

BACKGROUND

GIRLSCOUTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Why It Matters

From camping to visits to the park, and from backyard “safaris” to trips to Antarctica, experiencing our natural environment has played an integral role in Girl Scouting since its founding in 1912.

And no wonder. With their innate and insatiable curiosity about the natural world, children are born scientists! When this natural curiosity is encouraged, as it is wholeheartedly in Girl Scouting, the benefits to girls are real and quantifiable. In fact, studies confirm that both girls and boys benefit from outdoor education programs in many ways, including higher test scores, improved attitude and behavior, and better attendance in the classroom.

The informal outdoor and environmental education program activities offered in Girl Scouting help girls grow strong as individuals, as well as members of a team. These experiences provide unique opportunities for girls to develop a greater appreciation for nature and learn how to use the earth’s resources wisely.

Program Activities

The Girl Scouts offers dozens of fun and interesting environment-related activities through its Elliott Wildlife Values Project, including:

- Linking Girls to the Land offers workshops and funds to encourage Girl Scout councils and federal agencies to collaborate on conservation projects. These include bird banding, tree planting, water quality monitoring, and trail building.
- From Sidewalks to Treetops — Neighborhood Environmental Exploration workshops teach adults how to use the streets of their own communities as outdoor learning centers for girls.
- The EarthPACT (Plant and Animal Conservation Team) grant-funding project supports partnerships between Girl Scout councils and local environmental education, nature, or science-related institutions that seek to benefit native wildlife. Projects include restoration of a prairie, development of a national wildlife refuge, and a mentoring program on science careers.

Did you know . . .

- ➔ Of the estimated 10 to 100 million species that inhabit the earth, as many as one-fifth will become extinct by the year 2025?
- ➔ Young people rank their fears about the environment as second only to AIDS in listing the top ten problems they want to solve?
- ➔ Children as young as six have established nature preserves, protected nesting sites, and organized river clean-ups?

History

Juliette Gordon Low, who founded Girl Scouts in the United States in 1912, brought girls of all backgrounds into the outdoors, giving them the chance to learn about nature and develop self-reliance and resourcefulness. “Studying animals and plants teaches the value of little things,” she said.

Low’s naturalist legacy continues today, as Girl Scouts of all ages benefit from outdoor and environmental education activities that emphasize respect for nature and environmental stewardship. Girl Scouts practice minimal impact techniques to lessen the damage done to the environment as they pursue outdoor activities. Such new attitudes, approaches, and skills are necessary to protect the natural environment for future generations.

Who We Are

Girl Scouts is the world’s preeminent organization dedicated solely to girls — all girls — where, in an accepting and nurturing environment, girls build character and skills for success in the real world. In partnerships with committed adults, girls develop qualities that will serve them all their lives — like strong values, a social conscience, and a conviction about their own potential and self-worth. In Girl Scouts, girls discover the fun, friendship, and power of girls together. Through the many enriching experiences provided by Girl Scouting, they grow courageous and strong.

Girl Scouts. Where Girls Grow Strong.

Additional Resources

Girl Scouts can earn a wide variety of age-specific, environment-related awards, including “Animals,” “Earth Is Our Home,” “Water Everywhere,” “Outdoor Adventurer,” “Eco-Action,” “Hiker,” “Outdoor Fun in the City,” “All About Birds,” “From Shore to Sea,” “Outdoor Survival,” “Wildlife,” and “Planet Power.”

Other resources: *Outdoor Education in Girl Scouting*, *Exploring Wildlife Communities with Children*.

CSP# 40-155-326