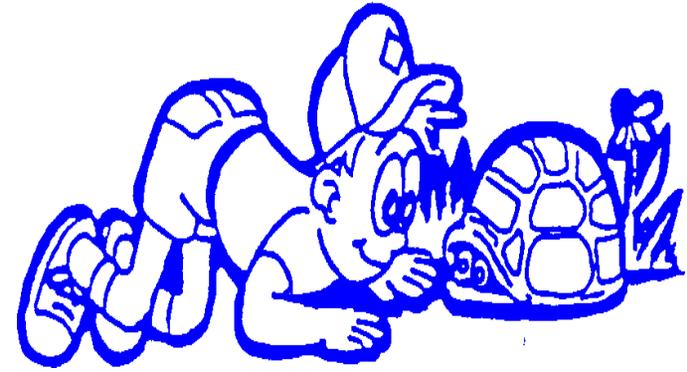


*I held a blue flower in my hand, probably  
a wild aster, wondering what its name was,  
and then thought that human names for natural  
things are superfluous. Nature herself does not  
name them. The important thing is to know this  
flower, look at its color until the blueness  
becomes as real as a keynote of music. Look at  
the exquisite yellow flowerets in the center,  
become very small with them. Be the flower, be  
the trees, the blowing grasses. Fly the flower,  
be the trees, the blowing grasses. Fly with the  
birds, jump with the squirrel!*

*Sally Carrighar  
from Home to the Wilderness*

# Nature Hikes and Activities for Cub Scouts



Compiled by  
Phyllis A Haning  
For  
Pow Wow 2007 Workshop  
Great Southwest Council—BSA

### **Take a hike!**

There's nothing quite like the sound of a summer breeze in leaves, the sight of a sparkling stream in the sun, or the sounds of birds singing and animals scurrying through the underbrush. But the experienced hiker knows to beware of munching mosquitoes, itchy ivy, and falling rocks. With the right knowledge, adventurers avoid blisters, rashes, and injury in the wilderness while enjoying all the experiences of nature.

**Never hike alone.** NEVER- under any circumstances venture into the woods by yourself. Outdoor adventures are fun for the family, but hiking is only a group sport. The chances of becoming lost, sustaining injury, or losing supplies is much higher when alone, making the sport extremely dangerous. Always go with a group, tell someone where you are going and when you plan to return, and check in at the ranger station so they are aware of your location.

**Use the Buddy System.** Every Cub Scout (and Scouter) should have a buddy! Buddies should stay close enough together to hold each others hand up before the hike leader reaches a count of ten after calling "BUDDY CHECK! ONE, TWO, THREE..." Hike leader should call BUDDY CHECK at least every half hour.

**Whistle if you're lost.** Give each Cub Scout an inexpensive plastic whistle to wear around his neck. Give instructions to blow the whistle ONLY IF HE IS LOST!

### **Plan Ahead.**

Know your hike and your terrain. Plan for the journey by researching the area on the web. Simply type the park's name into a search engine, and see what you find. Chances are, the park's site will offer loads of online information about their best season, activities, trails, and even numbers for contacting the Park Rangers. Some of these sites will even offer printable trail maps online. Be sure to talk to a local Ranger prior to the hike, and ask for information regarding safety and environmental issues. The Park Ranger knows the area well enough to steer you clear of danger and towards the best sites on the trail.

### **Know your environment.**

Whether you are hiking the Everglades, or the back yard, you must know your environment. Any time humans interact with nature, there is a chance of injury. It's best to know which plants and animals in the area should be avoided. It's also important to be very aware of weather. Research the weather patterns in your park before the hike.

faiths, but all of them hold nature and its creation as important. Those leaders working with Scouts of the same faith can easily use nature to strengthen their teachings. Those leading units with Scouts from more than one faith can adapt nature into interfaith services that create a commonality among the Scouts.

A few minutes to quietly consider what the "creator and preserver of the universe" has given us is time well spent.

### Questions Used on Silent Nature Trail First Weekend of Wood Badge Course WE5-412-97

What lives here?  
Is this plant edible?  
What lives in this nest?  
What did you miss since the last one?  
Would you use this kind of rock for a fire base?  
What made that hole? How would you find out?  
What good is this plant?  
What animal made these tracks?  
How many baseball bats will this tree make?  
Is there any thing here that indicates North?  
Would you burn this in your cooking fire?  
What is using this Pinion tree as a host?  
How did this plant get this way?  
Does this plant have feathers?  
What do you smell?  
How many critters are using this tree?  
How many varieties of grass do you see?  
Can you name this flower?  
What kind of trees grow around here?  
How did this rock get here?  
Look up!  
What happened here?  
Could you make a whistle out of this?

Note: All questions may not have been used and others may have been added.

Low pressure systems make flying more difficult so some birds sit in the trees and chatter,

If the chickens run for shelter when it starts to rain, it will be a short storm. If they stay out, it is going to rain for a while.

Many farmers will tell you that if the chickens run for shelter, the storm will be short. If it is going to be a long rain, but not too hard, they will stay out and eat.

Red skies at night—shepherds (sailors) delight. Red skies at morning—shepherds (sailors) warning!

Red skies at night usually indicates dust in the air (dry weather), while red skies in the morning indicates moisture in the air (precipitation possible).

If the wind blows the birch tree's leaves such that many of the undersides turn up, it is going to rain.

Don't know why or how birch leaves know what the weather is going to be, but many people agree that if the leaves show their undersides it is going to rain.

If there is a ring around the moon, count the number of stars in it and it will rain (snow) in that many days.

A ring around the moon is caused by ice crystals in the atmosphere and is an indicator of possible precipitation. The number of stars is not really relevant.

Ghosts or spirits live in Aspen trees. That's why the leaves are always shaking.

The leaves of Aspen trees have flat, rather than round, petioles (the leaf "stem") allowing the leaves to move in even the slightest breeze, which is why the trees are sometimes called Quakes. Some Native American tribes hold that there are spirits in the trees.

Chewing the bark of a willow will help a headache.

Many species of willow have salicylic acid in their bark. Modern aspirin tablets are usually acetylsalicylic acid.

Nature Is...

What better place to experience and worship our creator than in the outdoors.

Reverent

The Brotherhood of Scouting encompasses many

### Always start small.

The first hike of the season should be a short excursion. Those who are just learning about surviving in the wilderness should not be very far from their base camp (home, car, campsite). Until a hiker completes their first aid training, they should never venture very far from proper medical attention

### Know your water.

We all have visions of drinking from the crystal clear mountain brook babbling over the rocks after a hot hike, but beware of the water! Although it appears safe and clean to drink, most natural water sources have huge amounts of bacteria that can make brave adventurers very sick. Be sure to bring your own water or water filter for drinking.

### Be smart with food.

A daypack dinner of a smashed ham sandwich, chip crumbs, and a half of a granola bar can be compared to fine gourmet cooking when exploring the wilderness. After a hard day's hike, many adventurers thank their lucky stars for a feast from plastic, so good planning should surround the brave hiker's dinner. Whether hiking in an area known to have bears or sloshing through streams, it's a good idea to keep all food in tightly sealed containers. If animals can smell your rations, they may want to explore further, and a hiker is generally very disappointed to find a fat, happy squirrel in their pack, rather than a salami sandwich.

### Have a fire source.

Whatever the weather, a hardened hiker will be able to spark a fire. This is a job for either the guide, the guardian, or Mom and Dad. The fire-bearer should be well-versed in fire safety regulations, should know where they can build fires in the park, and should NEVER leave the fire unattended. To get more information ask your local park ranger for fire-building advice. They will know whether it's the legal season for building fires, they will be able to direct your crew to a campsite with an existing fire ring, and they will probably even be able to tell you which wood you should burn for a cozy campfire.

### Learn First Aid and carry a kit.

The best medicine for adventurers is that of prevention. By avoiding injury in the wild, everyone has fun and no one ends up in the hospital instead of splashing in the stream. But hikers can't plan for every instance, and sometimes there are accidents. **Know what to do in case of an emergency.** By using first aid, a quick-thinking kid can save a friend's life. First aid training teaches ways to overcome stress in an emergency and react with the courage of a hero. It also gives the knowledge of how to deal with specific types of injuries.

### Know where you can get medical care.

Always be aware how far you may be from proper medical attention. Ask your Ranger for this information. They will be able to direct you to the nearest hospital or clinic prior to an accident. Knowing this information in advance could save someone's life.

### Carry field guides.

When you step into the alien world of a wilderness environment, you are likely to see plants, insects, and animals you never noticed before. Instead of trying to remember what the creatures looked like until you get home, take a field guide for nature and look up the information on the spot. Find out if a plant is poisonous, match an animal to its name, or identify a species you've never seen. Field guides offer the opportunity for great outdoor study, and exceptional advice for mingling with nature.

### Be careful what you pack!

The most important rule of hiking- be smart about what you pack. A beginning hiker generally becomes exhausted carrying a sack full of trail munchies, games, a portable CD player, three sweaters, and a video camera. Although pictures are nice, consider carrying a disposable camera for a more enjoyable hike.

### Think before you step.

Complete common sense is sometimes lost in the excitement of the adventure. A mesmerized hiker may be staring at local wildlife, and trip over a tree root causing serious injury. This doesn't mean adventure walkers should stare only at the trail while hiking, but rather that they should be constantly aware of their surroundings. Keep an eye on the trail well in front of where you are walking, and always consider the path before bounding forward, or you may find yourself lost in the briar patch with Brer Rabbit. Stop moving long enough to take pictures of wildlife or research in a field guide. This allows all members of the group to grab a breath and enjoy the scenery before hitting the trail again.

### Always carry out what you carry in.

The first rule with interacting with the environment is: Leave it as you found it. This rule applies to the trees, the earth, the animals, the campsite, and even the flowers. The caretakers of the wilderness areas and parks have dedicated their lives to preserving what one careless hand could destroy in a second. Show respect to Mother Nature. Carry out all of the garbage you carry in, don't feed the animals, and leave only foot-steps when you go. If everyone works together to preserve parks, wilderness, and other hiking areas, we will all be able to enjoy breathtaking hiking adventures in the future as well.

How about a plant with leaves that appear to fold and overlap each other?  
no apparent leaves?

It's have "convoluted" leaves that fold and overlap each other.  
Many cactus appear to have no leaves.

- The best place to ask the above questions is in a wet area.

How many different colors can you find?  
shades of the same color?

What textures can you find?

How many different smells?

Nature Is...

What's under there? Down there? Over there?

Everywhere  
&  
All Sizes

- Look in and under forest duff to see what you can find.
- Move rocks and logs.
- Take "elevation hikes." On one, take note of things you see looking down. On another, note what is at eye level. On still another, look up.

Look for "belly flowers."

- "Belly flowers" are flowers that grow near the ground and are so small you need to lie on your belly to see them.

Look for the smallest (largest) animal in the area. You may only find evidence of it.

Set up a miniature nature trail and share it with others.  
- Use wood kabob skewers as markers and string to mark the path.

Do a one square foot or one square yard survey.  
- Select an area of the size you choose and note everything in it, including rocks, plants, animals, litter, etc. Is it shady, sunny, moist, dry, etc.?

Nature Is...

Horned lizards shoot blood out of their eyes if something tries to catch them.

Folk Lore

Horned lizards (they are NOT toads) have a defense mechanism that causes a blood vessel to burst and squirt blood from their eyes if they are in danger.

and some of it is true!

A large number of very noisy birds in the trees indicates a storm is coming.

changing the color of liquids. Bet you can too.  
 - Boil a large handful of Larkspur flowers in about two cups of water (distilled works best). Strain and save the liquid. Divide the liquid into at least two containers. Add a little vinegar to one and a little baking soda to another. Try mixing them back and forth. (Larkspur is a **toxic** weed. Be sure to check first, but most land owners will be happy to let you gather all you want.)

The purple pigment in Larkspur (and many other flowers) is a pH indicator. It will range from purple to red to green depending on the pH. You can also do this with purple cabbage water.

Nature Is... What were the colors in your favorite sunset?

Beauty How many sunrises have you seen and where did you see the prettiest one?

Have you ever had a chance to be on a mountain top and look across the tops of clouds? Did you get a chance to see the sun rise or set through those clouds? The last one is difficult to arrange but, if conditions are right, is well worth the effort.

What was the prettiest thing you saw on the hike today?

What were the nicest colors you saw?

Do you have a special place in the outdoors? What makes it special?

-These, and hundreds of others, are questions that can be shared with Scouts provide opportunities for them to find meaningful answers.

Nature Is... Can you find a plant with a round stem?  
 triangular stem?  
 no apparent stem?  
 square stem? (You may smell this one before you see it! And it's tasty too!)

Lots of stems are round. The Sedge family is a triangle. Many grasses appear to not have stems (unless going to seed). Members of the mint family have square stems.

**Don't don and doff layers continually.**

Though it is good to dress in layers, choose which layers, and stick with them for a time. Otherwise, you will exhaust yourself and try the patience of the group you are with. It's generally better to be a little cool than too hot, but don't change unless you are really getting uncomfortable.

**Put the slowest hiker in front and pace the group to that person.**

This works great in a group of differing ages! With the fast hikers in the front, they have a tendency to spread out too much. Then someone small at the back gets exhausted running to keep up. If you do divide into faster and slower groups, the one ahead should never get too far ahead and should stop and let the others catch up on a regular basis.

**Take regular breaks.**

Make sure that kids are drinking water. In very hot areas dehydration is especially dangerous.

**Avoid sunburn.**

Wear a hat and arm coverings in sunny or high altitude areas, and use sunblock.

**Pace Yourself!**

Encourage kids not to exhaust themselves early in a hike. Sometimes little ones run at the beginning, run out of energy and have to be carried. Remember: it is not the destination that teaches, but the journey itself! Although we may never reach the continental divide via granola bars and hiking boots, the time spent traversing nature is special family time. We talk, explore, learn, and exercise as a group. There are interesting people and animals along the way. We even learn to help a friend who is hurt through first aid training. We all work together to achieve the end of the trail as brave and seasoned outdoor adventurers.

## Nature Hikes



**ABC Hike:** Boys divide into groups which attempt to find natural objects beginning with each letter of the alphabet. The group finding the most wins.

**Animal Stories:** The boys follow a map to meet different animals that are indigenous to the area. When they reach the location of a particular animal (preferably in its natural habitat) they spend some time listening to the animal's story and asking questions before moving on to the next animal. The 'animals' can be adult volunteers or older boys, dressed up in costumes. Each volunteer is given information on their particular animal to relate to the boys.

**Back to Back:** Gather items found on the ground near the campsite, such as rocks, sticks, or leaves. Pair the boys up and have them stand back to back. Give one boy an item and have them describe it to their partner. The partner guesses what the item is.

**Egg Carton Walk:** Give each boy an egg carton to carry during the walk. In the bottom of each egg cup, have a description (i.e. hard, smooth, rough, etc.). The boys collect items along the way, then compare at the end. They can take their souvenirs home as a reminder of their outdoor experiences.



**Elevation Hikes:** Take a hike looking, as much as safely possible, only looking up. On another look at eye level. On still another, look only down. After the hikes discuss what you saw.

**Hike in the Rain:** As you hike along in the rain, catch a "drop" of rain water in your hands and taste it. Walk along with your tongue stuck out to get a taste of rain water.

**Hike in the Rain 2:** Take a walk during a rain and explore different smells, colors, and tastes

**Hike in the Rain 3:** Look for animals that like the rain.

just listen. There are a variety of sounds you may not hear during the day.

Because many animals are nocturnal and some flowers bloom at night (pollinated by bats and moths) there is opportunity to see and hear a "whole new world" at night.

- Put on a head lamp or hold a flashlight against your forehead and venture out on a dark night. Again be quiet and move slowly. Also try looking into bushes (close and far). Be sure the light moves with your head. You may be surprised what you see.

Light from animals eyes will reflect back to you if you put a light near your eyes. Some spiders eyes reflect green.

What happens if you soak dry ripe Pepper Grass Seeds (*Lepidium* sp.) in a small amount of water?

- Pepper Grass is a common weed in the mustard Try soaking some of the seeds in water (as kids, we used to suck on them).

Pepper grass seeds have a compound similar to the "water crystals" used in landscaping and potted plants. The seeds get a gelatinous layer on the when soaked in water.

How do things outside look under black light?

- If you have access to a portable black light, take it outside and move it slowly over the ground, bushes, plants, trees, etc.

Some rocks, flowers, molds, etc. fluoresce under black light. All known varieties of scorpions fluoresce under black light.

Nature Is...

Can you light up the night with rocks?

Magic

- Bang or vigorously rub two palm size or bigger pieces of quartz rock together after dark.

You can usually get Quartz rocks to flash light by banging them together. Some will also do it by rubbing them against each other. Wintergreen candy (must NOT be sugarless) will do the same thing if you chew it at night.

Throughout time people have been amazing others by

**Nature Is...** **A collection of discoveries** originally collected for Wood Badge WE5-412-97  
Chimayo Scout Reservation  
Great Southwest Council

Nature Is... Anyone who has been in Scouting any length of time has probably heard the saying, "Three quarters of Scouting is Outing." Indeed it is probably the opportunity to be outdoors that makes our program attractive to boys. And what a great classroom we have in the outdoors! Every turn in a trail and each new campsite presents opportunities to learn about nature, resources, conservation, and, with a little creativity, any number of other subjects.

A Teacher

We, as Scout leaders, need to be careful, though, that our outdoor classroom does not become a boring place. Asking Scouts to only name this plant or that animal becomes rote. How much more fun it is to have them discover something interesting about that plant or animal. Chances are the Scouts will remember the name better also.

The following pages offer a collection of discoveries which draw on nature as a teacher.

Please try the discoveries, then share them with your Scouts and others. I would also like to hear comments on this book and to include more discoveries in later editions.

Some discoveries have further information or answers that appears below them like this. Please try the discovery before you look at the answers.

Gene S. Haning  
14411 CR 500  
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147

Nature Is... What does Ponderosa Pine bark smell like?  
- Smell the bark of a mature tree (still on the tree).  
Mysterious - Try it with other trees.

Ponderosa Pine bark smells like vanilla. There are those who claim that other trees smell like chocolate and strawberry (but I haven't found them yet).

What's out there at night?  
- Try taking a hike during a full or near full moon. Be very quiet, do not use flashlights except where necessary for safety. Move slowly. Also stop and

**Hike in the Rain 4:** Look for places where soil is eroding. Discuss with the boys ideas on how to prevent soil from eroding.

**Images:** You will need leaves, rocks, etc. In a circle, pass around an object. As each boy sees it, he says something different than anyone has said about the object. When object has been seen by all, it is returned to its natural world.

**Make Natural Friends:** On a hike, boys find a leaf, a rock, a stick or a pine cone--something that can be their friend. After the hike, have each boy share why he chose that object to be his friend.



**Meet a Tree:** Pair the boys off by two. One boy is blindfolded and his partner leads him to a tree. The partner helps the "blind" child to explore his tree and to feel its uniqueness. Specific suggestions are best. For example, can you put your arms around the tree? Is the tree still living? Animal signs where branches have been? When the blindfolded boy is finished exploring, his partner leads him back to the starting point by an indirect route. Remove the blindfold and let the boy try to find his tree.

**Monogram Walk:** On a hike have each boy see, hear, touch or smell objects that begin with the initials of his name. After the walk, have boys share what they found.

**Paint Chip Hike:** Give each boy paint chip samples from the paint store to use during a walk. They should try to find something in nature to match the colors. After the walk, talk about what each person found for the different colors. Construction paper squares, crayons, or other color samples may be used in place of the paint chips.



**Pass It Back:** On a hike, the leader picks up several objects. Objects are then passed back down the line of hikers for all to see. The last person then places the object on the ground.



**Penny Hike:** Give each boy a penny. Have them go on a hike and find items that will fit on the penny. Remind them not to pick anything that is alive.

**Rain Scents:** Walk out into a nearby area while it is raining. As you walk along, take a deep breath and smell the rain; get very nosy. Breathe in as deeply as you can, then let your breath out slowly. What kinds of smells can you find on the breezes?

**Sharing Walk:** You will need a number of blindfolds. Divide boys into pairs. One person will wear the blindfold, the other will be the guide. Discuss safety rules. In silence, the guides take their partners on a local hike, hearing, smelling, feeling nature. After 5 minutes, switch. Have the boys share what they discovered.

**Sketching Walk:** You will need crayons and paper for each boy. Decide on a destination and upon arrival pass out paper and crayons and let boys draw what they see. When you get back, have an art exhibit.

**Sounds of Nature:** Make a fist with each hand. Right hand will count sounds of nature; left hand will count sounds made by mankind. Talk about the sounds you might hear, then with silence have boys listen and count. After a minute have boys share what they heard.

**Square Foot Hike:** Assign each group of two or three boys a plot of land of about one square foot (12" x 12"). Have them spend about 10 minutes doing an intensive exploration and writing down what they found in their area. Try to pick an area that will have a variety of conditions (ant hill, plant variety, etc.) A magnifying glass may make this "hike" more fun.



**String-A-Long Hike 1:** Divide the boys into pairs. Give each pair a piece of string 6 to 8 inches long. The first boy takes the string and tosses it to the ground then proceeds to take the other boy on a

tour along the string.

**String-A-Long Hike 2:** Give each group of boys a piece of string 25 to 100 feet long and 5 to 20 kebob skewers. Each group uses the string to lay out a nature trail, marking points of interest with the skewers, then leads other groups through the trail explaining the points of interest.

**Treasure Hunt:** You will need paper and pencils. Make a list of things to see. Send groups off in opposite directions to see which can find them all first.

**Un-Nature Walk:** Plant 15-20 man-made items along the trail (they could all be items relating to a theme). Have the boys work in pairs, leaving a few minutes between groups. The boys are not to disturb the items, just write down what they see.

**Unusual Object Walk:** Give each boy a bag to place an unusual object in during the walk. At the end, compare objects - anything that is the same as what someone else has is disqualified. The most unusual objects win!

Your ideas here!

It is also home to Wilderness on the Lake which features 108 luxurious two and three bedroom condominium units overlooking Lake Delton; and Glacier Canyon Lodge, which features 460 upscale condominium units. Combined, these three properties offer four indoor and four outdoor waterparks that total nearly 500,000 square feet — that’s™s over 12 football fields of extreme water fun! The Wilderness is also home to