

Cadette Girl Scout Badge with Tour

Animal Helpers Badge

Composed 2017

This workshop is designed to help Cadet or older Junior Girl Scouts earn their Animal Helpers badge. Girls will complete steps 1 through 5.

Introduction:

Meet the troop at the Educational Programs gate. Welcome them to the zoo and explain that we have a lot to see and talk about in order for them to complete their badge requirements in the time we have together, so it's very important that everyone follow the rules:

1. Stay together as a group. If we always have to wait for people to catch up, we won't have as much time to spend looking at the animals.
2. If the docent is talking or asking questions, it's important that everyone listen quietly so everyone can hear. If someone asks or answers a question, we should likewise be courteous and listen.
3. Please do not run ahead of the group. Stay next to or behind the docent.
4. Remember, the zoo is home to many animals. Do not yell at them, chase them, or bang on the glass of their exhibits.

What makes a good animal helper?

- Trainability
- Intelligence
- Compatible with a home environment
- Domesticated

Tour in the Zoo:

Begin tour at Otters by talking about how otters and humans have interacted in the past. The fur trade was a major factor in westward expansion. Otter pelts were one of the fur bearing animals they were searching for.

Move to the Bald Eagles. Ask why eagles and other birds of prey were important to humans? Birds of prey have been trained to retrieve small animals for their handlers. This sport is called Falconry. For hundreds of years people have been using falconry as a way to put food on their tables.

Gray Wolves are the next stop. Talk about how domestic dogs are the descendants of wolves. Domestic dogs behave like immature wolves in that they are playful and seek guidance from a leader. Dogs have retained some of the traits of wolves. Dogs still have a strong sense of pack

loyalty. This is why they bond so strongly with their humans which is important for dogs that become service animals for handicapped people. Dogs also inherited their strong sense of smell from wolves. Humans have been able to use this trait to develop dogs like bloodhounds and other scent detecting breeds. We use them to look for lost people, detect narcotics, and even detect cancer in human tissue samples.

Move to the Raven exhibit. Raven intelligence is ranked among the highest in the animal kingdom. Some tests rank them with chimpanzees and dolphins. They are able to use tools to solve complex problems on their own. One study presented a captive raven with different problem boxes that contain tools the raven needs to solve in a particular order. The bird was able to solve the problem boxes in order and get the food item out of the last box in the sequence.

At the Pony Express ask them how ponies may have been helpful to humans in US History (hint: it's in the name of the exhibit) The Pony Express was used to transport mail across the country when Americans were expanding westward. Ponies were also used in mines as well. They could walk in the mines and pull carts with rubble out of the mines. This sped up the mining process.

Optional: Farmyard -Talk about domestication of llamas/alpacas as pack animals in the mountains in South America. Can they identify any other animals that were domesticated to help people transport their goods? Donkeys would be a good example.

Head over to the F/P building to talk about why a big cat would not make a good service animal. Discuss the traits of an animal helper. Cross over to the primate's side to talk about animal intelligence. The Scouts should do some animal observation, they can talk about what they think the spider monkeys, mandrills, or lemurs based on the behavior they observed. Smaller monkeys like capuchins are being trained to be helper monkeys for adults with spinal cord injuries and other mobility impairments.

The Black Rhino exhibit would be a good place to stop next. Ask them to review the traits of an animal helper and why a rhino would not work so well.

Optional: B/R House- Could ask them to find an animal that could be a good animal helper in the building. Answers could be parrots or tamarins. You could also talk about how venom from different rattlesnakes is being used in medical research for heart conditions and other diseases.

Optional: Bactrian Camels- Used as a domesticated animal to transport goods in arid climates where horses or oxen don't do as well. Find out if the group knows the definition of arid. Dromedary camels were brought to Australia to transport goods but when cars became easier to get, people released the camels into the wild. Dromedary camels are now an invasive species in much of Australia. So this animal helper has now become problematic to people.

Classroom Work:

Talk about how different dog breeds have been developed for specific jobs. Think of German shepherds and Milonis; these dogs have good scenting abilities, stamina, and intelligence. St. Bernard dogs were bred to have a heavy coat and strong bodies to be able to search for avalanche

victims. Or breeds like bloodhounds that are used as search dogs for lost people or finding fugitives. Breeds like Golden Retrievers and Labradors are often used as seeing-eye dogs.

This would be a good time for them to do the “Leader Dog” obstacle course. They each have a partner, one is blindfolded and the other leads them around the room without speaking. Then they can switch and the blindfolded person can lead their partner.

Next they can watch a few video clips on how military and police dogs are trained. End with the Police K9 Scent detection video. You can use the Wolf chest to have the kids ID different scents. You could even do the pack identification game if you have time.

If you have 2 instructors, 1 can go get a rat from education collection.

You can talk about rat intelligence and the things they are being trained to do. Example: Rats being trained to sniff out land mines in war torn areas. They have been trained to identify cancer cells in tissue samples. They can check more samples in 10 minutes than a lab worker can check in a full day’s work.

Talk about our outreach programs to senior centers, preschools and hospitals. Connecting with nature through our education animals can help improve health. Studies have shown that petting an animal is good for lowering blood pressure and relieving stress.

At the end you could talk about our policy for service animals here at the zoo. Why is the zoo so careful about letting outside animals in? Talk about how it is important to respect service animals and never try to pass your pet off as one unless they really are certified. It is against the law in some states to masquerade your pet as a service animal.

Ask if they have any questions about service animals. Answer questions.

Hand out patches, 1 to each scout who completed the badge workshop. Thank them for coming, and invite them to explore the zoo on their own (time permitting).