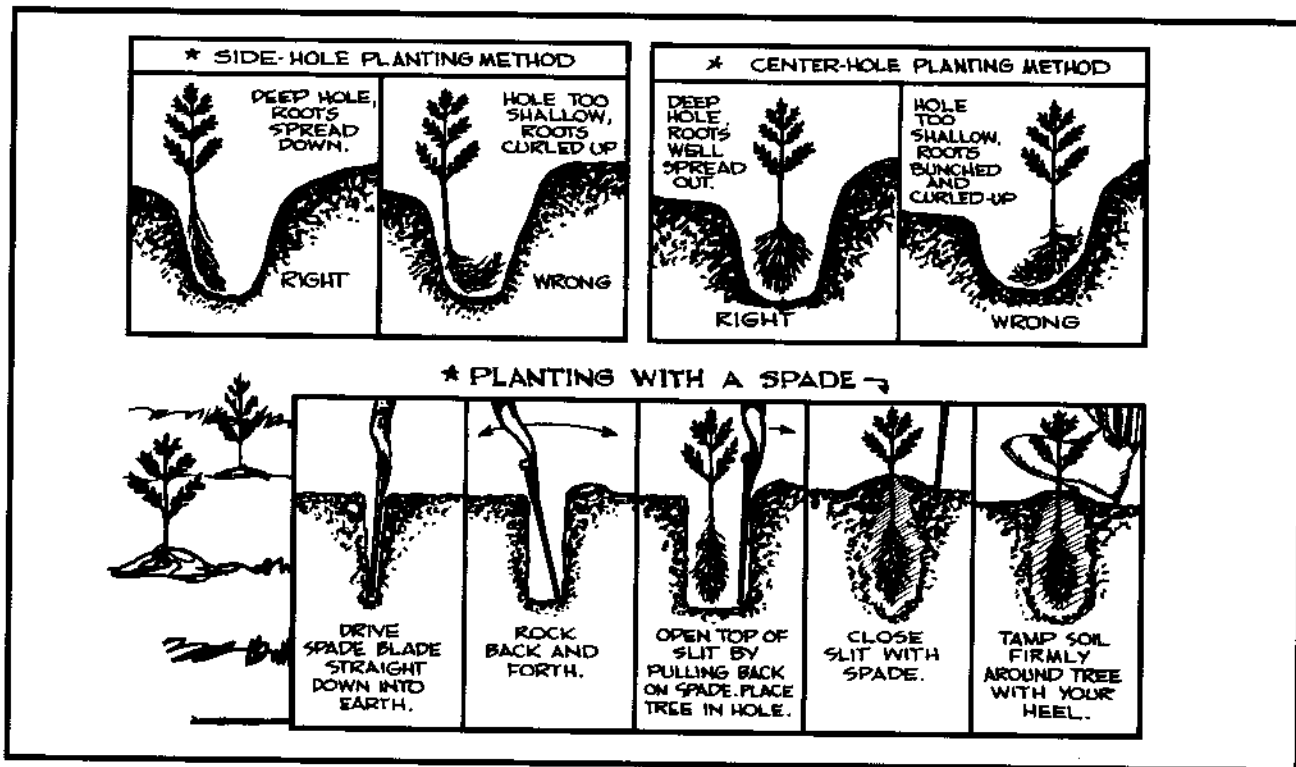
- An appreciation of the wonders of nature and possibly a greater feeling of closeness to God
- An understanding of how pollution affects the natural world and how Scouts can help to stop it
- A strengthened resolve to do their "duty to country" through good conservation practices
- Increased self-confidence

ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

By month's end, all Scouts should meet many of their basic nature requirements through First Class. Depending on the campout activities, they may also complete all or part of the following rank requirements:

Tenderfoot

- Outdoor—cooking, camping, hiking, nature
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies, Good Turn
- Patrol/troop participation—patrol identification
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law



Second Class

- Outdoor—cooking, camping, hiking, nature
- Citizenship—flag ceremonies, Good Turn
- Patrol/troop participation—leadership
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

First Class

- Outdoor—cooking, camping, nature, hiking
- Patrol/troop participation—leadership
- Personal development—Scout Oath and Law

Merit Badges. Older Scouts can concentrate on the Nature merit badge this month. Depending on activities during the campout, they may also complete requirements in Camping, Cooking, Hiking, Pioneering, Mammal Study, Geology, Fish and Wildlife Management, Insect Study, and Wilderness Survival.

PARENT/GUARDIAN PARTICIPATION

The patrol leaders' council can involve parents in the program feature this month by

- Asking qualified people to help with troop meeting instruction on nature
- Inviting parents to come along on the nature adventure
- Asking parents to provide transportation, if necessary, for the nature adventure

PATROL LEADERS' COUNCIL

The patrol leaders' council should meet during the early part of the previous month to plan troop activities for this program feature. If you don't complete all items on the following agenda, continue planning at patrol leaders' council meetings after each troop meeting.

- Decide on a site for the nature adventure. If possible, choose a place with a variety of nature environments so that Scouts will find a wide range of trees, plants, and animals. If the site is near a fish hatchery or game or forest preserve, the troop might plan a visit. Assign someone to secure permissions, if necessary.
- Decide whether to make the big event a campout or one-day event. Obviously, more activities are possible on a campout.
- Choose activities for the nature adventure. Consider the other ideas on these pages.
- Consider inviting a Nature merit badge counselor or a counselor for another nature-related badge to help with troop meeting instruction and on the nature adventure.
- Plan details of troop meetings.

FEATURE EVENT

Nature Adventure

Since the subject of nature is as big as all outdoors, there is a broad range of possible activities for the big



event this month. The patrol leaders' council should make its choices based on the interests of the Scouts and their needs for advancement.

As one possibility, the patrol leaders' council might use requirements for one of the nature-related merit badges as an outline for the nature adventure. For example, if the focus were on the Nature merit badge, activities might include bird identification, setting out bird feeding stations, plaster casting of animal tracks, identifying reptiles and amphibians, collecting insects, fishing, and identifying wild plants.

Unless one of the troop's activities will be a conservation project, allow some free time in the program so that patrols can do a conservation Good Turn to help young Scouts pass the requirement for a service project for Second Class rank.

Below are other possibilities for the nature adventure.

Nature Trail

A troop nature trail is an excellent learning device—much better than nature books—because the Scouts can see, smell, and touch an object while they learn. Obviously your trail will not be as long, detailed, or as permanent as the one in the council's Scout camp. Assuming you will use it for only one weekend, the markers can be 3-by-5-inch cards taped to the object. Ask a leader who is an amateur naturalist or a Nature merit badge counselor to choose the objects to be marked along the trail. Label these on the spot. Here is an example of a good label: "This lead-pencil tree, red cedar, is the favorite wood for making pencils. The

wood is also used for cedar chests. Smell it!" That's much better than "Red cedar—*Juniperus Virginia*, northeastern United States."

Here are other good signs:

- W-H-I-T-E pine—five letters to the name, five needles to the cluster.
- Bark like alligator skin? It's dogwood.
- Leaflets three—let it be. Poison ivy!

It is not necessary to identify every tree, plant, and rock in the area. Your primary purpose should be to identify the most common objects of the natural community and to point to other things in the natural world.

For example, you might have a marker where deer have grazed, where a beaver has been at work, or where lichens have found a toehold in rock. Another might be a fallen, rotting tree that has become a feeding and nesting ground for insects and reptiles.

After going over your trail, the Scouts should have some understanding of the "web of life" as well as a knowledge of common trees and plants. Remember to remove the trail signs at the end of the activity unless it is to become a permanent nature trail.

Conservation Project

A conservation Good Turn would, of course, be an excellent highlight for the nature adventure. A few possibilities are listed below. Be sure to get permission from the property owner before tackling the job.

For good advice on these and other conservation projects, see the *Fish and Wildlife Management* and *Soil and Water Conservation* merit badge pamphlets.

- Planting food plants for birds and mammals.
- Building a fence or a “living fence” to exclude livestock from a wildlife habitat.
- Building and setting out nesting boxes and brush piles for birds and mammals.
- Planting hedges or windbreaks to create winter cover for wildlife.
- Planting a gully, road cut, fill, or eroding area to provide wildlife shelter and reduce erosion.
- Building, stocking, or fertilizing a farm pond for fish.
- Building check dams, deflectors, or cover devices to provide shelter for fish and reduce erosion.
- Protecting a stream bank with plantings or riprapping.
- Building a grass waterway on sloping land.
- Controlling erosion on hiking trails by building water bars, or spreading a layer of an organic material such as sawdust, wood chips, pine needles, or leaves on the trail surface.
- Planting grasses or other ground cover.

Troop Nature Museum

The patrol leaders’ council might want to have a nature museum to study back home. If so, the nature adventure would be a good starting point.

Keep the museum project simple and have a definite plan for it. Don’t collect everything in sight for the sake of collecting. One way to do it would be to assign each patrol to one task, such as:

- Collect the 10 most common insects in your area.
- Make plaster casts of four different animal tracks.
- Make a rearing cage inhabited by six caterpillars.
- Collect 10 kinds of wood and mount for display.
- Collect five kinds of soil.
- Collect and prepare six common rocks for display.
- Plant six different tree seedlings in tin cans.

Before you begin collecting, make sure that you will be permitted to take samples from the site. Some parks don’t permit anything to be taken. Ask the landowner or land manager for permission.

Nature at Night

Nature never sleeps. Throughout the night the wilderness teems with life. You might hear skunks and

raccoons scurrying for a late supper, a coyote howling, or a fox barking. In the summer, insects hum through the brush, sampling the foliage. In the distance, a night-hunting owl hoots.

Getting close to all this wildlife (except insects!) is a problem. Nocturnal critters are shy and not easy to spot. But it can be done if your Scouts are patient and, above all, quiet.

At night, sit quietly at least 10 yards from a tracking pit. Remaining absolutely quiet, shine a flashlight on the pit at intervals of 5 minutes or so. Curiously, the light won’t bother the guests.

It is possible that no animals will appear while humans are near, even if Scouts are quiet. But in the morning, you are almost certain to see tracks in the loose soil of the tracking pit. A light snack might help attract animals.

The same idea of spotting nocturnal animals by flashlight might work with various baits. For deer, try a salt lick—a block of salt from a feed store. For night-roaming rodents such as mice, use peanut butter, nuts, or cereal grains. Raccoons, skunks, and opossums will be attracted to any leftover food.

Nature Contests

Below are three games that might be played during the nature adventure.

BRING ME. The leader asks patrols to bring him a single leaf from a particular tree. Everyone must bring the correct specimen for the patrol to receive credit. Then send the patrols out for another specimen.

TOUCH. Play this game in or near woods. The leader calls out the name of any tree and the patrols scatter to find one. The first patrol with all members touching the correct tree earns a point. Continue naming other nearby trees until one patrol has earned 5 or more points.

NATURE MARATHON. If you have a nature trail, this game can be played after all Scouts have traveled the trail. Replace all the trail signs with cards that only have numbers on them.

Each Scout is given a pencil and sheet of paper. At intervals of about 30 seconds, send Scouts out on the trail. At each numbered card, the Scout stops and writes on his paper the identity of the object. He then races to the next object. Time each runner. The winner is the Scout with the most correct identifications. If there is a tie, the winner is the Scout with the most correct identifications in the fastest time.

If this game is played as an interpatrol contest, the patrol’s score is the average number of correct answers by all patrol members.

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 1

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes	Have Scouts collect litter outside the meeting location. Then have a display of edible plants for Scouts to review (<i>Boy Scout Handbook</i>).		
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form the troop into a square. • Repeat the Scout Oath and Outdoor Code. • Repeat the Pledge of Allegiance. 		
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts work on identifying poisonous plants and reptiles in your area, and learn how to treat contact with them. • Experienced Scouts begin plans for a nature hike or conservation project. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or plan a weekend canoe trip. Be sure to review the Safety Afloat rules. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Discuss plans for the outing this month and make sure everyone knows his assignments. If it will be an overnigher, begin planning meals and the patrol duty roster, and make plans for equipment distribution and tent needs. Any Scouts who have not been camping yet will need some extra help. All other patrols plan activities to work on advancement related to nature and outdoors.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Play Nature Go-Down. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sing "Taps." • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop campout or outing. Begin work on next month's program feature.		

*Troop Program Resources for Scout Troops and Varsity Teams, Supply No. 33588

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 2

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts stake out a 9-square-foot area outside the meeting hall. They study the nature objects within that area and identify whatever they find. • Experienced Scouts continue to work on a nature hike or conservation project. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or continue making plans for a canoe trip. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review assignments for the campout. First-time hikers continue working on troop procedures for hiking and camping. All other patrols continue to work on activities on advancement for the outing.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Do Nature Scavenger Hunt. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> . *)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop campout or outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 3

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	Nature Ramble Patrols are sent out within a specified distance from the meeting place to look for conservation work that could be used in their rank advancement. Collect items for the interpatrol activity.		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Finalize the menu for this month's outing and make sure everyone knows what he will need to bring. Review clothing and equipment needs and collect any necessary fees. Review plans for any upcoming patrol projects.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Do Nature Memory Hunt. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> . *)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and plans for the troop campout or outing. Continue work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP MEETING PLAN

Date _____ Week 4

ACTIVITY	DESCRIPTION	RUN BY	TIME
Preopening _____ minutes			
Opening Ceremony _____ minutes			
Skills Instruction _____ minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Scouts review troop camping procedures and their involvement in the troop campout (<i>Boy Scout Handbook</i>). • Experienced Scouts finalize plans for the nature hike or conservation project. If it will coincide with the troop outing this month, make sure they share duties with the troop. • Older Scouts work on the Venture program or finalize your plans for the canoe trip. Make sure they have met all of the necessary prerequisites. 		
Patrol Meetings _____ minutes	Review plans and assignments for the campout. Make sure everyone knows the travel plans and equipment needs. Go over the patrol duty roster. Make sure that you have any special equipment required for the nature projects.		
Interpatrol Activity _____ minutes	Play Nature Kim's Game. (See the Games section of the <i>Troop Program Resources</i> .)		
Closing _____ minutes Total 90 minutes of meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoutmaster's Minute. • Retire colors. 	SM	
After the Meeting	Patrol leaders' council reviews the next meeting and checks last-minute details for the troop campout. Finalize work on next month's program feature.		

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TROOP OUTDOOR PROGRAM PLAN

Date _____

TIME	ACTIVITY	RUN BY
Friday evening	Load gear at meeting location and leave for camping area. Plan only a light meal en route.	SPL
	At the campsite, off-load equipment and set up patrol sites. Stow gear and set up camp.	SPL/PL
Saturday 6:30 A.M.	Cooks and assistants up. Prepare breakfast. (Cooks should be working on First and Second Class requirements.)	Cooks, assistants
7:00 A.M.	Everyone else up. Take care of personal hygiene, air tents, hang out sleeping bags.	
7:30 A.M.	Breakfast	
8:00 A.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
	Patrols put up the gear for morning activities, clean up patrol site.	
8:30-11:30 A.M.	Set up nature trail or do conservation project.	SPL
11:30 A.M.	Sack lunch	
Noon	Continue conservation/nature activities.	SPL
4:30 P.M.	Start dinner preparation.	Cooks
5:30 P.M.	Dinner	SPL
6:00 P.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
8:00 P.M.	Troop campfire	SPL
9:00 P.M.	Cracker barrel	
10:00 P.M.	Lights out	
Sunday 6:30 A.M.	Cooks and assistants up. Prepare breakfast. (Cooks should be working on First and Second Class requirements.)	Cooks, assistants
7:00 A.M.	Everyone else up. Take care of personal hygiene, air tents, hang out sleeping bags.	
7:30 A.M.	Breakfast	
8:00 A.M.	Clean up.	Cooks
	Patrols put up the gear for morning activities, clean up patrol site.	
8:30 A.M.	Worship service	

TIME	ACTIVITY	RUN BY
9:00-11:00 A.M.	Patrol games—Use four games from the Games section of <i>Troop Program Resources</i> . *	
11:00 A.M.	Break camp.	
Special equipment needed	Cameras, pens, tools for conservation project, troop camping equipment	

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