

Chapter 11

OUTDOORS

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Taking Care of the World

Nature Element

Nature is a fundamental element in the Beaver Scout Programme. As an organisation, The Scout Association of Malta clearly states that:

- The outdoors provides an ideal setting for growth and recreation.
- Responsible citizenship imposes an increasing obligation upon all of us to live in harmony with the natural environment.

These beliefs mean that outdoor activities and a heightened awareness of nature are essential parts of all Scouting programmes, including Beavers.

Real understanding develops from doing or experiencing something. When children experience something first-hand, they usually learn quickly. It is essential to provide the Beavers with activities that promote greater understanding of ecological relationships; these activities should promote a sense of responsibility for improving the quality of the environment.

Whenever possible use the outdoors for learning and activities. In a world that is increasingly sensitive to environmental issues, it is more important than ever to help young people build a strong sense of understanding, appreciation and wonder.

Here is an easy way to develop a series of programmes with a “nature” theme. Choose a topic

For example: Astronomy and Space. Organise a series of evenings around the theme. Include stories, a film, games adapted to space the theme, crafts. For example: making rockets or a space shuttle.

It is also possible to plan a programme on environmental issues for Beavers. Visit a recycling centre. Ask these questions: How is our sea polluted? What kinds of environmental problems affect the bigger villages? Why do people litter?

On your next outing at a park or nature reserve, help put up bird houses. Take photos of the activity. Once done why not inform the Association’s Public Relations Officer so that the local press can be informed?

Outdoor Meetings

Consider holding some of your Colony meetings outdoors. It is just as easy to play games, do crafts, sing songs, learn nature lore and follow a spiritual theme outdoors as inside, and you have a chance to do something different. As a bonus, your Beavers will be in the fresh air with lots of room to move around.

Here are some general tips for an outdoor meeting:

- Plan the meeting carefully so that the Beavers are involved in a game or activity all the time.
- If you are planning an outing away from your regular meeting place, make sure that you inform the Group Scout Leader and the member's parents/guardians.
- Know the area where you plan to take the Beaver Scouts. Carry out a thorough risk assessment of the area **PRIOR** to the activity to ensure it is safe. For example: check for safe accessibility for everyone to the site and any other dangerous objects (broken glass, etc).
- Before the meeting, tell your Beavers what sort of behaviour you expect of them.
- Make sure that a signed consent form is received from each and every child. It has to include all necessary emergency numbers and (if applicable) a health form stating allergies etc.
- Keep a first aid kit available and ensure that one of the Leaders present is a qualified First Aider.
- If meeting involves handling of food, ensure that at least one of the Leaders present is a qualified Food Handler. Be aware of Leaders/Children's allergies.
- Parents/Guardians are responsible for transporting or arranging for transport of their children to and from meetings.
- Always have a Plan B.

Changing Seasons

As discussed, many times, programme planning is of utmost importance and sometimes, when dealing with a theme, we neglect to notice the natural changes happening around us. In fact, we can easily look at seasonal patterns as a major programme source. The variety of changes and the liaison between seasons provide a rich think tank of ideas.

Take a look at the season and the changes that occur. How do we know that a particular season has arrived? What changes take place? Some animals prepare for the changes to the seasons differently. What are they doing?

A number of choices exist depending on the season - watch for and talk about migratory birds. Visit a local park/garden at sunset. Talk about the effect weather has on birds. Take a walk to collect weed bouquets, seeds and leaves. You can adapt films, stories, songs, crafts and games to fit seasonal focuses very effectively.

As you plan a seasonal outing, develop a programme around questions like: Where and how do insects and animals spend that season? What causes the season? How do plants and trees survive?

On your next outing, divide the Beavers into Lodges and under ample supervision search for dry nests. Find other animal homes. Find tracks and follow them. Set up feeders for the birds that winter in our country. **Carefully prepare for and closely supervise all outings.** Regardless of the season, always pay attention to the **health and safety of your Beavers.**

Outing Ideas

To assist you we have listed some outing ideas. Although some may seem far-fetched at first, you may find they are possible to achieve after all.

Pedestrian Safety

You will be carrying out a great service to your Beavers if you schedule a programme that shows the proper way to cross the street, recognizing traffic signals recognition, walking in a car park and other pedestrian hazards. Contact your local police station for tips and resource help if needed. Possibly even get a policeman to come visit and talk to the Beavers.

National Beavers Day or Beaveree



The National Beavers Day or as it is called in many countries a *Beaveree*, is a day programme solely for Beaver Scouts. It is an event for Beavers on a national scale. In an activity like this one expects to have all Colonies from all the Scout Groups around the islands present.

These activities are planned by the Groups participating with the assistance of the National Events Team. Such activities are always based around a theme or a saying or a famous character. Then themed games, crafts, physical activities, creative activities, etc will be

chosen accordingly.

Note: When organizing such an activity one has to keep in mind that longer and more thorough planning well as a lot more of manpower is needed.



Cookouts

Bearing in mind the young age of the Beaver Scouts cookouts are not an integral part of the Beaver Programme and it is also dealt with in the next section's programme. However, cookouts can be a way to promote teamwork within the Colony.

One such example would be to divide the Colony into two lodges and have (if possible) a few leaders in charge of each lodge. One lodge will be the Chefs and other lodge the Entertainers. Whilst the Chefs are busy helping a Leader in charge with the cooking – opening up burger boxes, piercing sausages with forks, preparing burger buns; the Entertainers can have a storytelling / playacting / games session. Then after a designated time the Lodges swap 'duties'.

Leaders to Beavers ratio is to be observed at all times – 1-6. However, it would be ideal to get extra Leaders to help in the activity.

Hikes

This type of activity is relatively simple to organize. Ensure that what is planned is not too challenging for Beaver-aged children. Ensure that you know the route and that the necessary risk assessment is carried out beforehand.

Keep the weather in mind. ***Always have a Plan B!***

Visit to the Nature Reserve

With or without a resource person or a guide, Beavers and Leaders can see and learn much

from a visit to a Nature Reserve such as :

Observation of Water Plants and Land Plants

Types of trees

Shapes and sizes of Leaves

Insects

Different Sounds

Pond Water inhabitants

Salt Water inhabitants

Water Themed Activities

Here is a great summer fun idea. All you need is some imagination and you can create a lot of water activities and also games – bet Beavers would enjoy such an activity!

Below are a but a few of the tons of items that you can do based on this theme:

- Bucket filling relay races with sponges, recycled bottles, plastic cups, etc etc
- Bash the leader's nose with a sponge full of water
- Balance a plastic cup full of water on your head
- Water experiments: Will it sink? or Will it float?
- Learn how to wash your scarf properly
- Making plastic bottle fish and float them
- Jam Jar Aquarium
- Make soapy bubbles
- Paint with soap bubbles
- Making fish out of fruit
- Bowling with recycled plastic bottles filled with water and a large foam ball
- Paint with spray gun bottles
- Making colourful paper boats and floating them
- Water bag piñata
- Making ice lollies
- Water balloon football
- Water balloon relay races
- Learn how to make your fruit squash
- Tie and dye your summer t shirt
- Learn about the water cycle
- Making water bottle bird feeders
- Washing up your mess tin, mug and cutlery
- Water sponge toss Olympics
- Making Jelly
- Why not ask another Colony to join you in the fun?!

As you can see the water themed activities are not just based on games but also on the preparation of food items and learning to do chores that involve water. More resources can be found on Scoutkeeper's downloads section under Beavers.

The One Minute Naturalist

Although the ideal places to observe the natural world are designated parks, green spaces or zoos, one may still find much to observe in the grounds around a Colony's meeting hall too.

Whether you meet in a rural school, suburban community centre, or the church hall, the yard just outside the front door or the public garden nearby are full of opportunities to make simple outdoor observations. These offer a safe area for Leaders who have little knowledge of nature or experience in the outdoors.

To take an excursion into the yard, you still need to plan, but you can keep it quite simple and basic. Chances are, the Beavers are already familiar with the surroundings. They will enjoy discovering things that may have been right under their noses.

Hiking

Beavers love to walk in wooded areas or across a field, and a hike is an excellent outing. Keep the distance short – no more than a kilometre or two. Because Beavers are curious, they will want to stop, look and explore. Ensure you have enough leaders for an outdoor activity and have planned it well. Here are some guidelines.

A hike has a:

- Destination
- Purpose
- Plan (distance and stops)
- Game/s

Use hiking often as a means of travel, observation and an energy outlet. Keep in mind that the objective of a hike is to explore and discover. This will prevent your hike from turning into a forced march.

Some hiking ideas:

- Message following hike - like a treasure hunt moving towards a goal.
- Conservation or nature hike - use it to collect things such as an item for each letter of the alphabet – No live animals or plants !!!
- Teach Beavers to choose fallen items - So they do not damage trees and plants by tearing away living parts.
- Observation hike.
- Rock finding hike - find coloured rocks or different kinds of rocks. Display them later by setting them in plaster of Paris. With the help of a Leader / Parent / Guardian put a small tag indicating the date and place collected from.

Nature Hikes

Here are some ideas you can build into a Saturday outing or even a short ramble in the vicinity of your meeting hall or headquarters on a regular meeting night:

- What do you smell?
- What do you hear?
- What type of ground do you walk on?
- What did you see on your way to your destination?
- Build a beaver face, a beaver dam, a lodge, etc., with twigs and mud.
- Scavenger Hunt: Say the name of a plant or bird. Find something from nature that starts with each letter of the word - For example “daisy”: d-dirt, a-ant, i-insect, s-sand, y-yellow. For Beavers who cannot read, draw/show pictures of things to find.
- Find something pretty.
- Find a tall tree.
- Find something that should not be there.
- Find something of a certain colour.
- What colours do you find in nature?
- Collect nature objects (for example: rocks, twigs). Close your eyes and feel the different things, their texture. Do they have a smell?
- Take a picture of an evergreen tree’s leaves. Notice how different they are from the leaves of other trees.
- Give the Beavers a dead leaf. Tell them to find one to match it.
- Study flower petals under a magnifying glass.
- Give Beavers a small jar; how many things from nature they can put inside it? - No live animals !!!
- Show Beavers an item from nature – make sure they are plentiful – then ask each to find a similar item and return to the meeting hall / headquarters. Show another item and send them off again (under supervision).
- Find insects. Take pictures – Let them live!

Planning Steps

Set a goal. What do you want to achieve?

- State the type of hike.
- Establish a time. How long a hike will you take?
- Establish a route and check it out. Choose the location for start and finish, and give clear instructions on how helpers / parents / guardians can get there.

➔ Outline the programme for Group Scout Leader's approval prior to the event.

Include:

- Date, time, venue etc.
- Safety considerations
- List of help needed
- Budget
- Equipment list
- Make sure you parents/guardians are informed well prior to activity. Obtain their written permission for their child to participate.

Listening

On a summer's day when the grass is dry, ask your Beavers to lie down with an ear to the ground. What can they hear? What do they think is going on under the surface?

Invite the Beavers to sit or lie on the ground in a good "listening" position, close their eyes, and listen for bird songs. Tell them to raise a finger when they hear a bird singing and to raise another finger each time they think they hear a different song. After about a minute, compare numbers of fingers and together try to identify different songs and the birds who are singing them.

As part of this exercise, ask your Beavers to sit with eyes closed and see if they can count to 10 without hearing a bird sing.

Looking

With the Beavers, lie under a tree and look up at the patterns made by leaves against the sky. If you are lucky, you will spot a bird. Watch the animals. Show the Beavers how to cup their hands around their eyes to make "hand field glasses" to help them focus their attention.

What things are the animals using to build their homes?

Where are they building them?

Why do you think they are putting them in those places?

Take a close look at the branch of a tree or bush. Talk about the new buds, how buds are arranged on the branch, whether all trees have the same arrangements of buds. Find the scars of old buds and leaves.

Stake-Out

Help Beavers mark out a piece of ground with a circle of string and tell them to take a close look at the territory within the boundary to see how many living things, or how much

evidence of life, they can find. Encourage them to lift pebbles gently and look closely at leaves and stems. Hand out some magnifying glasses to help them explore.

Have the Beavers follow a crawling insect to find out how fast it moves, what it eats, and where it lives.

If Beavers pick up an insect (and they will!!!), ask them to handle the bug gently and look carefully:

What colour is the bug?
How many legs does it have?
Can they find its mouth and eyes?
How many segments does its body have?
Does it have feelers?
Does it have pincers?

Make sure you tell the Beavers to put their creatures back as close to where they picked them up as possible.

Be Crafty

Take paper and wax crayons, charcoal or pastel sticks outdoors so your Beavers can make rubbings of the leaves and bark on different kinds of trees. If there is a tree stump in the area, let your Beavers make a stump rubbing. For this, you need a piece of sturdy paper large enough to stretch over the stump with some to spare so you can make the rubbing as big as possible. Using the broadside of a piece of charcoal or a wax crayon, rub over the paper in one direction only. From the number of rings that show on the rubbing, you can tell approximately how old the tree was when it died, and you will see evidence of wet years (wide rings) and dry years (narrow rings).

Use the sun to make leaf prints. Pin different kinds of leaves on a piece of coloured construction paper (*kartoncina*) or a recycled piece of cardboard from an unwanted box. Set it in bright sunlight for at least an hour. The prints will show not only leaf outlines, but also the vein patterns.

Cut leaves responsibly !!

Farm Visit

A farm visit offers an example of how much learning an outing can provide. The objectives for the visit might be to help Beavers gain some insights into the complex tasks involved in operating a farm and the interdependence of the farmer and people who buy food.

Before making the visit, sit down with the Beavers and brainstorm a list of questions they would like to ask. Here are some examples:

- What size is this farm?
- What does the farmer grow on the land?
- How many animals live here?
- What types of animals?
- When does the farmer harvest the crops?
- Where does the farmer store the crops?
- Where does the farmer sell the products?
- What kinds of help does the farmer get from machinery or other people or animals?
- What conservation practices does the farmer use? Why?
- Is the farmer troubled by predators or pests?
- How does the farmer control them?
- How does farming help us?

As you can see a simple idea like this visit might easily generate a great many new programme ideas. When you choose activities, keep in mind that Scouting aims to increase the Beavers' knowledge and understanding of their natural surroundings.

Special Events

- Visits to senior citizens; adopt a grandparent; make a gift.
- What is your job like (guest speaker)?
- Develop a cooking course (Leaders will do the actual cooking). This might involve making a packed lunch, preparing a soup, cookie night, bake a cake night, etc. Parents/guardians may be involved in the activity.
- Christmas concert.
- Parent/Beaver activity.
- Scout Week activity.
- Carnival night.
- Easter talent show.
- Show and tell – Pets.
- Fundraising for a noble cause.
- Collecting goods (food, blankets, etc) to give to animal shelters.

Outings and Visits

Planning Tips

You need organisation, planning and coordination to make any of these events happen. With the help of all the Leaders in your Colony, you will find the job easy. This checklist of reminders will also help.

Preparations

- Contact the place of interest and ask for all the information they can supply: admission price and what is included in it; availability of guides; number of people they can accommodate at one go; time required for tour or activity; souvenirs suitable for Beavers and their cost; bathrooms and lunch facilities; if they cater for certain food types (allergies); venue accessibility.
 - Estimate total cost of the outing and include everything in your budget.
 - Set a programme for the day.
 - Programme of the day to be forwarded to GSL for discussion and approval.
 - Inform parents/guardians at least three to four weeks before the outing. Include:
 - Meeting place
 - Meeting times (beginning and end)
 - Venue
 - Costs involved (tell them by when you need the fees in hand)
 - Kit list - request help with supervision (if needed)
 - Consent Forms (tell them by when you wish to have them returned)
 - Health Forms (tell them by when you wish to have them returned)
 - Means of transport - Remember: it is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to drive or ensure their child gets to the event equipped and on time. Do not use your personal transport.
 - Collect activity fees and signed consent forms.
 - Two weeks before the outing, remind parents/guardians of those Beavers who have not yet brought in forms and fees.
 - Build up the Beavers' enthusiasm by planning meetings around the outing's theme.
 - Explain to them what you expect of them in terms of behaviour. Give a list to the parents / guardians indicating what the Beavers can bring with them to the activity (jacket, sun glasses, packed lunch, etc) and what they cannot bring (Mobiles, electronic gadgets, jewellery, etc).
 - Check your first aid box and ensure that is equipped and up to date.
 - Ensure that at least one of the Leaders attending is a qualified First Aider.
 - Prepare name tags for each Beaver including:
 - his/her name
 - name of scout group
 - phone number of GSL and BSL
- Children should wear the name tag on a lanyard around their neck or stuck to a clothes' pin onto their scarf or inside a jacket or vest pocket.
- Keep a list of all Beavers' parents'/guardians' emergency numbers and health forms in hand.
 - Prepare maps with travelling directions for drivers or parents'/guardians.

- Confirm arrangements for reservations a few days prior to the trip.

Day of the Outing

- Ensure leaders are on time at the meeting place.
- Give the Beavers their name tag as soon as they arrive.
- Provide drivers with maps to destination and indicate meeting point exactly.
- Remember to prepare some activity to fill any pauses of activity during the day. Although most leaders schedule a half hour for lunch, it only takes some Beavers 10 minutes to eat.

Always carry:

- A First Aid kit and make sure that one of the Leaders is a qualified First Aider.
- All consent forms
- All health forms (where applicable). These should include clear indications of any medication dosages. At the Group/Leaders' discretion parents may be allowed to visit the activity for a few minutes to administer medications to their child. (Always seek guidance from your Group Scout Leader).

After the Outing

- Have Beavers send out thank you cards to people who helped with the trip. This is not just good manners, but it also makes it easier for the next group.
- Hold a follow-up meeting where you remember what you did and saw. Why not show slides or pictures taken on the trip?
- Assess the success of the trip. Did the Beavers enjoy it? What programme goals did it achieve? Can anything be done differently next time? This is an ideal time for evaluation especially if you have a mix of experienced and new leaders.

Checklist

Here is a sample of a checklist to help ensure that everything that needs to be done is completed. When you plan an outing or special event, think of the specific things you need to do before, during and after the activity. As each item is completed, put a check mark beside the date. The leader who has taken on the job of coordinating the outing can be responsible for the check- list.

Date	Details	Person Responsible	Done
	<i>Note dietary and medical considerations of Participants</i>		
	<i>Consent forms of all those participating</i>		
	<i>Have you confirmed the use of the location?</i>		
	<i>Do all participants and parents have information on date, time, cost and programme?</i>		
	<i>Do you have parents' permission? Have they filled in the consent form? Have you asked for their help and cooperation?</i>		
	<i>Have you completed all the required forms?</i>		
	<i>Do you have a theme for the day? Is everyone informed?</i>		
	<i>Will you use costumes?</i>		
	<i>Have you listed and obtained all supplies?</i>		
	<i>Have you asked for extra support from Leaders in other Sections?</i>		
	<i>Is there a first aid kit available, and is at least one of the Leaders a qualified first aider?</i>		

	<i>Are bathrooms available and open? Who has the key?</i>		
	<i>Who is responsible for meals?</i>		
	<i>Do you have an alternate plan in case of bad weather?</i>		
	<i>Is parking accessible?</i>		
	<i>Do you need direction signs? If so, who will make them?</i>		
	<i>Will you have a lost and found? Who will be responsible for it?</i>		
	<i>Have all organizers (GSL, parents, leaders) been fully briefed before the event?</i>		
	<i>Will other family members be present? What will they do?</i>		
	<i>Have you planned to evaluate the event? How?</i>		
	<i>Will you make recommendations for the next organizers?</i>		