

Becoming environmentally active scouts

Scout camping & hiking have always been great ways of introducing young people to nature and the outdoors. And contact with nature has been shown to be the key component in **creating environmental awareness**. This is more important than ever before as the effects of **Climate Change** are becoming obvious for all to see. Many of our structures and programs were set up at a time when their effects on climate & on the environment were not a concern.

But if Ireland is to meet its Paris Climate Accord commitments and avoid environmental catastrophe we need to change our behaviour in all sorts of ways: transport, waste, consumerism, energy use, recycling, our expectations, our scout programs and even our style of camping.

Our motto of **Be Prepared** could not be more apt for the times we live in... Scouting with its tradition of outdoor education and our network of outdoor facilities is ideally placed to help today's young people learn & adapt to climate change and to help them become Agents for Change.

As a values based organisation Scouting could be a leader in sustainability & creating environmental awareness as these go hand in hand with traditional scout activities. With just a small change in emphasis, our programs can incorporate lots of environmental activities & projects helping us to become exemplars of best practice within our communities. Scouting is a place where Nature & Nurture meet.

Lough Dan has decided to do just that & become An Agent for Change. We are showcasing 100 practical eco-projects & ideas ranging from making simple bug hotels to planting future forests. We have demonstrations of loads of ideas that you could include in your scout program to make it more relevant to the age we live in.



List of eco activities you could do around your scout den

- Make Bird and Bat boxes including the latest designs
- Attract different bird species by making a Bird table & hanging a variety of Bird feeders
- Make Hedgehog hibernation boxes and Insect hotels
- Construct a small pond for amphibians
- Installing a Night vision “Bushnell” wildlife camera & Nest box webcams linked to your computer
- Plant a wildflowers meadow or window boxes for pollinator bees & butterflies to increase biodiversity
- Join the All-Ireland Pollinator Action Plan
- Make Set-aside areas and brash piles for invertebrates
- Plant a small herb garden or make a raised bed to grow vegetables



- Plant native trees and create a future forest
- Plant fruit trees or if you only have a confined space plant espalier apples and pears

- Make wildlife management plans for habitats and species endangered around your den
- Help endangered species by enhancing habitats, creating nesting sites and foraging areas



- Plant an edible hedge of apples, blackberry, Logan berries & rose hips,
- Join the campaign for responsible rodenticide use In Ireland
- Install Bicycle stands and encourage kids to cycle more. Give out day-glow vests
- Run bike maintenance workshop and Cycle safety classes
- Organise a “Walking Bus” to your scout meetings for younger kids
- Do an energy audit of your scout den’s energy use and see where more savings could be made
- Add insulation to your den’s attic



- Set up a SEAI Sustainable Communities Network with other scout dens sharing info and solutions
- Research the possibility of installing Solar Panels at your scout den
- Remove all unnecessary outdoor lighting around your den to create a Dark Sky Reserve and reduce light pollution
- Fit light sensors & LED energy saving light bulbs to your den
- Organise waste recycling bins with good signage & posters of what goes into each
- Start a battery recycling campaign
- Recycle mobile phones
- Put up a sign of how long it takes waste to biodegrade
- Organise a Pride of Place campaign to create a Litter Free Zone around your area
- Join the PURE mile project to enhance and keep hedgerows, road side verges or an area you use regularly such as a park, beach, forest area litter free

- Make a nature trail or nature info sheets/panels for your area or an area used by your group for activities.
- Run a wildlife Photo completion of around your area and scout den



- Fit water filters or install a water fountain at your den to reduce the use of single use plastic bottles
- Ban the use of disposable plates, cups & cutlery at the den and on activities
- Start a Green Scout Den initiative to turn your den into an exemplar of best environmental practice
- Make environmental awareness posters
- Design a green code for your den
- Agree a group procurement policy to reduce needless waste?
- Start with REFUSE and then Reduce, Reuse and Recycle as these apply to scout equipment as much as anything.

The World Environment Badge

When your Group or sections start doing these activities you might consider going for the World Environment Badge. This World Scouting Award endeavours to connect young people and the natural world through meaningful action projects. The projects should be carried out in small teams following WOSM’s age-appropriate time commitments.

The programme encourages Scouts to have a holistic awareness of the natural world and how their everyday actions can impact upon this, progressively building a sense of personal responsibility for the environment. Participation in the programme follows a simple structure:

1. Register: A section or small team registers to begin the programme by emailing betterworld@scouts.ie
2. Plan: Using activities, such as those suggested above, explore and reflect on each of the five areas in the programme - Clean water and clean air, natural habitats, risks of harmful substances minimised, suitable environmental practices, and environmental hazards and natural disasters.
3. Take Action: Complete an environmental project based on your exploration of the issues and which helps the local environment.
4. Review: Evaluate your project and each scout reviews their role.
5. Submit an application for the World Scout Environment Badge which records all your exploration activities and the environmental project.

