



## Our Own Council's "Wild In Georgia" Girl Scout Junior Badge

*The butterfly on this badge is the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, Georgia's State Butterfly.*

Wildlife...wildflowers...wilderness areas... the state of Georgia is a great place for "going wild"! There are designated Wilderness Areas in Georgia, and there are little bits of the wild in your own yard or on your block. Georgians are lucky enough to have mountains, valleys, forests, lakes, rivers, big cities, small towns, subdivisions and farms – and more! This means we share our living space with many, many different kinds of wildlife and have many opportunities to visit our wild neighbors and places. As you explore and learn about Wild Georgia, keep *yourself* safe by using Safety Activity Checkpoints, and protect and preserve wildlife and wild places by using the seven Leave No Trace principles. ***To earn this badge, complete all five steps. There are three choices under each step; complete one choice to complete the step.***

### STEPS:

1. Wild Where YOU Live
2. State Symbols Go Wild
3. Wildlife Watchers
4. Wild Lands and Waters
5. Wild to Explore!

### PURPOSE:

When I have earned this badge I will know "where the wild things are" in Georgia, and how to treat them with respect.

### STEP 1 – Wild Where YOU Live

Whether you live in a city, small town, suburb or rural area, you have **non-people neighbors**: the plants and animals who share their habitats with you! (A *habitat* is the place where plants and animals find the right amounts of food, water, cover and space to raise a family or reproduce.) *Wildlife* is the name we use for plants and animals that do not depend on people for their food, water or shelter; they do not need people to help them reproduce and raise a family. Find out what wildlife is sharing its habitat with YOU! *Are you just visiting in Georgia? Explore the place where you are staying while here!*

- o Keep a wildlife "Critter Count" record sheet for at least one week. Create your chart or record sheet with places for you to mark whether the "critter" you saw or heard was a bird, mammal, insect, arachnid (spiders and their relatives), reptile, amphibian, fish or annelid (worms and their relatives). *Not sure what some of these names mean? Look them up online\* or in a book! Or ask a teacher or other adult friend.* If you can't identify an animal, make a sketch or photograph of it to go with your chart; you may find out what it is later! Which category had the most checks? Share your final count with your family – and your people neighbors, too, if you like! Your County Extension Agent or a Wildlife Ranger might like a copy of your chart as well. **Or...**
- o Georgia provides habitats for 62 species for plants and animals protected under the federal Endangered Species Act. The state of Georgia has its own lists of plants and animals that are considered to be threatened or endangered, and they are also protected under state law. Go online\* or use the library to discover if there are endangered or threatened plants and animals in your county. (Yes, plants can also be endangered or threatened too!) You might start your online\* search at [http://www.fws.gov/athens/endangered/counties\\_endangered.html](http://www.fws.gov/athens/endangered/counties_endangered.html). Find out if there is

an organization in or near your county that works to protect threatened and endangered species, and visit them if you can (Callaway Gardens, the Atlanta Botanical Garden, and the State Botanical Garden for example) or talk to someone whose job is to protect plants and animals. **Or...**

- Weeds...or wildflowers? Learn the difference between a native plant, an introduced plant, and an invasive plant. Are there *invasive* plants in your yard or neighborhood? In your schoolyard or a near-by park? Find out how invasive plants affect Georgia's native plants and animals; then volunteer at an invasive plant pull. (Or, help remove any invasive plants on your own property.) Two places to find out about these "pulls" are through the Georgia Native Plant Society and the Department of Natural Resources (Georgia State Parks and Historic Sites.) Check out their Web sites\* for more information.

## STEP 2 –State Symbols Go Wild

State symbols represent things that are special about a state. You probably know Georgia's state flower, state tree, and state bird; but did you know there were wildlife symbols as well? Discover why these symbols were chosen and how they are important to the state of Georgia.

- Georgia's state **butterfly** is the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail, and Georgia's state **insect** is the honeybee. Find out why each was chosen and why both are important to Georgia's *ecosystems*. Do at least one thing that will attract more bees or more butterflies to your own home or to a school yard or other place in your community. If you can, visit a beekeeper or a honeybee exhibit, or a butterfly center or butterfly festival in Georgia. **Or...**
- Find out what Georgia's state **wildflower** is, why it was chosen, and where it grows in Georgia. Don't confuse this wildflower with a cultivated flower of the same name! Look up both plants online\* or in a book and be sure you know which is which. If you can, visit a place where our state wildflower is blooming and capture its beauty with a drawing, photograph or poem you create. (One place where you will find this wildflower is at Girl Scout Camp Timber Ridge.) Be a nature detective: find out whether the state butterfly or the state insect helps pollinate the state wildflower; you may be surprised! **Or...**
- Georgia has a state reptile *and* a state amphibian. Find out what they are, and why they were chosen; then figure out which one you are most likely to see and which one you are least likely to see. Make a food chain for both the reptile and the amphibian that begins with the sun and has at least three more links, including the state reptile or amphibian. *Not sure what a food chain is? Ask your adult volunteer or go to the library or online\* to find out. One place you might look is <http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/content/animals/kidscorner/foodchain/foodchain.htm>.*

## Step 3: Wildlife Watchers

Georgia has many great wildlife habitats, places where plants and animals find the right amount of food, water, cover (or shelter) and space to survive and raise a family (or reproduce, in the case of plants.) Choose one of these unique habitats to explore and find out how – or if – plants and animals have had to *adapt* to live there.

- **Wetlands:** visit one of Georgia's wetlands. Allow plenty of time to look for and look at (observe) the plants and animals you find there. Discover some of the special features plants and animals have developed so they can live in the "wet" of the wetlands. If you visit a wetlands area that has a nature center or interpretive center, be sure to visit the center and ask questions! Some centers may have magnifying glasses, binoculars or other discovery tools you may check out. *After your visit, make time to tell someone why Georgia's wetlands are so important.* **Or...**
- **Granite Outcrops:** visit one of Georgia's granite outcrops, allowing plenty of time to look for and look at (observe) the plants and animals you find there. Discover some of the special features or habits plants and animals have developed so they can live on what appears to be bare rock. If you

visit an outcrop that has a nature center or interpretive center, visit the center, look at the displays, and ask questions! Find out why these outcrops are an important part of Georgia's ecology and should never be used as dump sites. *If you visit an outcrop during warm weather, be sure to take lots of water and wear a hat and sunscreen. Or...*

- **Old Growth Long-Leaf Pine or Hardwood Forests:** find out what an old-growth forest is and where several are located in Georgia (you might be surprised to discover there's one just a few miles outside Downtown Atlanta!) Visit one of these forests, allowing *lots* of time to look for and look at the plants and animals you find there. Find a place where you can sit comfortably for five minutes without moving or talking – just observing. If you visit a forest that has a nature center or interpretive center, be sure to visit the center, look at the displays, and ask questions! *Find out why old growth forests are so important to wildlife, and why they need protecting.*

#### **Step 4: Wild Lands and Waters**

The United States was the first country in the world to designate wilderness areas by law, through the Wilderness Act. One definition of a wilderness or *wild land* is a natural environment that has not been disturbed by human activity - logging, for example – for at least 100 years; you might like to look up other definitions. There are 14 designated Wilderness Areas in Georgia. You can find a list at <http://www.wilderness.net/index.cfm?fuse=NWPS&sec=stateView&state=GA>

- Choose one of Georgia's Wilderness Areas to visit with your family, Girl Scout troop or other group. Use the seven Leave No Trace principles to help you plan and prepare for your trip and use them *on* your trip. Afterwards, reflect on your trip with a Girl Scouts' Own ceremony or by making a scrapbook of pictures, photos, your own poetry and quotes about the wilderness. **Or...**
- Georgia has only one designated Wild and Scenic River, the Chattooga. Flowing through three states and the Ellicott Rock Wilderness, the Chattooga is one of the Southeast's premier whitewater rivers. Working with a reputable outfitter who will follow the Whitewater Rafting Safety Activity Checkpoints, plan and go on a rafting trip on the Chattooga. *Fill out a High Risk Trip Application at least four weeks before you go!* Afterwards, reflect on your adventure with a Girl Scouts' Own ceremony or by making a scrapbook of pictures, photos, your own poetry and quotes about the wilderness. **Or...**
- Organizations like the Nature Conservancy purchase and *preserve* natural areas in Georgia; this means they can never be developed or used for commercial purposes and will stay in their natural state. Go to the Nature Conservancy or other Web site to research and choose a nature preserve to visit. Before you go, contact the agency or organization that protects the area and ask if there is a project you can do during or after your visit to help the preserve; carry out the project. If there is not a specific project, take work gloves and trash bags with you and pick up any litter you find on the trail or around the grounds.

#### **Step 5: Wild to Explore!**

Georgia has more than 100 Wildlife Management Areas, Natural Areas and Public Fishing Areas throughout the state and within an hour's drive of every Georgian. Georgia's State Parks are home to mountains, canyons, gorges, deep forests and fast-moving rivers. Add county and privately-owned nature areas and you have thousands of acres to explore!

- You can watch birds everywhere in Georgia, including big cities like Atlanta. Go to the Wings Over Georgia Web site (or another site of your choice) to find Georgia's best birding (bird-watching) locations. Choose one or more to visit, plan your trip, pack your supplies...and go! Keep a record of the birds you see and/or hear; it could be a Life List, a Birding Bingo card you make, or just a list – you choose! **Or...**
- Located on the western edge of Lookout Mountain, **Cloudland Canyon State Park** is one of the most scenic parks in Georgia, offering rugged geography and exceptional hiking. The park straddles a deep gorge, where elevation changes from 800 to 1,980 feet. With family, friends or your Girl Scout group, plan and go on a day or overnight trip to Cloudland Canyon. Go to <http://www.gastateparks.org/CloudlandCanyon> to learn more about the park, its facilities, and

special programs for visitors. **OR**, visit **Tallulah Gorge State Park**, one of the most spectacular canyons in the southeastern U.S. The gorge is two miles long and nearly 1,000 feet deep, with rim trails to several overlooks and a strenuous hike down to the gorge floor (permit required.) **Or...**

- o *Get out. Get dirty. Get fit.* Hikers, bikers, paddlers, tree-climbers and geo-cachers love a challenge! Lace up your sneakers and come play in the great outdoors with a biking, paddling, tree-climbing or geo-caching expedition you and your friends plan for yourselves or your families. Choose a state, county or city park, or other appropriate site for your adventure. Be sure to use the Girl Scout Safety Activity Checkpoints for your activity.



**ADD THIS BADGE** to your "Get Moving" leadership journey as you gather Energy Insights from Wilderness and Wildlife (pages 44-53) and enjoy the "Stomp in a Rain Puddle" for Energize patch activity #2.

**Now that I've earned this badge, I'm prepared to give service by:**

- o Telling my friends (especially other Girl Scouts) about the Leave No Trace outdoor principles and how to use them when planning an outdoor adventure.
- o Showing Girl Scout Daisies and Brownies how to discover wildlife in their own neighborhoods.
- o Encouraging citizens to protect the wetlands, rock outcrops or old-growth forests in their community by sharing why they are so important.

**What are you inspired to do with your new skills?**

*I'm inspired to:*

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**Sign here** .....

\* **COMPUTER/ONLINE SAFETY:** Help girls use the Computer/Online Use: Safety Activity Checkpoints and read and sign the Girl Scout Internet Safety Pledge before doing online research. They should either work with an adult or get an adult's permission before signing on.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

*What Girl Scouts Can Learn About "Leave No Trace"* – a great online article, including the seven principles and sources for workshops and free handouts:

[http://www.girlscouts.org/for\\_adults/volunteering/articles/leave\\_no\\_trace.asp](http://www.girlscouts.org/for_adults/volunteering/articles/leave_no_trace.asp)

Another avenue to explore besides the Nature Conservancy in the "Wild Lands and Waters" Step might be "land trusts." The Georgia Land Conservation Center website <http://www.galandcc.com/land-trusts-to-partner-with/> has several listed that are accessible.

The Georgia Ornithological Society <http://www.gos.org/links.html> has a nice list of helpful links for birding places and identification.

The Georgia Botanical Society <http://www.gabotsoc.org/> is another great resource for information on native plants. They offer free field trips around the state to learn more from the experts leading the trips.

If girls would like some ideas for helping pollinators, the Pollinator Partnership <http://www.pollinator.org/> has lots of information.

US Fish and Wildlife has a good "threatened and endangered" list on their website <http://www.fws.gov/athens/endangered/teplants.html>.

*With thanks to Susan Meyers, Girl Scout volunteer and environmental educator.*



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