



Eco Explorer

An eco explorer is a person who investigates environmental issues and works to make positive changes to the environment. In this badge, you'll be an eco explorer as you take a look at different environmental issues and choose one to explore further.

Steps

1. Meet an eco explorer
2. Explore biodiversity
3. Investigate a global ecosystem issue
4. Plan a trip to explore and work on an issue
5. Share what you learned

Purpose

When I've earned this badge, I'll have researched different environmental issues and taken at least one trip to see how an area is impacted.

Prepare Ahead: Before you start this badge, learn the Leave No Trace Seven Principles so you can follow them as you work through the steps. You can read about them on page three.

Every step has three choices. Do ONE choice to complete each step. Inspired? Do more!

STEP **1** Meet an eco explorer

With help from an adult, arrange to talk to an eco explorer about their work, or research one in books or online. An eco explorer can be anyone who has taken their passion for the environment and used it to make a difference. What inspired them to get involved with environmental issues? How have they impacted the world?

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Talk to a traveler** who has taken a trip to explore an environmental issue or who is interested in eco-friendly travel. (You might get inspired by reading about the conservation-themed Girl Scout Destination trips at www.girlscouts.org/destinations.) How can people travel in an environmentally-friendly way? How can travel be used to make a difference in the world? If you have a trip planned in the future, you might talk about it and ask for tips on making it more eco-friendly.

OR

- ☐ **Talk to a conservationist** about the work they do. It could be someone local, or you could set up a call or email correspondence with someone farther away. How did they get involved in conservation? Do they have one specific issue that is their passion? How does their work affect your area?

OR

- ☐ **Research an eco activist** (from the past or present) who made a difference in an environmental field. Find out all you can about the work they did (or are doing) and share what you learned with your friends or family.



Leave No Trace

Learn and be prepared to use the Leave No Trace Seven Principles to help protect the environment whenever you're outdoors. The principles are:

- **Plan Ahead and Prepare:** Do what it takes to accomplish your goals safely and enjoyably, while also minimizing damage to the land.
- **Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces:** Avoid travel damage, which occurs when surface vegetation or communities of organisms are trampled beyond recovery. The resulting barren area leads to soil erosion and development of undesirable trails.
- **Dispose of Waste Properly:** Carry out what you carry in—never dump anything on a campsite or into a water source. Bury solid human waste at least 200 feet from water, trails, and camp—and at least 6–8 inches deep.
- **Leave What You Find:** Don't collect or take anything from the outdoors.
- **Minimize Campfire Impacts:** If campfires are not allowed in certain parks or protected areas, pack a lightweight cooking stove and lantern.
- **Respect Wildlife:** Only check them out at a distance. Never approach, feed, or follow them.
- **Be Considerate of Other Visitors:** Remember you're not alone in the wilderness. Keep your voices down and let nature be the loudest sounds you hear.

European Starling

European starlings may look like harmless little birds, but they're actually a good example of an invasive species. An invasive species is an organism that causes ecological or economic harm in a new environment where it is not native. These species may be introduced intentionally or by accident. In 1890, a group of European starlings was released into New York City's Central Park by a man who wanted to bring all of the birds mentioned in Shakespeare's plays to the United States. The group of birds thrived in the new environment—and the numbers grew and grew and *grew*. It is now estimated that there are 150 million European starlings in the United States. They compete with native species for food and nesting areas, damage fruit and grain crops, and may spread infectious disease.

STEP 2 Explore biodiversity

Biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal species in an area. It's a delicate balance of living things that all work together. When species become extinct—or new species are introduced—it can create problems in the environment. Take a trip to explore biodiversity in this step.

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Visit a local nature conservancy or nature preserve** to find out about biodiversity and new, invasive, or endangered species in your area. If you can, talk to a person who works or volunteers there. Ask about the Leave No Trace Seven Principles—are they familiar with them? How do they practice them in their work?

OR

- ☐ **Visit a marine research facility** to find out about marine ecosystems and new, invasive, or endangered species. If you can, talk to a person who works there. Ask about the Leave No Trace Seven Principles—are they familiar with them? How do they practice them in their work?

OR

- ☐ **Visit a farm** and learn about biodiversity in farming. Why is biodiversity important to agriculture? How has farming been affected by invasive species? If you can, talk to a person who works there. Ask about the Leave No Trace Seven Principles—are they familiar with them? How do they practice them in their work?



STEP 3 Investigate a global ecosystem issue

As you learned in Step 2 of this badge, biodiversity refers to the variety of plant and animal species in an area. An ecosystem includes plant and animal life, but also refers to nonliving factors such as climate, soil, and water. Dive into an issue that affects the global ecosystem in this step.

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Explore threatened wildlife.** Find out which species are on the endangered species list worldwide and which species in your area are protected and/or endangered. Research at least one success story in which a species was brought back from the brink of extinction. What methods were used? Does it spark any ideas for ways other species could be helped? Keep track of your thoughts and ideas to use in Step 5 of this badge.

OR

- ☐ **Explore an environmental issue relating to water.** You might look at rising sea levels, melting polar ice caps, unusual patterns of precipitation, desertification, or ocean acidification. What are some of the ripple effects (so to speak!) of global water issues? Keep track of your thoughts and ideas to use in Step 5 of this badge.

OR

- ☐ **Explore the rain forest.** You may have heard people talk about saving the rain forests, but do you know why they are important to the planet? Take a deeper dive and find out what lives in our rain forests, what environmental issues are impacting them, and what people can do to help. Keep track of your thoughts and ideas to use in Step 5 of this badge.

Saving Polar Bears

Have you seen photos or videos of polar bears struggling to find food in the Arctic? It can be hard to watch, but this is a pressing issue. It's happening because these animals spend most of their lives on sea ice where they can hunt and catch seals for food. Polar bears are strong swimmers, but they are not fast enough to catch seals in open water. As sea ice melts due to Earth's rising temperatures, polar bears have fewer opportunities to catch large prey.

There is still hope for polar bears, but we need to act fast. Go online to find suggestions for simple things that people can do to help these animals and increase awareness to their plight. Then spread the word!



Leave No Trace Awareness Course

If you'd like to know more about Leave No Trace, you can go to the official website (www.lnt.org/learn/online-awareness-course) and take a 30- to 60-minute awareness course that includes questions about Leave No Trace practices and techniques. (Note: The course doesn't work on a mobile device.) Learn about the Leave No Trace history and mission and find out about visitor-created impacts in recreational areas. You can print a certificate when you complete the course.

STEP 4 Plan a trip to explore and work on an issue

Now that you've talked to an expert and explored some environmental issues, think of one issue you'd like to explore further. Plan a trip to investigate your issue in person and come up with a hands-on way to make a difference. Your trip or series of visits could take place at the local level or farther away—whichever works best for you and your family.

CHOICES—DO ONE:

- ☐ **Take a trip or go on a series of visits to a state or national park** to learn more about your favorite preservation or environmental issue. If you can, talk to people who work or volunteer there. Plan and carry out an environmental project on your chosen issue.
OR -----
- ☐ **Take a trip or go on a series of visits to a river, ocean, or lake** to explore environmental water issues. You might look at water pollution, coral reef preservation, or endangered species. Plan and carry out an environmental water project.
OR -----
- ☐ **Take a trip or go on a series of visits to a wildlife sanctuary, wildlife park, or migration area.** Plan and carry out an environmental project on a wildlife issue.



STEP 5 Share what you learned

One voice can change the world, but many voices can become a movement. Share your hard work with others and they might be inspired to raise their voices, too!

CHOICES—DO ONE:

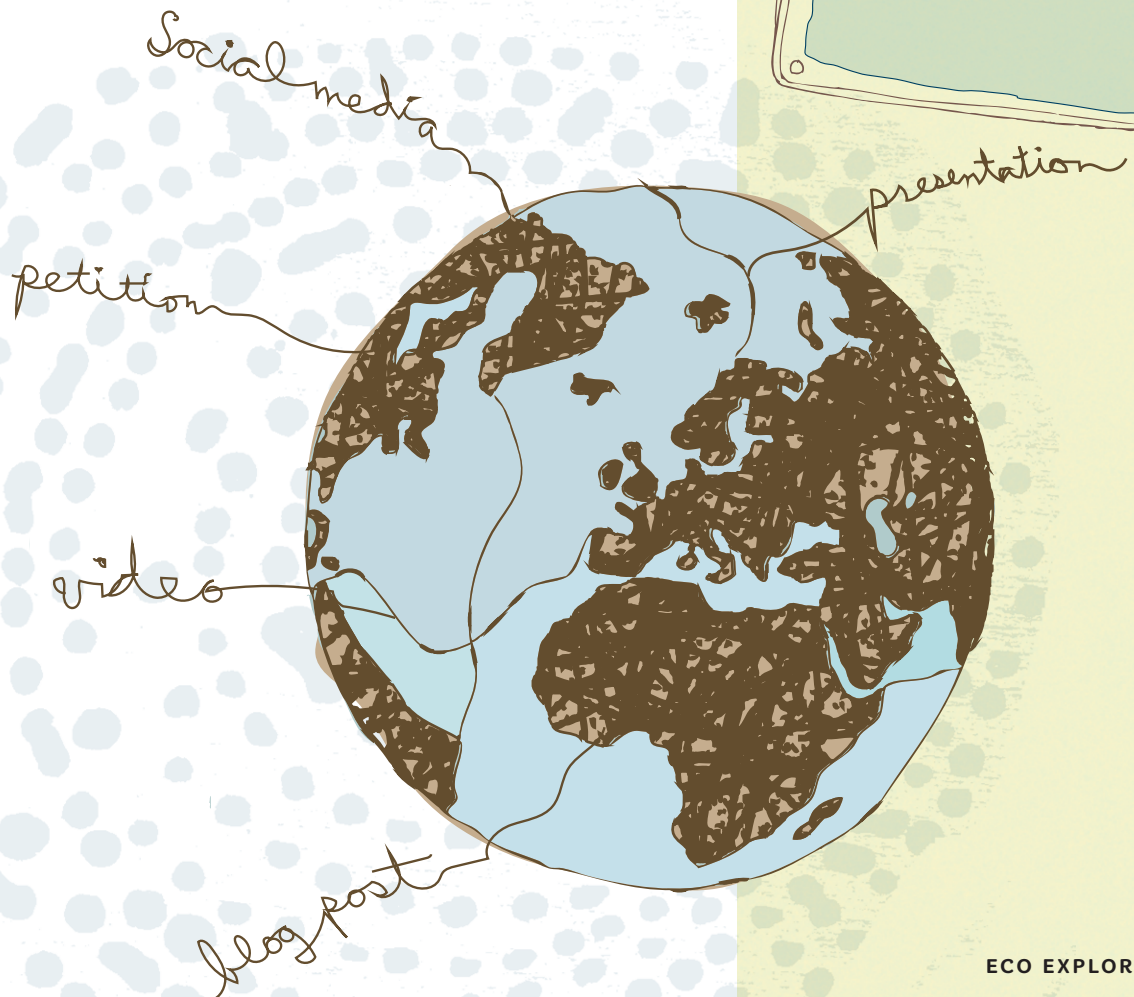
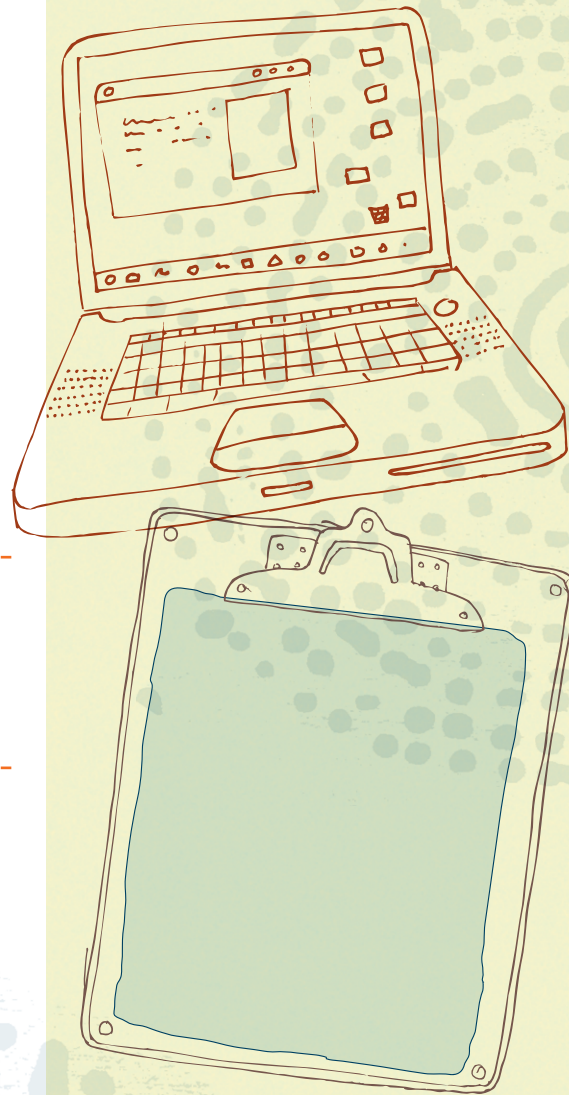
- ☐ **Make a presentation** for your troop, school, or community about your trip, motivating your peers to take action with you. Get their attention and make the case for how and why they should get involved. Your project could be in the form of a song, story, play, video—anything you like!

OR

- ☐ **Share your findings** with a blog or a social media post about your trip, identifying what people can do to make a difference in your chosen area. If you took photos along the way, be sure to include some of your favorites. You might include a video, too.

OR

- ☐ **Start a campaign**—like a petition, organization, drive, or school action club—to increase awareness about the issue you learned about on your trip. Your campaign could take place online or in person. Try to think of creative ways to spread your message and grab peoples' attention.





Going on a Journey?

Do some badge work along the way.

On the Senior Outdoor Journey, you'll complete three Outdoor-themed badges and a Take Action project. As you explore different environmental issues in this badge, keep an eye out for any you might want to explore further in your Outdoor Journey Take Action project.

Now that I've earned this badge, I can give service by:

- Helping to plan family vacations that are eco-friendly
- Showing younger Girl Scouts some things they can do at home to help a global ecosystem issue
- Starting a club or group for students who want to make positive changes to the environment



I'm inspired to:

©2018 Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or by any other electronic or mechanical methods now known or hereinafter invented, without the prior written permission of Girl Scouts of the United States of America, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permissions requests, write to Girl Scouts of the United States of America at the address below or visit the www.girlscouts.org website to access permission request forms.

First published in 2018 by Girl Scouts of the USA
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10018-2798
www.girlscouts.org

Printed in the United States

©Stock images courtesy of Adobe Stock

Links to third-party websites are provided for convenience only. GSUSA does not endorse nor support the content of third-party links and is not responsible for the content or accuracy, availability, or privacy/security practices of other websites, and/or services or goods that may be linked to or advertised on such third-party websites. By clicking on a third-party link, you will leave the current GSUSA site whereby policies of such third-party link may differ from those of GSUSA.

UPC 64188

