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Fall 2014

The Land Scouts: Guide Book

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the Land Scouts




**GUIDE
BOOK**

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book can help you get started as an independent Land Scout or as a guide leading a Land Scout troop.

This book and the Land Scout program are work in progress. If you have ideas on how either could be made better, please be in touch directly.

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IN THIS BOOK

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INTRODUCTION:
Who we are, what we do, and
how to get started
- 7** OBSERVATION
How to earn your first badge
- 17** LAND SCOUT GUIDES
Become a Land Scout Guide
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Photo by Jonathan Bagby



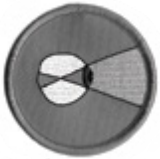
WHO ARE THE LAND SCOUTS?

We are a group who promote curiosity, reflection, and action towards the health of our immediate land. We use a broad definition of land that includes not only soil, plants, and animals, but also buildings, events, and systems (like sidewalks or electrical lines). We explore and care for our land through ten core values.

Our work involves getting outside often, making and doing things by hand, learning new skills, and working in community to better understand and care for our land. If after reading through this book you'd like to become a Land Scout, all you need to do is say the pledge out loud, sign your name, and get started. If you'd like to establish and lead a registered Land Scout troop, you can find information on that process towards the back of this book.

The Land Scouts are open to anyone willing to take the pledge and practice our core values. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship or disability.

The Land Scout Core Values



OBSERVATION

The Land Scouts look at the land daily; they are observant of and attentive to it.



DISSEMINATION

The Land Scouts share information freely and teach others what they know.



ORIENTATION

The Land Scouts try to identify and map the plants in their neighborhood.



COLLECTION

The Land Scouts collect and plant seeds.



GERMINATION

The Land Scouts cultivate whatever soil they can access and tend.



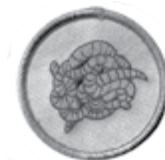
HABITATION

The Land Scouts are patient and rooted in the land where they live.



DIGESTION

The Land Scouts are fed by the land in which they live.



DECOMPOSITION

The Land Scouts compost with the help of worms.



CULTIVATION

The Land Scouts make an effort to grow food.



PROPAGATION

The Land Scouts share their harvest.

The Land Scout Pledge

I will to the best of my ability
be a good steward of the land where I live
by cultivating native and edible plants,
promoting species diversity,
sharing the fruits of my labor and knowledge,
and propagating Land Scouting in barren areas.



WHAT THE LAND SCOUTS VALUE and DO

This book is not Land Scouting. You will be Land Scouting when you go out and see with new eyes. Land Scouting means looking at, knowing, and caring for the land where you live. Wherever you live, that's your land. You do not have to own land in order to care for and look after it.

In order to care for our land, we have to get to know it. The Land Scouts have ten core values that introduce different aspects of getting to know our land. Each value has a badge you earn by making tools and practicing skills of land stewardship.

All Land Scouts begin by earning the OBSERVATION badge; observation is the foundation of Land Scouting. After you've earned your OBSERVATION badge, you can pursue the others in whatever order makes sense for your group, resources, seasons, and land. Instructions for getting started on your OBSERVATION badge are on the next page.

WHO CAN BE A LAND SCOUT?

Everyone is welcome to join the Land Scouts provided they agree to the following:

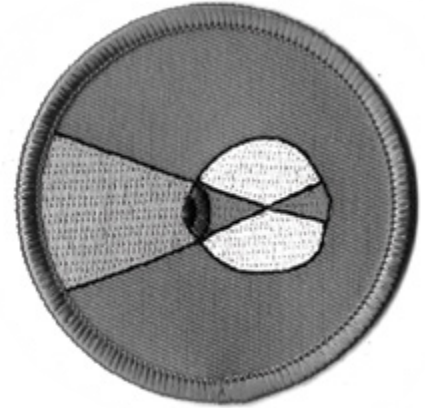
- to take and abide by the Land Scout Pledge, and
- to practice the Land Scout values to the best of their abilities.

There are two levels of the Land Scouts: *Beginner* and *Continuing*. All scouts start as Beginners. After you've progressed through the cycle of values and badges you become a Continuing Land Scout. Continuing Land Scouts understand their land with greater complexity and are able to make better and more ambitious actions in caring for their land. They are also qualified to lead Land Scout troops.

The activities listed here assume that Scouts are in middle school or older and that they are able to read, write, and cross a city street by themselves. If not, Scouts will need more help and supervision with certain tasks. Most of the Land Scout activities are inexpensive, low-tech, and hands-on. They can be made more complex and challenging as Scouts' curiosity and ability allows.

HOW to EARN the OBSERVATION BADGE

1. Bind a field book following the instructions on the following pages.
2. Take your field book on a walk in your neighborhood or city and make drawings and notes of the things you see.
3. Fill your book with drawings, notes, and samples and turn it in to your Land Scout Guide. She or he will check it and give you a badge. (If you don't have a Guide, you can send your book to the Land Scout Headquarters listed at the back of this book.)



GOOD OBSERVATION
with your Field Book

go out again and again

Take your book everywhere and fill it up. Draw and write about what you notice. It doesn't have to be beautiful or profound—just pay attention and note things. Go out walking and then go out again. If you can, return to a site at different times of day or in different weather.

go slowly

Be prepared to take long observation walks. Plan to go alone or go with another Land Scout. Move slow enough to see, stop, take notes, and draw what you see.

draw first

Cameras are good for shooting reference photos, but try to draw and note as much detail as you can while in the field. Not only will you notice more things, when you draw something you'll get to know it and remember it better.



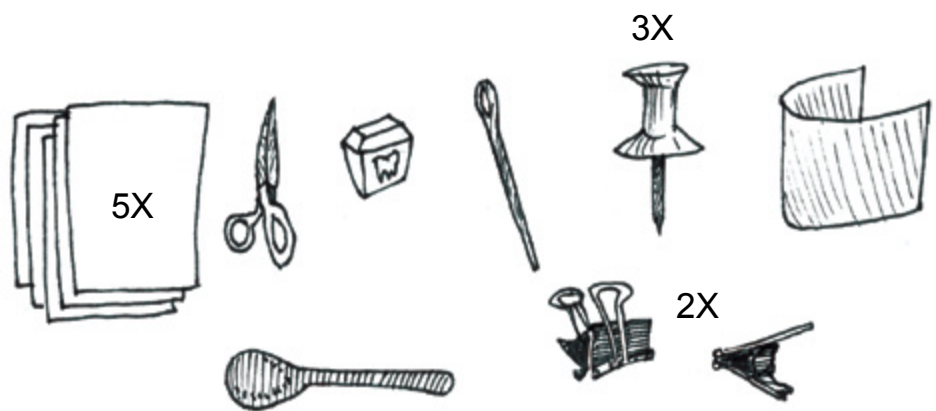
Clover by Isabel Brown



How to bind your **FIELD BOOK**

Materials to assemble:

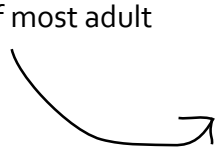
5 sheets of office paper
Scissors (or a utility knife)
Waxed dental floss
A needle with an eye big
enough to accept
the dental floss
3 push pins
A piece of stiff cover
material at least as
big as a horizontal
half of your paper
Binder clips (2 or more)
A metal or wooden spoon



1. Prep your paper.

Tear or cut your paper into horizontal halves. That means you'll get squatty halves as opposed to long ones. If you are folding and tearing your paper by hand, use the back of the spoon to press the the paper's fold into a nice sharp crease. Then gently lick the crease. This weakens the fibers and helps the paper tear cleanly along the edge. You can also use scissors or a utility knife for this step.

Make halves like this to
get a book that fits in the
back pocket of most adult
pants.



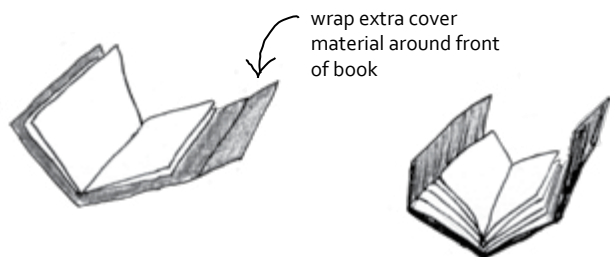
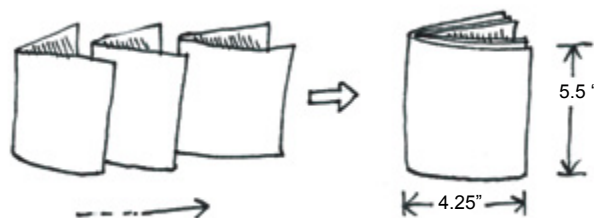
Not like this.



2. Fold and nest your paper.

Now fold each of your ten (10) half sheets in half. Crease the fold sharply with the spoon. Nest the folded sheets together and tap the bundle lightly on a hard surface to line up the pages.

If you're using US letter-sized sheets of paper (8.5" x 11") your stack of folded and nested pieces will be 4.25" x 5.5".

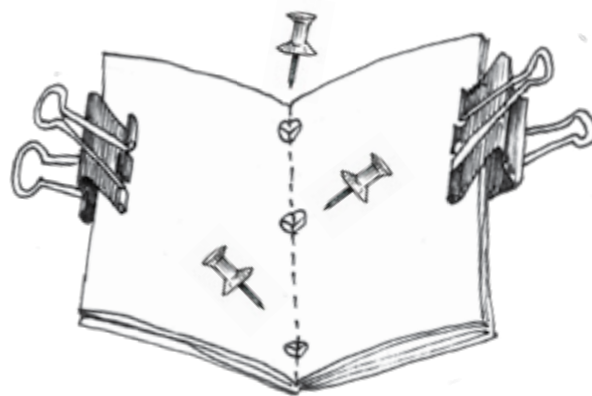


3. Add covers.

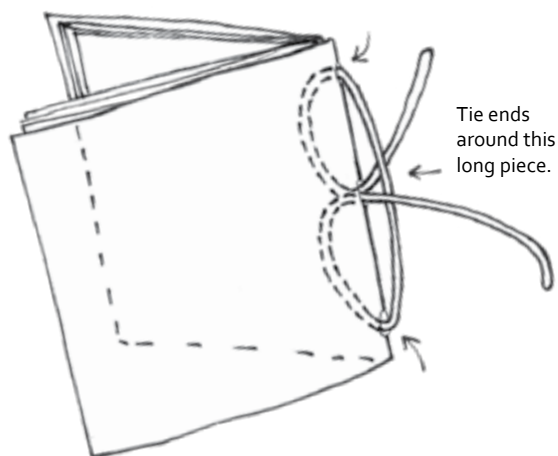
Fold your cover in half and nest it around the pages. If your cover is longer than the stack of pages, you can fold the edges back around the pages or use the extra length to make a closure. See the next pages for closure ideas.

4. Punch holes.

Make sure everything is as snug together as it can be. Use your binder clips to hold the pages and cover in place while you jab at them. Use pushpins to make three (3) holes right on the folded valley edge of your pages. Put one in the dead center and the other two an inch or so away from the edges. Leave each pushpin in; this helps keep the pages together as you continue to punch holes.



Make sure everything is snug together here and punch your holes right in the crease.



5. Sew it up.

Thread your needle with a piece of floss three times as long as your book's height. Start at the center hole on the outside and leave a 4" tail. Sew in and up to the top hole. Sew along the outside from the top to the bottom, skipping the center, and going into the bottom hole. Sew back out the center hole. Make sure your ends are on either side of the long piece. Tie off, trim, and take your book for a walk.

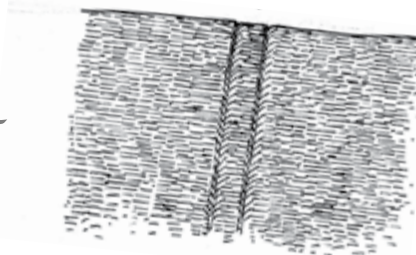
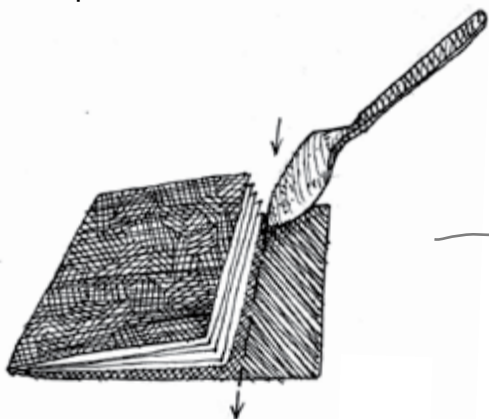
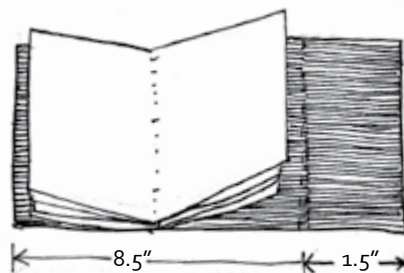
FIELD BOOK variations + ADDITIONS



Wrap Around Cover >>

Cut a piece of your cover material that's at least 1.5 inches longer than the width of your open book and the same height.

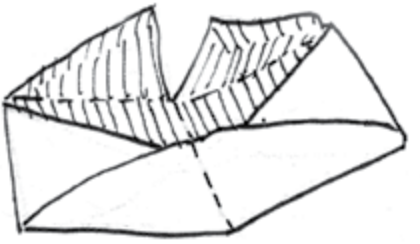
Mark the edge of your book on the cover and score the line with something pointed but blunt (like the edge of a spoon or a ball point pen with no ink). You want to crush the fiber, but not cut through it. Scoring the cover paper will help it bend precisely where you want it. The extra inch folds around the front of the book and will help contain samples or loose notes.





<< Pencil, Pen or Stick Closure

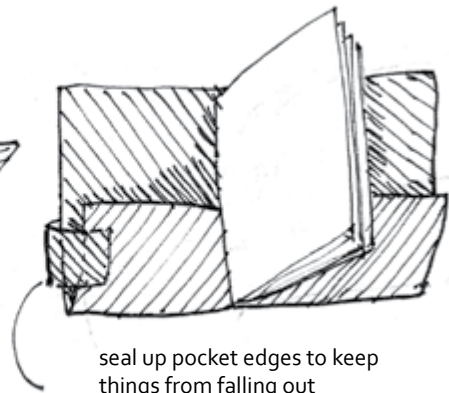
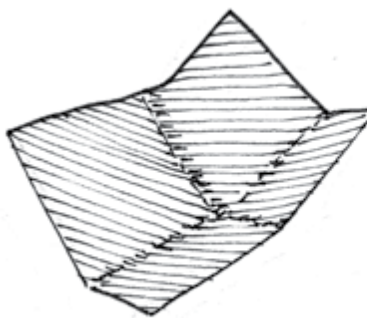
Cut a longer cover piece following the instructions for a Wrap Around Cover. Mark and cut out a small rectangle in the center of the overlapping flap. The rectangle should be a little smaller than the width of the pen, pencil or stick. Cut a 2 – 3" length of sturdy paper, ribbon or other similar material and fold it in half around your object. Slip the ends of your wrapper through the rectangular hole letting the pencil hold it in place. Fold the cover over and mark in pencil on the front cover where the wrapper lands. Use the marks on the cover to cut a small slit exactly as tall as your wrapper and just wide enough to fit both pieces through. Glue or tape each end to the inside of the front cover leaving the loop on the outside.



ta-da!

<< Pockets and Envelopes

You can create pockets for the covers, interior pages, or both. As a general rule, take the height of your book and add half the height to your pocket pages or cover pieces. Score as with the Wrap Around Cover and fold up. You can seal the sides of the pockets with tape or glue.



seal up pocket edges to keep things from falling out



A field book with a loose map that tucks into a pocket.

You can also bind envelopes as pages. Fold the envelope in half and make a small cut on the envelope flap. This will allow the flap to open and close after it's been sewn down the middle. Nest your envelope into your pages and sew together. Small coin envelopes are good for gluing into the pages of field books.

OBSERVATION VOCABULARY for BEGINNING SCOUTS

The vocabulary words below are good suggestions for things to observe on your walks. Challenge yourself to add to this list and to observe new things every time you go out, even when you return to places you've already visited.

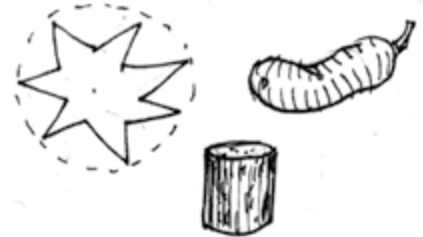
scale/size – How big or small is something? You can estimate measurements or describe things relatively. For example: the twig was as thick as my thumb and as long as my arm).



texture – The way something feels or the way a surface looks. For example, some grasses have a smooth texture when you touch them in one direction and a prickly texture in the other direction. Other words you might use to describe texture: barbed, bumpy, dimpled, dusty, flakey, fuzzy, hard, pitted, powdery, shaggy, shiny, slick, slimy, smooth, spongy, stiff, wet, wispy...



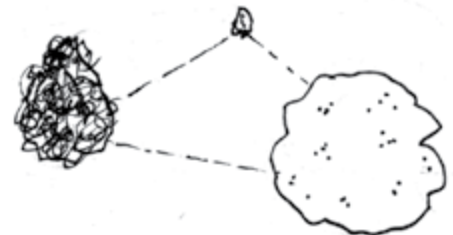
shape – The forms that make up an object or scene. Many objects are made up of multiple shapes. Some shape words include: angular, circular, cylindrical, curved, flat, geometric, irregular, long, peaked, organic, short, regular, square, spiked, tubular...



color – Try to move beyond basic color names. For example, instead of saying a leaf is green, say what kind of green. Is it blue-green? Green with red spots and brown veins? Yellow green with a red stem? Get poetic with your color language.

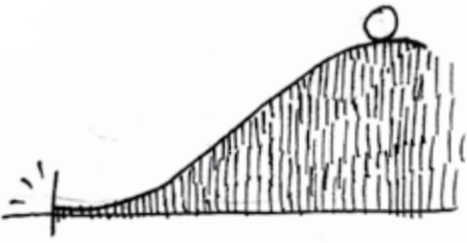


proximity – What's nearby? For example, we found a plant growing next to some train tracks and inside a rotten stump. Or, we found 3 chip bags in close proximity to the entrance to the hospital.



quantity – How many of something are there? One, two, dozens? If there are too many to count, you can estimate or guess.





slope – Change in elevation. One good way to think about slope is how a ball or running water would move through a site. Sometimes slope is gradual (i.e. the ball or water would move slowly) and sometimes it's more extreme.



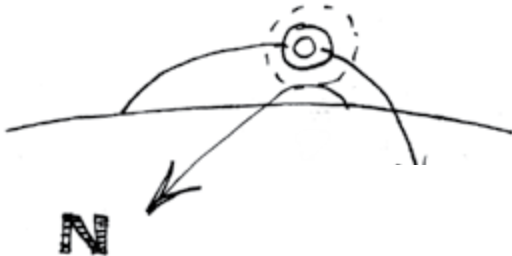
smell – Get as descriptive as possible. Especially if something is very pungent. If you can't think of how to describe the smell, describe the how it makes you feel or what you think of when you smell it.



sounds – Noises! Pause somewhere on your walk and close your eyes. What do you hear? Can you identify what's making the sounds you hear? Draw a picture of the sounds or use letters to make an onomatopoeia (a word that describes a sound).



symmetry + asymmetry – Things have symmetry when their parts match up across an axis, as if someone put a mirror down the center of it. You might also find radial symmetry, where objects are similar and mirror each other around a center point (like some flower petals). Asymmetry describes objects whose parts do not mirror each other. Things can be symmetrical one way and asymmetrical another way.



orientation – Orientation refers to how something sits relative to the four cardinal directions: north, east, south, and west. If you don't know which way is north, you can describe an object's orientation relative to other things. For example, we found a toy car on the shady side of the library, the one nearest to the parking lot.



temperature – How warm or cold was it when you went out? How are your observations affected by the temperature?

OBSERVATION for CONTINUING SCOUTS

Here are a couple different ways for Continuing Land Scouts to step up their observational walks and vary their practice. Invent your own and see what happens.

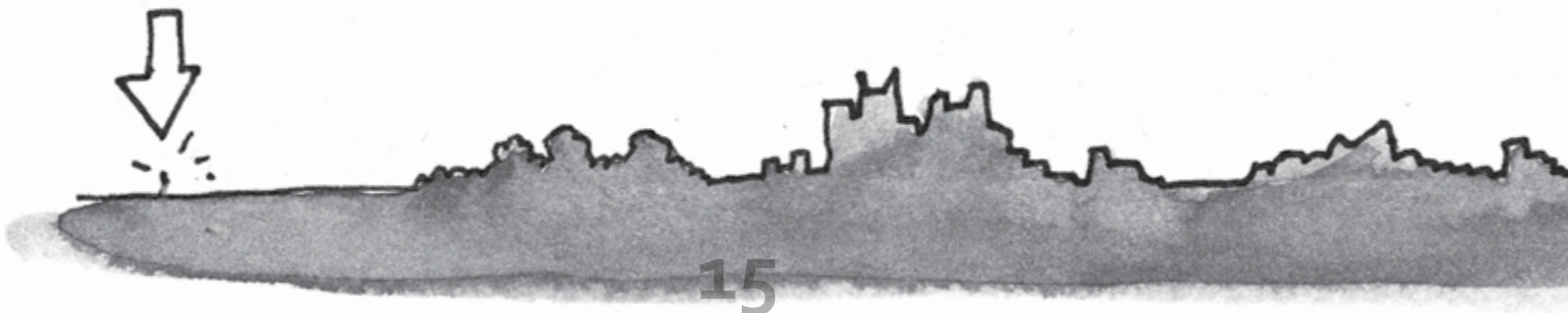


<< Long Sit

Pick a comfortable place outdoors that's not too far from where you live. Return to that spot once a week (or more often if possible) and observe it for a year. Note the changes you encounter throughout the year.

Sensory Shift >>

Travel with a partner to a new location. Have your partner blindfold you. Your partner is responsible for guiding you safely through the new land without explaining where you are or what you're encountering. Rely on your senses of touch, smell and hearing to observe this new place. Go somewhere else before you remove the blindfold and draw your observations. After you've drawn from your other senses return to the site to compare sensory memories to vision.



Out of Bounds >>

Take an observation walk in which you do not use any roads, sidewalks, or established paths. Choose your land carefully and be diplomatic and forthcoming with anyone you encounter. Be smart about where you go and what you do. Always let someone know where you're headed. Record your observations.

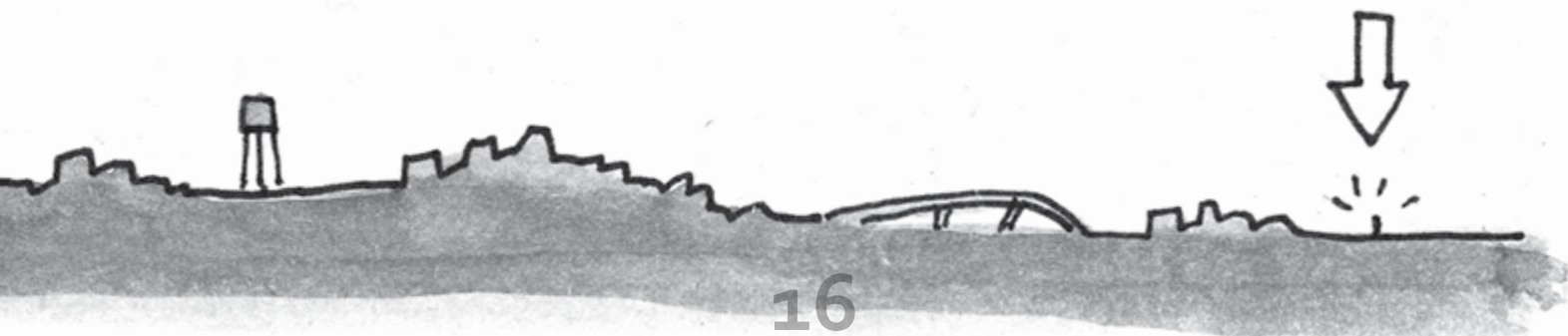


<< Tour de Plants

Organize a group Tour de Plants in which you teach participants to bind their own field books and then lead them through your land pointing out the plants you've found Land Scouting. Bring a reputable plant identification book to help positively identify any new plants you find along the way. Return to a safe and comfortable place to continue working in your field books after the tour. Refreshments are nice addition if possible.

Long Walk >>

Take a day-long walk somewhere in your city or town. This will require that you plan ahead and bring extra materials. Consider walking to a point where you can take the bus home. Bring a comfortable bag with your field book and a pen or pencil, a bottle of water, lunch and snacks, a sweater, rain jacket or hat as is appropriate to the time of year, a cell phone (or money for a pay phone), and a bus schedule. Make sure to pause and draw and write about the things you see.



BEING a LAND SCOUT GUIDE

If you're comfortable in your skin and in your land you might think about being a Land Guide. These are people who organize, promote, and lead Land Scout activities. They also help guide scouts through the steps to earn their badges. Land Guides are open, patient, knowledgeable and generous.

PREPARING TO LEAD SCOUTS

Many of the Land Scouts' core values require you to know and teach specific skills or facts. For example, when you lead DIGESTION activities, you'll teach the safety and ethics of foraging, the steps to test for an allergic reaction, and methods for positively identifying wild edible plants. In other cases, such as leading scouts in OBSERVATION, your main goal is to supply the basic tools, provide a safe place in which to work, and then get out the way so Scouts can explore on their own. In all cases we want to encourage curiosity, discovery, documentation, and reflection.

GUIDING: Ongoing Troop or Independent Workshop Series?

You can organize a troop that meets regularly or schedule a series of public stand-alone workshops. On the next page are some of the things to consider if you want to host a troop. If you cannot commit the time to hosting a troop you might consider instead holding Land Scout workshops. These are one-time events that introduce Land Scout values and teach some or all of the skills involved in practicing that value. Workshops should be made available for free or at low cost to participants. Workshop leaders can charge a small amount (usually less than \$10) to cover the cost of materials; Land Scout workshops are not a for-profit venture.



Brian and Luke play at the start of Land Scout camp.



Katie reaches into the worm bins at a workshop.

TO START A LAND SCOUT TROOP

The Land Scouts model is flexible and can work in a variety of communities. Land Scout Guides are encouraged to be creative how they host and manage their troops. There are a few principles that Land Scout Guides must agree to follow in order to host a troop.

The Land Scout activities and participation in the troop is free to scouts and their families. When you do activities that require purchasing materials, for example if you decide to plant a garden, the troop is obligated to work to find appropriate sponsorship. Please contact the Land Scouts' HQ for help fund raising or identifying appropriate sponsors. (Workshops are an exception to this rule. Read more about that on the page prior.)

The troop must be open and inclusive to all interested scouts. You are encouraged to recruit scouts from beyond your immediate circle of family and friends.

The Land Scouts do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, citizenship or disability.

The Land Scouts are a noncommercial program. Independent Land Scout troops may not enter into contracts or business relationships in which the Land Scout name, logos, badges, and/or activities are used to promote or endorse commercial and for-profit organizations. This excludes a Land Scouts Troop's fund raising to support troop activities.

Troops must satisfy all the following criteria: troop has four (4) or more scouts, troop has at least one adult leader and does not exceed the ratio of 8 scouts to 1 adult leader, troop has a safe and appropriate meeting place, troop meets at least once a month, and troop agrees to submit a Registration Packet to the Land Scouts HQ.



Before you commit to guiding a troop, take time to answer these questions in writing :

Which parts of my land am I most curious about?

Where would our troop meet indoors?

Where would our troop go outside? Are there any practical or safety concerns at either location?

How much time do I want to spend each week preparing for Land Scouts?

Who could help me with the troop?

Is there somewhere indoors where we could start plants?

Is there somewhere we could plant or help with planting?

What are my weaknesses as a leader?

Do I know 4 or more (young) people who might enjoy Land Scouting and who could commit to the troop? If not, how will I recruit scouts publicly? How will I make the troop open and accessible?

Which of the Land Scouting skills can I comfortably lead and which would require outside guides? Do I know people who could be those guides?

Would I need help raising money to cover the cost of Scouts' badges?

Estimate = # of scouts x # of badges (maximum 11) x \$2

Once you've sorted out most of the details of your troop and recruited your scouts, you can plan your first meeting. Get your scouts to sign the official Land Scout registration sheet (available on our website or in this book). Send in the registration sheet, waivers for scouts signed by parents or guardians, and money for badges and you'll be an officially registered troop.

You do not have to be a registered troop to pursue the Land Scout activities, but you do have to be registered to earn badges. As a registered troop you are expected to uphold the Land Scout values and principles, to meet regularly, and to send in occasional updates and photos to the Land Scout HQ. As a registered Land Scout troop, you'll have badges for scouts, help designing and producing a badge specific to your troop and region, as well as support with recruitment, fund raising, and meeting planning.



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In order to make the Land Scouts more accessible, all materials are available at a low cost. In return, I ask that you use our name and images appropriately, that you honor our core values and our interest in promoting land stewardship, and that you do not use this project and associated materials commercially. You can read a more thorough description of the terms under which this project is licensed here:

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>



Curly Dock, *Rumex crispus*

NOTES ABOUT SAFETY, INSURANCE, AND A REQUISITE DISCLAIMER

The Land Scouts encourage you to go and explore the land where you live. It is up to you to be safe about it. This may mean basic things, like looking both ways before crossing the street, or more complex decisions like how to engage appropriately with a stranger. Keep alert, trust your gut, and build in back-ups (like telling someone where you're going out). We cannot build a meaningful awareness of our land if we are not safe and comfortable traveling in it. Neither the Land Scouts nor Katie Ries can be held liable for your actions. Be careful out there.



If you become a Land Guide and lead a troop, you are encouraged to get insurance against liability and accident. Chances are the activities you pursue as Land Scouts will not result in any injury. That said, you are still advised to look into and ensure coverage against liability and accidents. Many non-profit organizations carry insurance and if you meet in a school, wilderness center, or religious building you may be able to find coverage under their policy. Ask around.

One important way you can ensure the safety of your troop is to be well prepared and flexible. If you're making something as a group, make one ahead of time to work out the construction details. If you're introducing worms or a specific type of plant, read up on the particulars of the species. If you're walking to a new area, visit ahead of time to scout out the terrain. You cannot anticipate all possible outcomes, but good preparation can help you to be a stronger and more flexible Land Scout Guide.

Additional Resources

You can find these digital and printable resources online at:
whoshareswins.com/the-Land-Scouts

Land Scout Troop Registration Sheet

Observation Vocabulary inserts for Field Books

Field Book binding instructions

Send Mail to the Land Scout Headquarters:

Land Scout Headquarters
Attn: Katie Ries
100 Grant St.
De Pere, WI 54115

This book was produced in Northeastern Wisconsin through the summer and fall of 2014 in a print edition of 25. It was digitally printed with screen printed elements and hand bound with staples and PVA glue.

The people shown here are Land Scouts in Knoxville and Nashville, TN. Unless otherwise noted all illustrations and photographs are by Katie Ries. The Land Scouts are licensed under the Creative Commons - Attribution-Non-Commercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

This is a PDF version of the printed book.

