



Dear Parents and Leaders: Use this guide to facilitate fun and learning for your scout as she works to complete the Junior Animal Habitats badge. Be sure to pick up a map of the Virginia Aquarium before you get started.

Step 1: Find out about wild animals.

Recommended Exhibits: Red Sea Tunnel, Norfolk Canyon Aquarium, Light Tower Aquarium, Nature Trail, or Marsh Loop

Encourage your scout to.....

- Before or after visiting the Aquarium, observe a pet or tame animal and record her observations about its behavior.
- Find a similar animal at the Aquarium to watch and record observations of its behavior.
 - Recommended animals for the pet v. wild activity are birds, reptiles, mammals, hermit crabs, fiddler crabs, or fish.
 - For viewing wild animals, please be aware that fiddler crabs are most active in our marsh during the warmer months. Birds are active year round in our marsh.
 - If you do not have a pet or tame animal at home, you can also visit a pet store or use web resources like videos or webcams. Choose wisely and be sure to preview the material prior to the scout viewing the material.
- To use the Venn Diagram on the scout sheet, your scout should record observations in the outer portion of the appropriate circle. Behaviors the pet/tame and the wild animal have in common should be written in the middle portion where the circles overlap.

Step 2: Investigate an animal habitat.

Recommended Exhibits: Marsh Loop or Nature Trail

Encourage your scout to.....

- Quietly observe nature (if you're talking loudly, animals will likely run off).
- Identify 5 animals on your walk.
- Ask your scout to make observations of each animal and draw a line to the characteristics of the animal. It is very likely that each animal will have multiple lines going to the characteristics.
- Discuss how these characteristics help the animal survive in its habitat.



Step 3: Create an animal house

Recommended Exhibits: Marsh Loop oyster reef

Encourage your scout to.....

- Find the oyster reef along the Marsh Loop.
- Read the oyster reef exhibit signs and discuss the importance of oysters to the health of the Chesapeake Bay.
 - Oysters filter and clean the water.
 - Oyster reefs provide important habitats for a variety of other fish and animals.
 - Oyster reefs help protect the shoreline from erosion and flooding.
- Baby oysters, called spat, do not receive any parental care. They must be able to survive totally on their own.
- Spat will search for an established oyster reef to attach and grow. Once they attach, that is where they'll spend their whole life.
- After your visit to the Aquarium, provide your scout time to color the oyster reef on her scout sheet.

Step 4: Explore Endangered Habitats

Recommended Exhibits: Marsh Loop oyster reef

Discuss with your scout....

- Read the oyster reef exhibit signs along the Marsh Loop and discuss the importance of the Chesapeake Bay.
 - Wetlands are in danger from sea level rise, pollution, and development.
 - The animals are suffering from poor water quality, overharvesting, and disappearing habitat space.
 - Efforts are being made to decrease the amount of fertilizers, waste, and pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. We have also enacted fishing/harvesting limits to help animal numbers rebound.
 - Some animals are able to adapt, but many cannot. Hence the huge drop in oyster populations.

Step 5: Help Protect Animal Habitats

After your visit to the Aquarium, help your scout complete one of the options from the Junior Animal Habitats booklet for Step 5, such as a trash clean-up, throwing a wildlife awareness party, or creating a backyard habitat.