



Junior Animal Habitats Badge Activity Plan 2

Badge Purpose: When girls have earned this badge, they will know more about wild animals and how to protect animal habitats.

Planning Guides Link: Outdoor Awareness and Environmental Stewardship

Activity Plan Length: 1.5 hours

Involve Family and Friends: Participation from family and friends can enrich your troop's Girl Scout experience, both for the girls and for you. Use the suggestions below to make it easier for you to connect with additional support.

- Before the meeting:
 - Send a note to families to find those with interest in or expertise with the topic. Ask them to lead or support an activity or two, or even lead the whole meeting.
 - Offer this activity plan as a starting place and point out that they may choose alternative activities using the *Customize It!* section as a guide. For example: If an activity plan directs girls to sit outside and observe animal habitats, you may choose to go to the zoo and learn about animal habitats there instead.
- At home:
 - Encourage families to ask questions about their girls' badge activities. Some examples that work for any badge include: What did you learn? What surprised you? What does it make you think of trying next?
- Throughout the year:
 - Suggest to families ways that girls can share or display their Girl Scout accomplishments. Possibilities include a bulletin board, a scrapbook, a special memories box or family sharing time.

Girls Take the Lead: Include girl leadership through long-term planning, short-term meeting prep and specific activities at meetings.

- Long Term Planning
 - If you use "Plan Your Junior Year", share this with the girls at the start of the year. Have them ask friends and family to help out with specific meetings or activities. Let the girls brainstorm ways to make the plans their own, such as thinking of related field trip activities. If a girl has experience with a field trip, ask her to be assistant tour guide.
 - If you are adapting the "Plan Your Junior Year", get the girls' input on which badges to choose. Offer just a few choices in each category or timeframe to make decisions easier. Every girl should have at least one badge or journey she's excited about.
- Short Term Planning
 - Ask a family to help lead a badge. Make sure they have access to activity plans and any resources you might have. Keep additional requested materials to a minimum.
 - Choose two helpers to stay after a meeting for 15 minutes. Give them each an activity to introduce and either instruct or help guide at the next meeting.
 - Before a meeting, ask everyone to vote on some aspect of the activity: draw posters or perform skits, open with a song or game, etc.
 - Use a rotating list of helper tasks, called a 'kaper chart', to share responsibilities. Examples include acting as emcee of the meeting, leading an opening game, bringing a snack next meeting or taking attendance.
- At the Meeting

- During the opening, have 1-2 girls share their answers to a get-to-know-you question.
- Have girls fulfill their kaper chart responsibilities.
- Try to find something in each activity that you can let girls decide or manage.

Customize It: If your group wants to expand work on this badge, or simply try different activities, go for it! There are many ways to earn this award, including: completing the activities as listed in the Junior Skill-Building Badge set for *It's Your Story-Tell It!*, completing two of these activity plans, attending a council-sponsored event or customizing activities. Pick the one(s) that work best for your group. Girls will know they have earned the award if:

- They have learned about wild animals and animal habitats
- They have created an animal house
- They have learned about and helped protect endangered animals and habitats

Tips and Tools

- Just as girls need to be careful around pets, they need to be even more careful when observing wild animals. Girls should never feed or approach wild animals.
- Check out ways to stay safe using Safety-Wise at <http://gsrv.gs/safetywise>.
- Ensure that your activities are accessible to everyone. Ask in advance if any special accommodations need to be made. If you have questions regarding specific adaptations, please contact River Valleys at 800-845-0787.

Resources

- This lesson plan has been adapted from the Junior Skill-Building Badge set for the *It's Your Story-Tell It!* Animal Habitats Badge, which can be used for additional information and activities.

Getting Started

Time Allotment: 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Optional: Girl Scout Promise and Law printed out on poster board

Steps:

1. Welcome everyone to the meeting.
2. Recite the Girl Scout Promise and Law. Use repeat-after-me or say it as a group if girls know it by heart.

Girl Scout Promise	Girl Scout Law
<i>On my honor, I will try:</i> To serve God and my country, To help people at all times, And to live by the Girl Scout Law.	<i>I will do my best to be</i> honest and fair, friendly and helpful, considerate and caring, courageous and strong, and responsible for what I say and do, <i>and to</i> respect myself and others, respect authority, use resources wisely, make the world a better place, and be a sister to every Girl Scout.

3. Play a game so girls get to know each other better. Use the example below, if needed.
 - Favorite Animal Introduction: have the group form a circle. Start the process by saying, "My name is ____ and I like_____" followed by an animal – except that instead of saying the name, you'll need to act it out. When someone gets it, have the group say your name while doing the action. The next person in the group will do the same with an animal she likes, and everyone repeats this new name/action as well as the one before it. The last time through, the group will say everyone's name while acting out the animals. See how many the group remembers next meeting.

Activity #1: Building Animal Shelters

Badge Connection: Step 3—Create an animal house

Time Allotment: 25 Minutes

Prep Needed:

- Gather materials and supplies.

Materials Needed:

- Writing utensils
- Paper
- Mud, sticks, other items from nature and home to act as insulation and "building" materials (i.e. sticks, leaves, socks, Kleenex)
- Package of Jell-O
- Source of hot water
- Mixing bowl and spoon
- Small container with lid/sealed top (i.e. baby food jar or Ziploc)

Part 1: Insulate Your Own "Nest"

Steps:

1. Girls have watched how animals use their habitats and have thought about why animals live in certain areas. Now, they will take a look at the houses animals build in their habitats. Each habitat has unique challenges for animal builders!
2. One of these challenges is temperature. Many animals use insulation to keep their homes cool in hot temperatures or warm in the cold. They may line a nest with feathers or burrow into snow or mud to hold in body heat. Try this experiment with the girls to see how insulation in a nest works.

3. Make a Jell-O Nest!
 - Mix a package of Jell-O. Before it sets, put part of the liquid into a small container with a lid or sealed top, like a baby food jar. Pour the rest into a mixing bowl.
 - Insulate the small container the way an animal might insulate its nest. You could bury the container in leaves and sticks in the yard or use materials in your house, like socks.
 - Keep the container in its warm, insulated place while the mixing bowl with the rest of the Jell-O stays out in the air—in the same area as your nest container.
 - When the bowl of Jell-O has set (gotten firm) uncover and check your “nest.” If the Jell-O is still liquid, you’ll know your insulation would have kept the animals inside warm. If it is set, try building your animal home again.
 - Ask girls to share what happened with their Junior friends, and talk about the “warmest” nest designs. What made them work well? What materials did not work as well?

Part 2: Make Your Own Animal House

Steps:

1. Another challenge that animal builders face is how to build a home that protects them from predators and the elements. Meerkats live in large underground burrows with several entrances. Beavers make dome-shaped homes called lodges with branches and mud—and they usually have an underwater entrance.
2. As a group, find out more about animal homes like these.
4. Ask girls to try sketching their own meerkat burrows or building their own beaver lodges from sticks. Or, they can build a home for an entirely different animal. Remind them to think about what they’ve learned so far about animal homes.
5. Have girls share their “home” with the group and explain how and why it works.

Activity #2: Create a Butterfly Habitat

Badge Connection: Step 5 – help protect animal habitats

Time Allotment: 25 Minutes

Prep Needed:

- Gather materials and supplies. If spring is a long time away, focus on the herbs for larval plants, as the girls should have better luck keeping them going until they can be placed outside. Also, the herbs can be trimmed regularly for use in the kitchen and still be ready for spring.
- The amount of seeds needed depends on how many kinds you want to plant, what size pot you can find, and whether you want the girls to plant just a nectar plant pot, just a caterpillar plant pot, or one of each.
- You may want to divide the potting soil in advance into a number of Ziploc bags to speed up the scooping process and keep down the amount of spillage.

Materials Needed:

- Small flower pots or paper cups
- Potting soil
- Scoops, small trowels or plastic spoons
- Styrofoam packing peanuts or newspaper
- Plastic or Styrofoam plates or liners (drainage for pots)
- Seeds for caterpillar plants: dill, parsley, oregano, mint, nasturtium (these are big – just one per pot)
- Seeds for nectar plants(unless pots are big, look for small varieties): zinnia, marigold (can be for caterpillars too), phlox, alyssum (also for both)
- Cups or small mister bottles for water
- Waxed paper or landscaping cloth
- Optional - Cling film and rubber bands
- Optional – permanent markers (for decorating)

Steps:

1. Have the girls help cover the tables in newspaper or tablecloths, or make sure you allow time for extended clean up at the end.
2. Get some helpers to hand out materials: one or two pots, liners for each, scooping tool. Make sure everyone will have access to the potting soil and packing peanuts. If there's going to be time for decorating, do it now before the pots are full of dirt.
3. First, each girl should take a small piece of waxed paper and put it in the bottom of the pot over the drainage hole. This is not going to keep covering the hole; this is just so you can get the pot home without leaking soil on the way. When the girls get home, they can use a pencil or stick to poke a hole through the waxed paper. Or, a square of landscaping cloth can help get everything home; the cloth will drain, so doesn't have to be removed.
4. Then, have them take some of the packing peanuts and break them into slightly smaller pieces, and put them in the bottom of their pot. The pieces should still be bigger than the drainage hole in the bottom. Alternatively, you can use a handful of pebbles, some wadded up newspaper, or pieces of broken terra cotta pots to help with drainage.
5. Girls should then fill their pots with a partner – taking turns, one holds the pot steady while the other scoops dirt into the pot. Encourage them to take their time. Fill the pots so there is still between half an inch and an inch of clearance between the top of the dirt and the rim of the pot.
6. Instructions on how far apart to plant the seeds will depend on the specific plants chosen; read the seed packets and plan accordingly.
7. Have the girls add a small amount of water to each pot. The soil should not get waterlogged, but will need to stay moist. Girls should check their pots every other day, and try not to add too much water at a time. Misting bottles can help.
8. If desired, cover with cling film and secure with a rubber band – the pot still needs to stay upright in order for the seeds to stay in the right place, but at least there won't be mud to clean up if it tips over.

Activity #3: Nest Test

Badge Connection: Activity #1 follow up

Time Allotment: 5 Minutes

Materials Needed:

- Nests and Jell-o from activity #1

Steps:

1. Check the unprotected Jell-O: has it set? How thick is it?
2. Check each of your nests: what consistency is your Jell-O?
3. Are there any similarities between the nests that were most effective? Is there anything you would do differently next time?

Activity #4: Snack Chat

Badge Connection: Questions link to multiple badge steps

Time Allotment: 10 minutes

Steps:

1. While enjoying snack, here are some things for girls to talk about:
 - a. What do we need to make a healthy habitat for ourselves?
 - b. What things do we do to keep that home habitat the best it can be?
 - c. What kinds of things do animals do to "upgrade" their basic habitats that are like what we do with our homes?
 - d. What do you think you would add to make your home habitat a "dream habitat"?

Wrapping Up

Time Allotment: 15 minutes

Materials Needed:

- Optional: Make New Friends printed on poster board

Steps:

1. Instruct girls to get into a Friendship Circle. Have girls stand in a circle and cross their right arms over their left, holding hands with the person on each side of them.
2. Sing "Make New Friends."

Make New Friends		
Verse One	Verse Two	Verse Three
Make new friends, but keep the old. One is silver, the other is gold.	A circle is round, it has no end. That's how long, I will be your friend.	You have one hand, I have the other. Put them together, We have each other.

3. After the song, ask everyone to be quiet.
4. Assign a girl to start the friendship squeeze by gently squeezing her neighbor's hand with her right hand. Then, that girl squeezes with her right hand. One by one, each girl passes the squeeze until it travels around the circle. When the squeeze returns to the girl who started, she says "Goodbye Sister Girl Scouts" and the girls unwrap and face outward instead of inward.
5. Optional: Have girls make a wish after their hand has been squeezed and before they pass the squeeze along. Girls can also put their right foot out into the circle when they receive the friendship squeeze, so that everyone can see it travel along the circle.

More to Explore

- Field Trip Ideas:
 - Visit a store specializing in outdoor clothing and gear, and find out about the kinds of clothing that provide us with waterproofing and insulation.
 - Join in a local park clean up or habitat restoration project.
- Speaker Ideas:
 - Invite someone who has worked on gardens, landscaping, or other environments for specific animals or plants, such as gardening for birds or restoring prairies.
 - Talk to someone who knows what your neighborhood - and natural environment - was like fifty years ago, a hundred years, or even more.

Suggestions

Do you have any suggestions to improve this activity plan? Do you have ideas for other possible badge-earning activities? Please email troopsupport@girlscoutsrv.org.

Family Follow-Up Email

Use the email on the next page as a template to let families know what girls did at the meeting today. Feel free to add additional information, including:

- When and where you will be meeting next
- What activities you will do at the next meeting
- Family help or assistance that is needed
- Supplies or materials that girls will need to bring to the next meeting
- Reminders about important dates and upcoming activities

Hello Girl Scout Families:

We had a wonderful time today learning about animals and their habitats and are on our way to earning the Junior Animal Habitats Badge.

We had fun:

- Learning about butterflies and caterpillars
- Creating and testing an animal home for warmth
- Getting ready to improve habitat for butterflies and caterpillars

Continue the fun at home:

- Keep a bird feeder stocked outside a window or in your yard.
- Take a walk together around your neighborhood and discuss what animals might like to live there.
- Organize a cleanup of a local park or green space.

Thank you for bringing your Junior to Girl Scouts!