



Nature

Scouts BSA · Nature

Name

Started

Completed

Nature is about seeing how plants, animals, soil, and water all fit together. You'll explore several areas of nature and spend real time outdoors observing. It makes every hike and campout more interesting.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/nature/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

- ☐ **1** Name three ways plants matter to animals. Name a plant with legal protection where you live and tell why it is threatened

Tip: Think about how plants give animals food and shelter, then find a protected plant in your state.

Example: Plants give animals food, shelter, and oxygen. You could explain that an oak feeds deer with acorns, hides nesting birds, and shades a stream so fish stay cool, then share a protected plant from your state and why it's at risk.

- ☐ **2** Name three ways animals matter to plants. Name an animal with legal protection where you live and tell why it is threatened

Tip: Look at how animals help plants, like bees spreading pollen or birds spreading seeds. Find a protected animal in your area.

- ☐ **3** Explain what a food chain is and give a four-step example on land and a four-step example in water

Tip: Draw a food chain from a pond and one from a forest, starting with the sun and ending with a predator.

Example: On land: grass, grasshopper, frog, hawk. In water: algae, insect larvae, small fish, heron. Start each with the sun's energy and draw arrows showing where the energy goes.

4 Nature fields (all parts of each field): Choose 5 of 8

Tips for this section: Pick five fields you're curious about, like birds, insects, or rocks, and work through them one at a time over a few weeks.

Example for this section: Choose fields you can actually reach. A Scout near a pond might pick fish, reptiles and amphibians, and insects, then add plants and birds, which live almost everywhere. Work through one field every few weeks.

4a Birds

- ☐ **4a1** Identify eight bird species in the field

- ☐ **4a2** Make and put out a birdhouse, feeding station, or birdbath, and list the birds that use it over one month

4b Mammals

- ☐ **4b1** Identify three wild mammal species in the field

- ☐ **4b2** Make plaster casts of a wild mammal's tracks

4c Reptiles and amphibians

- ☐ **4c1** Show you can identify the venomous snakes found near you

- ☐ **4c2** Identify three reptile or amphibian species in the field

- ☐ **4c3** Identify one toad or frog species by its call, or one reptile or amphibian by its eggs, den, burrow, or other signs

4d Insects and spiders

- ☐ **4d1** Collect and identify 10 species of insects or spiders, in the field or from photos (your own or from other sources)

- ☐ **4d2** Do one: hatch an insect from a pupa or cocoon, hatch adults from nymphs, raise larvae until they pupate or spin cocoons, or keep an ant or bee colony for one season

4e Fish

- ☐ **4e1** Identify two fish species native to your area

- ☐ **4e2** Collect four kinds of animal food that wild fish eat

4f Mollusks and crustaceans

- ☐ **4f1** Identify five species of mollusks and crustaceans

- ☐ **4f2** Collect, mount, and label six shells

4g Plants

- ☐ **4g1** Identify 15 wild plant species in the field

4g2 Seeds or leaves: Choose 1 of 2

- ☐ **4g2a** Collect and label seeds from six plants or leaves from 12 plants

- ☐ **4g2b** Photograph seeds from six plants or leaves from 12 plants, and make a catalog of the photos

4h Soils and rocks

- ☐ **4h1** Collect and identify three soil types: one high in sand, one in clay, and one in humus

- ☐ **4h2** Collect and identify five kinds of rocks from your area

- ☐ **5** Discuss why the Outdoor Code and the Leave No Trace Seven Principles matter in nature study, and explain how you followed them in natural areas while observing, collecting, and identifying

Tip: Talk about how to enjoy nature without harming it, like staying on trails and leaving what you find.

Example: Use a real place you've been: "At the creek we kept to the trail, left the salamanders under their rocks, and packed out our snack wrappers so raccoons wouldn't get into them."

6 Succession

Tips for this section: Visit the same natural area a few times and look for clues that it's changing over time, like young trees in an old field.

Example for this section: Pick a spot like an old field, a vacant lot, or a forest edge. Visit three or four times and note what's growing: grasses first, then shrubs, then young trees. Explain what the spot might look like in 30 years.

- ☐ **6a** Explain succession to your counselor

- ☐ **6b** Visit a natural area such as a forest, grassland, meadow, or water feature and explain its plant and animal succession stage, what communities came before and may come next, what past disturbances shaped it, and what future changes may reshape it

7 Careers or hobbies: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Talk with a park ranger or naturalist about their job and how they got started.

- ☐ **7a** Name three careers that use nature skills. Pick one and research its training, education, certification, experience, costs, job outlook, starting pay, and advancement. Talk over your findings with your counselor, including whether you'd want this career

- ☐ **7b** Identify how nature skills could become a personal hobby. Research the extra training, costs, and organizations that could help you get the most from it, then share your findings and your short- and long-term goals with your counselor