

# Environmental Discovery Experience at Norris



The Mount Norris Scout Reservation will host a new environmentally-focused program in August called the Environmental Discovery Experience at Norris, or EDEN. The purpose of program is to help Scouts understand the myriad connections between Nature’s many species, the habitats in which they live and the effect man has on all of this. The curriculum is built around eight merit badges (shown above), including the Eagle-required Environmental Science.

Scouts in Vermont are lucky to have easy access to various habitats and places to discover wildlife. We literally have species flying, crawling, slithering and hopping through our backyards. While its likely astute Scouts can name many of Vermont’s plants and animals, we should not assume that they understand all the relationships created over centuries of co-existence and evolution. In addition, the impact of so many invasive species needs to be explored as these new arrivals are impacting so many different habitats in ways we are only beginning to understand. It is my aim to spend a full week of indoor instruction and outside exploration showing Scouts these important relationships. The program will cultivate fun and love of nature through well-designed activities used by our curriculum writer in several nature camps where he has previously taught. We will explore the full 1,070-acre Mt. Norris Scout Reservation, including a climb up our namesake mountain on the last day.

The Boy Scouts of America has a perfect framework for delivering superior environmental programming with the use of over twenty Merit Badges with some connection and immersion in nature study. The curriculum focuses on eight specific Merit Badges. With attention to the planned instruction, games and activities, all eight merit badges can be completed during the full week of the EDEN Program.



The ***Environmental Science Merit Badge*** is the foundation for this curriculum. It speaks to a Scout understanding of concepts such as Ecology, Pollution, Endangered Species and Invasive Species.

Requirements 1, 2, 3a (3), 4b (3), 3c(2) or 3c(3), 3d(3), 3e(1) or 3e(2), 3f(3), 3g(1) or 3g(2), 3h(3), 4a or 4b, 5 and 6 can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The ***Forestry Merit Badge*** is a key building block for this curriculum. Utilizing the entire 1,070 acres of the Mt. Norris Scout Reservation we will observe and understand Vermont's working forest and its importance to the state's economy.

Requirements 1, 2c, 3a (1-8), 3b, 4a-e, 5a, 6, 7a-c and 8 can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The ***Fish & Wildlife Management Merit Badge*** is a necessary tool for each participant to fully understand our impact on the environment through the observation of managed areas and programs which benefit wildlife.

Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5b, 6c, 7a and 8 can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The ***Soil & Water Conservation Merit Badge*** is a great primer for understanding the causes of erosion, what watersheds are and the complexities of the hydrologic cycle.

Requirements 1a-c, 2a-d, 3a-c, 4a-e, 5a-e, 6a-d, and 7d and 7e can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The ***Mammal Study Merit Badge*** is an important merit badge to begin understanding food chains and food webs. Scouts will learn about mammals from mice to moose and crawlers and climbers. We'll also learn about the State Endangered Pine Martin which might actually range through the MNSR.

Requirements 1, 2, 3c, 4d, 4g and 5 can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The *Nature Merit Badge* ties so much together for the observant Scout. In this merit badge Scouts have a chance to identify other species not discussed in the other merit badges. Rocks and minerals, insects and crustaceans are all examples of these opportunities.

Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4b (1 and 2), 4c (1-3), 4d (1 and 2), 4e (1 and 2), 4g (1 and 2a), 5 and 6a-b can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The *Bird Study Merit Badge* is a welcome return to MNSR after a very, very long absence. The requirement to identify 20 bird species is a normal impediment during a usual week of camp unless the Scout is singularly focused on completing that task. EDEN participants will have five early morning bird walks to identify most of their birds.

Requirements 1, 2a-b, 3a-d, 4a-f, 5a-d, 6a-d, 7, 8b, 9d, 10a-b, 11 and 12 can all be completed during the EDEN program.



The *Weather Badge* allows Scouts to understand the vital supply of precipitation falling on MNSR through the forms of rain, snow, hail, sleet and ice. Scouts will understand the Water Cycle and the effects of climate change among many other concepts.

Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9a, 10 and 11 can all be completed during the EDEN program.

### A typical day might look like this:

0600 Wake-up

0630-7:30 Assembly at the Econ Lodge and start of morning bird walk (5 in all during the week.)

0730-8:00 Clean-up and travel to Parade Field for flag raising with the NYLT Troop

8:00 –8:45 Breakfast

8:45-9:00 Travel back to campsite, gather materials and reassemble at Econ

0900-1145 Instruction/activities/adventure with appropriate breaks

12:00-12:45 Lunch

12:45-2:00 Siesta

2:00-4:45 Instruction/activities/adventure with appropriate breaks

4:45-5:45 Personal reflection and journaling and possible swim

5:45-6:00 Flag retirement with NYLT Troop

6:00-7:00 Dinner

- 7:00-8:00 Evening Nature Activity  
8:00-9:00 Evening campfire and experience sharing; recap of the day  
9:00-10:00 Owl Prowl  
10:00 Lights Out



**The Environmental Discovery Experience at Norris** is a pilot nature program. We have 20 slots available, supervised by Provisional Troop adult leadership. The cost for this unique program is the same as a regular week of Summer Camp with a separate registration link on the Council's website. The program will run from Sunday afternoon, August 4<sup>th</sup> through Saturday morning, August 10<sup>th</sup>. Feel free to contact Randy Gates, Program Director, at [randall.k.gates@gmail.com](mailto:randall.k.gates@gmail.com) with any questions.