



## The Great Outdoors Challenge

The Great Outdoors Challenge is all about getting outside and getting excited about the amazing natural world around us! Each month, complete a challenge and document it in your nature journal. This “journal” can be whatever gets you excited to share your outdoor experiences: a sketchpad, a lined notebook, a blog, a shadow box, maybe even a video journal! Be creative and choose something that motivates you to explore the great outdoors.

When choosing your activity each month, try to select an activity that will be a reasonable challenge for you without taking away from your enjoyment of the great outdoors. Your goal is to be outside to learn and grow, while also creating wonderful memories!

Once you have chosen your activity, document your adventures into your chosen nature journal as you go about the project, whether it takes you a day or the whole month. Show off your discoveries with pride! You can use the hashtag #gsoutdoors to share your creations with the world and inspire other girls to get outdoors.

In June—National Great Outdoors Month—send a photo and story from your journal to [answers@girlscoutsw.org](mailto:answers@girlscoutsw.org) and you’ll earn a special Great Outdoors Challenge fun patch, available for purchase at GSOSW Shops. Grab your adventure buddy, try something new and most of all—have fun!

- October Challenge: [The Detective](#)
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Some of the activities below recommend using the internet for research. Be sure to complete the [Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge](#) before you start.

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## October: “The Detective”

Nature is full of mysteries! There are treasures big and small to be found around every corner. Crack the code by becoming a nature investigator.

### ***Pick Your Detective Project!***

#### **OPTION ONE**

Ever heard of **letterboxing or geocaching**? Do some research to familiarize yourself, and see if this mysterious hobby sounds fun to you. (Psst - check out [letterboxing.org](http://letterboxing.org) and [geocaching.com](http://geocaching.com)). If so, decide where you could hide a letterbox or geocache in a nearby park or natural area, and think about some clues you could give to others to help them find it. Then, create the box/cache, hide it, and post the clues to an online community, or give clues to a friend! Don't forget to include a logbook and a small “treasure,” like a pin, a book, or something you make. Who knows ... maybe you'll find another cache along the way!

In your nature journal, record the clues you will leave for others to discover your box, as well as the actual location of the box. Draw a map if it will help you remember where it is.

#### **OPTION TWO**

Go to the library or surf the web to find information about **tracking wild animals**, including tracks, signs and trails. Take notes in your nature journal as you learn. Think about or find out what animals live in your area. Can you learn to identify their scat? Can you tell the difference between bird feathers? How can you tell where an animal was moving?



Then, go to a local park, trail, or other natural area to see what you can find. Record in your journal what you discover: fur, a nest, maybe even a live animal! Even if you don't find an animal, guess what may have happened to that animal or where it went based on the clues you find. Photos are a great addition to your journal entry.

### **OPTION THREE**

Make a **nature scavenger hunt** for your friends and try to complete it together. You might try to find something in nature for each letter of the alphabet, find as many different types of plants and flowers as possible, come up with any scavenger hunt theme of your own!

In your nature journal, write or paste your scavenger hunt list. If you kept anything from your hunt (a fallen leaf, a flower petal, a small pebble), add it, too. Note anything surprising you discovered, whether you couldn't find an item, and what your friends thought of the

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## **November: The Harvest Artist**

The seasons are changing, and the vibrant colors of early fall are fading as the sun sets earlier. This month, embrace the last full month of autumn by going outdoors and creating a piece of art to illustrate its beauty!

***Pick Your Harvest Artist Project!*** *If you are working on your Art in the Outdoors badge, these activities may help complete some steps!*

### **OPTION ONE**

Find a camera and become a **nature photographer!** Research and practice photography principles like composition, lighting, and different ways to capture a subject in the outdoors. Write down tips to remember in your nature journal.

Then, take your camera and your journal out into nature! Practice taking photos of different subjects. Remember, taking great photos requires time, patience, and a lot of thought. You might find you enjoy taking photos of landscapes, or maybe you prefer close-up, detailed images of flowers or bugs. Paste copies of your favorite photos into your journal. If you are proud of your photos, print them out and host a mini art gallery for your family and friends! If you prefer, you can create a nature video instead.



Can't find a camera to use? Sit in a beautiful spot and try sketching or painting what you see instead! Just remember to give special thought to your art's composition.

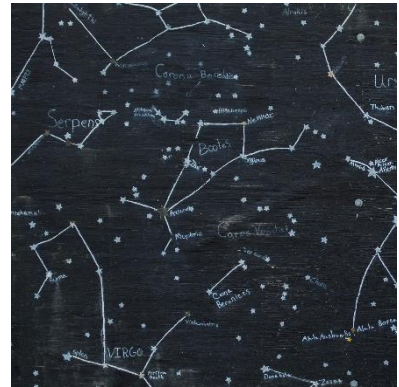
*Choosing this activity may help you complete Step 4 of your Art in the Outdoors badge!*

### **OPTION TWO**

Research or think of a **craft** you can create that incorporates materials you find in nature in autumn. You could create something to wear, like jewelry or a floral crown. You could create an instrument, like a drum or a wind chime. You may want to create a decoration for your home or a gift for a friend.

Whatever you decide, plan out your craft in your nature journal. List the natural materials you need to collect and how you will assemble your craft. Go outdoors to collect the materials you need, then start assembling your creation!

A couple autumn-themed ideas to get you started include a [pumpkin bird feeder](#) and a [preserved leaves mobile](#).  
*Choosing this activity may help you complete Step 2 of your Art in the Outdoors badge!*



### **OPTION THREE**

Embrace the fall by **designing a leaf labyrinth** or maze! First, use your nature journal to sketch and plan a design. Note that a labyrinth has only one winding path, whereas a maze has multiple paths with wrong turns and dead ends. Pick what kind of course you'd like to create, and make your design as complicated or simple as you'd like. Make sure you designate a start and finish to your course.

Then, find a space with enough fallen leaves to create your labyrinth or maze, maybe your own yard, a friend's house, or a nearby park. Use a rake or your hands to bring your sketch's paths to life! Once your creation is complete, test it out by asking a friend or family member to walk through it start to finish.

*Choosing this activity may help you complete Step 5 of your Art in the Outdoors badge!*

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## **December: The Night Owl**

The Winter Solstice is coming, which will be the day of the year with the shortest period of sunlight. Use the darkness to your advantage this month by becoming a Night Owl!

***Pick Your Night Owl Project!*** *If you are working on your Space Science badge, these activities may help complete some steps!*

### **OPTION ONE**

Go to the library or bookstore and find a book about constellations with **star maps**. Learn how to use a star chart, and make sure you're using charts for the Northern Hemisphere in the correct season. Find out why the night sky looks different during different parts of the year. You may even figure out a method to always be able to locate the North Star!

Now it's time to go stargazing. Wait for a clear, cloudless night. Choose three different constellations or stars (or maybe even a planet!) that you want to find. In your nature journal, make rough sketches or jot down any notes to help you find these, including how to figure out which direction is North. Bundle up and head outside with a red flashlight, so there is no bright white light blinding your eyes and making it harder to see the stars. Use your star charts and research notes to find what you're looking for. Maybe somebody you know has a telescope or astronomy binoculars you can borrow! Relax under the wonders of the night sky and add any interesting observations to your journal.

### **OPTION TWO**

Humans are diurnal animals; we're active in the daytime and sleep at night. But there is a whole world of **nocturnal animals** out there, even right in your neighborhood! Grab an adult to go for a night walk, and use your senses to get a look into the nocturnal world. Listen for nocturnal bird calls, rustling trees, crickets chirping, or howling animals. Look for insects flying towards lights, bats darting through the air, deer roaming the trees, or perhaps a mischievous rodent getting into garbage. What evidence or animals can you discover? Make sure to record your findings in your nature journal.

Next time you go out on a daytime neighborhood walk, notice any similarities or differences between walking that route during the day and during the night, and note your observations in your journal. If you live in a place where animals or clues are especially hard to spot, note what else appears at night. What shape is the moon? Can you find interesting shadows? What things seem to glow at night?

### **OPTION THREE**

Can't find a way to get outdoors at night? Use the daylight to design a sidewalk chalk model of the **solar system**! Research our solar system, its planets, and the sun, paying special attention to the sizes and distances between these celestial bodies. Using your nature journal and your research, plan out to scale, both in size and distance, how you will create your chalk model. (You can find projects like this that scale down planets and the sun to the size of fruit or sports balls. For example, if Jupiter were the size of a watermelon, Mars would be the size of a blueberry.)



Once your design is complete, actually draw it out onto the sidewalk or driveway! Make it colorful and label the planets and sun. If you want to save your science art forever, take a photo of the finished product and add it to your journal.

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## January: The Athlete

It's the chilliest time of year, but after starting one of these activities, you'll warm right up. Celebrate the cold by getting active outdoors!

### ***Pick Your Athlete Project!***

#### **OPTION ONE**

Take advantage of daylight hours by gathering some friends together to play a **team sport!** Organize a soccer game, shoot some hoops, or hit the tennis courts—you can pick a sport you already love, or try a new one.

Before you play, write down 1-3 goals in your nature journal that you'd like to accomplish. They can be anything from "I want to pass the ball to a teammate before I take a shot" to "I want to focus on my form as I swing the bat." After you play, return to your journal to reflect on whether you met your goals. Also, write down what you noticed about playing outdoors—did you wear the correct layers of clothing? Did you enjoy the cooler air? Do you prefer playing that sport indoors or out?

#### **OPTION TWO**

Make exercise extra fun by doing it with somebody you love to spend time with! Ask a friend or family member to join you in an **outdoor exercise** activity of your choice. You could go for a run, practice yoga, take a bike ride, or climb sets of stairs at the park.

Before you leave, write down 1-3 goals in your nature journal that you'd like to accomplish. They can be anything from "I want to jog three blocks before taking a break" to "I want to explore a new trail on my bike." After you're done, return to your journal to reflect on whether you met your goals. Also, write down what you noticed about exercising outdoors—did you wear the correct layers of clothing? Did you enjoy the cooler air? Will you do that activity outdoors again?



#### **OPTION THREE**

January is a terrific time to participate in a traditional **winter activity!** Ask some friends or family members to accompany you on an outdoor winter activity of your choice, like sledding, snowshoeing, skiing, or ice skating.

Before you go, use your nature journal to plan out where you'll go and what you'll need to bring. This includes any appropriate clothing and equipment. Check the weather forecast first, so that you can wear the proper layers. When you return, write your three favorite memories from the activity in your journal. What goal would you like to accomplish next time you try the activity?

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## February: The Musician

Can you hear the music in nature? Whether it's a simple birdsong or the symphony of a thunderstorm, the outdoors is full of music. Create your own tunes this month!

**Pick Your Musician Project!** *If you are working on your Art in the Outdoors badge, these activities may help you complete step 3!*

### OPTION ONE

Assemble an **instrument** out of objects you find in nature! First, brainstorm ideas in your Nature Journal. You could create a wind chime to hang outdoors by using a stick, string, and natural or recycled objects (think shells, stones, bottle caps, and tin cans). You could create a stringed instrument with a gourd, or a flute out of bamboo. You could craft a set of simple percussion instruments with rocks, leaves, branches, and more. Plan out whatever design you choose in your journal and write a list of materials you'll need to find.

Then, build your instrument. When it's finished, test it out in front of friends or family by hosting an outdoor "concert" for them. You could create your own beat, or play your favorite sounds out loud to play alongside them. If you get others to create instruments with you, you could form an entire band!

### OPTION TWO

Become a songwriter—create **lyrics** to a special nature song! Think about a place, outdoor activity, species, or a memory you have from being in nature. Use your Nature Journal to write down some words and phrases about your topic that you could draft into a song. Then, write the song! You could write an entirely new song, or you could parody a song you already know by replacing the words. It can be any type of song, or even a rap or a poem.

Once you're satisfied, share your masterpiece by performing your song outside with friends or family. If you make copies of the lyrics for them, they might sing along!

### OPTION THREE

If you love to **dance**, take it outdoors! First, make a list in your Nature Journal of at least

ten different animals or objects in nature that you think could represent a unique dance move. For example, a snake might slither to the beat on the ground, while a tree may gently sway along with the melody.

Now it's time for a dance party! Go outside with some friends or family, and bring a way to play some of your favorite music out loud. As the music plays, dancers can take turns selecting items from the list you made, and challenging themselves to dance to the music in that way! See who can discover the sweetest nature-inspired dance moves.

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## March: The Advocate

The Earth needs people like you to stand up for it. Earth day is April 22; to celebrate, pick a project this month to help make the planet a little bit healthier!

***Pick Your Advocate Project!*** *If you are working on your Environmental Stewardship badge, these activities may help complete some steps!*

### OPTION ONE

There are many local organizations that support the health of the environment and what lives in it. Think about nature and what about it makes you feel passionate. Is it conservation? Animals? Access to hiking trails? Now, find an environmental or outdoors-related organization that you stand for, and find a way to **volunteer!** Depending on your choice, you might spend a full day volunteering, or a couple hours each weekend throughout the month. Call or email people that work for the organization you admire, and they can help you find a way to lend a hand. The possibilities are limitless!

In your Nature Journal, write about the organization or event you chose to participate in, and why you chose it. How did volunteering for this cause make you feel? Did you meet anybody inspiring? Will you find ways to contribute your time in the future?

### OPTION TWO

Choose a small **act of service** you can do each day this month to help Mother Nature. Pick something that you don't already do, but that you could add as a habit to your daily life. For example, you may choose to pick up three pieces of litter off the ground each day, take shorter showers, or try recycling or composting at home. Research eco-friendly habits if you need some inspiration.

As you begin your challenge, write in your Nature Journal about the act of service you'll be doing this month, why you chose it, and what outcome you hope to have by doing this





daily habit. Anytime you notice something interesting in your journey this month, jot it down in your journal. At the end of the month, reflect on your service and the difference you made in the health of nature. How did doing this act make you feel? Will you continue to do it?

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## April: The Scientist

This month, complete a STEM project! STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. Pick one of the options below, or choose your own STEM adventure. Whatever you choose, ask an adult (plus maybe a friend or two) to help you with your project!

### **Pick Your Scientist Project!**



Did you know that by completing this month's Great Outdoors Challenge that you are also completing one step toward the **STEAM Challenge Patch**? Find out more by visiting [girlscoutsofsw.org/STEM](http://girlscoutsofsw.org/STEM).

### **OPTION ONE**

Find a STEM project to work on with an adult. Start by opening up your Nature Journal and writing down a question you would like answered by doing your project. After you finish, come back to your journal and answer your own question! Here are some ideas for your project:

- Create a [snow volcano](#).
- Learn to tell if a winter storm is approaching by creating your own [barometer](#).
- Create a [human sundial](#).
- Find three different rocks outside and [classify them](#).
- Research types of [clouds](#) and figure out which type is in the sky today.
- Create a [solar oven](#).
- Research examples of math in nature, then go outside to find examples of symmetry, tessellation, the golden ratio, a [Fibonacci spiral](#), or fractals.
- Identify plants and create a [yard map](#).
- Collect different types of [soil](#) and see how they interact.
- Collect a bunch of natural materials outside, then examine them under a microscope, or even create your own [microscope](#).

### **OPTION TWO**

Register for an upcoming STEM program with GSOSW! Look through the Program Guide or check our [Activities List](#). Whenever you finish the program, write down three things you learned in your Nature Journal.

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## May: “The Cultivator”

It’s finally starting to feel like spring! Celebrate the return of warmth, sunshine, and colorful flowers by planting your own garden or learning about plants.

### ***Pick Your Cultivator Project!***

#### **OPTION ONE**

Do you have a green thumb? Create a **garden** this month! Your garden could be in your yard, a box in your window that has flowers or plants, or even a few small pots in your kitchen to grow edible herbs. If you can’t grow anything alive, collect special stones, sticks, leaves, or other natural art pieces to design a special area outside.

Decide how you can make your garden unique. You could create a color theme for your flowers, trace out your name in seeds, arrange plants into a shape, or whatever else you think would make your garden yours!

In your Nature Journal, plan out your garden before you create it. Draw a design for your plants, flowers or rocks, and decide on colors, shapes and placement. Then, over the next weeks and months, document any growth or changes you notice in your garden. Draw pictures or attach photos of anything interesting you notice. Now, try to keep that garden thriving all year long!

#### **OPTION TWO**

Do you know the difference between **native plants** and invasive plants? Do some research at the library or on the web, and discover what plant species are native to the area where you live. Figure out how to spot the difference between douglas fir, western red cedar, mountain hemlock, and bigleaf maple trees. What types of flowers and berries are native to your area? See if there are any endangered or threatened plants in your neighborhood that are being harmed by invasive plants. Make sure to also take some time to research how to identify poisonous plants like poison oak. Take notes in your Nature Journal.



Then, go out and explore! Head to a park, a trail, or maybe even your own backyard to find as many native plants that you can. Also, keep your eye out for invasive plants and poisonous plants. When you find an interesting plant, flower or berry sketch it out in your Nature Journal and write a detailed description. Make sure to consider the color, texture, size, health of the plant and anything else you notice. Don't forget to label your sketches! If you come across a plant that you can't identify, your drawing and description can help you figure it out later. Now, you're well on your way to becoming a botanist!



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## June: The Happy Camper

Congratulations—you've made it to June, National Great Outdoors Month! Use what you've learned so far in the Great Outdoors Challenge to create the perfect June camping adventure.

### ***Pick Your Happy Camper Project!***

#### **OPTION ONE**

Never been camping before? No problem! Your **backyard** is the perfect place to try it out. Ask family or friends to join you on an overnight camping experience at your very own home. You can eat dinner outside, play games outside, and, of course, sleep outside! Whether you sleep in a tent or under the stars is up to you.

In your Nature Journal, draw a picture of your backyard campsite, write down fun activities you can do while camping, and plan out a dinner menu. Create invitations for people to join you in your backyard adventure!

#### **OPTION TWO**

It's time to step up your camping game! Find a **campsite** in a natural public area, and go camping with your friends or family in a beautiful place. Visit [recreation.gov](https://www.recreation.gov) to find campsites near you, or go somewhere farther away for an even bigger adventure!

Next, plan everything you need for your trip. What camping gear do you need to bring with you? What type of food should you take? Did you check the weather to make sure you have what you need to stay comfortable? Record all these notes in your Nature Journal. After your successful camping trip, add your favorite memories to your journal, along with any photos or drawings you have to remember the experience.

### **OPTION THREE**

Ready for the ultimate camping experience? Sign up for GSOSW **overnight camp**! Visit the [camp page](#) on the GSOSW website to see our overnight camps and decide which program is the best fit for you.

In your Nature Journal, write what you are excited for, what you are nervous about, and a few things you hope to do while at overnight camp. It'll be fun to look back at your journal after a fun time at camp and add cherished memories to it!

### **OPTION FOUR**

Too busy to camp? Take time and explore the outdoors for the whole day in whatever way you want! Whether it's your backyard, park, or neighborhood. The outdoors is all around you and spending the whole day outside exploring is a great way to have a June outdoor adventure.

In your Nature Journal, write what you saw, places you hope to visit in the future, and what made today special.

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*Missed a month? Don't worry! Simply complete that month's challenge to be caught up!*