EMPOWERING YOUNG ADULTS
GUIDELINES FOR THE ROVER SCOUT SECTION

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"BY ROVERING I DON'T MEAN AIMLESS WANDERING. I MEAN FINDING YOUR WAY BY PLEASANT PATHS WITH A DEFINITE OBJECT IN VIEW, AND HAVING AN IDEA OF THE DIFFICULTIES AND DANGERS YOU ARE LIKELY TO MEET BY THE WAY."

BADEN-POWELL

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"THE MAN WHO IS BLIND TO THE BEAUTIES OF NATURE HAS MISSED HALF THE PLEASURE OF LIFE."

BADEN-POWELL

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Chapter 7 - Nature & Environment

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Key concepts

- "Nature, a club, laboratory and temple" as Baden-Powell described it, and as the favoured setting for Rover Scout activities.
- Environmental concerns and sustainable development.

"FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EYES TO SEE AND EARS TO HEAR, THE FOREST IS AT ONCE A LABORATORY, A CLUB AND A TEMPLE."

BADEN-POWELL

1. Introduction

Life in nature: activities that take place mainly outdoors, in contact with nature. "Nature, a club, laboratory and temple" as Baden-Powell described it, is the favoured setting for Rover Scout activities.

Life in nature is always a greatly enriching experience. As much because of the way it can challenge each individual to explore their limits and go beyond them, as the way it can shelter them. To live in nature requires understanding the significance of all the decisions made and illustrates the effects of actions in reality. Surviving on their own abilities in nature is a greatly empowering for anyone. Being able to rely on one's abilities builds self-confidence and self-esteem in young adults.

At a camp, young adults have to carry out together all the tasks vital to daily life: decide their route, choose a campsite and set it up, prepare meals, shelter themselves from bad weather, etc. Young adults love the fact that outdoor and camping activities give them the opportunity to create together, and experience all the aspects of a micro-society on their own scale. Activities in nature are an extraordinary means of socialisation.

At a deeper level, life in nature is in itself a way of discovering the wonders of nature and creation. It allows a young adult to discover "Man's place in the Universe" and to gain access to the spiritual dimension.[1]

There are a number of challenges facing programme developers and NSO around the world in relation to the nature & environment in the Rover Scout section. Some of these include:

- To provide "life in nature" in communities where there are only urban settings as immediate surroundings.
- Access to "safe" areas.
- Using "nature" as an element of the Scout Method and not nearly as an aim.
- A lethargy in some societies that favours indoor technology as the predominant pastime.

In response to these challenges amongst other things, this chapter aims to provide you, the programme developer at national level, with information, advice and guidance on:

- understanding the principles and aims for environment education in Scouting; and
- the importance of nature & environment in the Rover Scout Programme.

In developing the Rover Scout Programme, NSOs should:

- provide opportunities for "life in nature" (adventure in wilderness confronting natural elements);
- explore the concept of nature to get the best from all of its dimensions;
- follow the principles and aims for environmental education in Scouting; and
- provide links between environmental education and the educational objectives.

Here I am camped by a rushing river between forest-clad hills. Heaven is not a vague something somewhere up in the sky, but is right here in this world in your own heart and surroundings.

By a camp fire the mind can open out and receive great thoughts and higher impulses.

The study of nature brings into a harmonious whole the question of the infinite, the historic and the microscopic as part of the Great Creator's whole. Don't be content with the what but get to know the why and the how.

If you ever feel hopeless about getting on to success in life from a small beginning remember that even that great strong tree, the oak, began at first as a little acorn, lying on the ground.

Patience has more to do with success than almost any other quality.

As we get into our crabbed old age, we are apt to forget that we were once youngsters.

God has given us a world to live in that is full of beauties and wonders and He has given us not only eyes to see them, but minds to understand them, if we only have the sense to look at them in that light.

Compilation of Baden-Powell's texts

2. Nature & Environment and the Scout Method

"Nature, as an element of the Scout Method, refers to the immense possibilities that the natural world offers for the development of the young person."[2] Life in the outdoors and contact with nature have a direct relationship with the purpose of Rover Scouting.

Nature and life in the outdoors are the ideal framework for Rover Scout activities. This is endorsed by WOSM's framework for environmental education in Scouting.[3]

Rover Scouts who enjoy travelling and exploring the world discover the rich tapestry that nature provides, the best way to get the most from the variety of natural differences is to do so in the company of other Rover Scouts.

For Rover Scouts, life in nature is exciting and rewarding. The scope of adventurous activities may be limited only by their imagination, and resources. Certainly Rover Scouts often follow through to adventurous sports which they may enjoy to a very high level, with others from the Rover Scout Community or outside of it. Rover Scouts also like to take part in challenging activities, pushing themselves and each other, to go further all the time. The other side of this is taking time to see and feel the world as you pass through it. Learning to appreciate and enjoy the natural surroundings, developing a love for nature and wilderness, learning more about the natural order of things and taking time to care about this.

Sustainable development is development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[4]

Never before in history has it been more important to develop an attitude that contributes to sustainable environmental development because of the necessity to take positive action.

Rover Scouting plays an important role in connecting people with the natural world, especially given the increasing separation of young adults from the natural environment. With nearly 50% of the world's population living in urban environments, it is important to incorporate the 'bigger picture' of the environment, which includes more than just plants, animals and conservation. Rover Scouts should actively engage in educational programmes and make informed choices about the environment, people and society - choices that reflect Scouting's Promise and Law.

"GOD HAS GIVEN US A WORLD TO LIVE IN THAT IS FULL OF BEAUTIES AND WONDERS AND HE HAS GIVEN US NOT ONLY THE EYES TO SEE THEM, BUT MINDS TO UNDERSTAND THEM, IF WE ONLY HAVE THE SENSE TO LOOK AT THEM IN THAT LIGHT."

BADEN-POWELL

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"HE WHO IS IN HARMONY WITH NATURE HITS THE MARK WITHOUT EFFORT AND APPREHENDS THE TRUTH WITHOUT THINKING."

CONFUCIUS

3. Environment education and educational objectives

Life in nature provides an ideal setting for the development and achievement of educational objectives in all of the areas of growth.

The benefits of life in the outdoors for the physical development[5] of young adults are obvious. Such activities help to compensate for the increasingly sedentary life style of young adults. Challenging Rover Scouts to expand their limits and test themselves against and with nature helps to achieve their educational objectives. Spending time in the out of doors, particularly going on expeditions, builds stamina and fitness. Life in nature provides a vital relationship to the natural world, especially amongst the rapidly growing populations who live in metropolitan or urban areas where very often opportunities are lacking for hiking alone or going on canoeing expeditions and camp on highest mountain of the continent.

Perhaps less evident but no less fundamental are the possibilities that life in nature offers for the intellectual development of children and young adults. Nature allows them to enlarge their horizons, to discovery the universe in its profound meaning. Animals and plants, in particular, challenge every child's natural inclination to observe, discover and explore. And this habit of observation leads young adults to question, investigate and even carry out genuine research into the multiple facets of the natural world and its interdependence. Finally, the use of the five senses, paramount for life in nature, develops sensibility and flexibility of mind towards the non-evident and consequently educates for creativity and initiative.

The educational importance of nature in the emotional development of young adults cannot be overlooked. To experience the beauty of nature and the sensations it can offer develops emotions and feelings. In the Rover Scout Programme activities in nature can extend from peace and tranquility to producing adrenaline followed by high elation. Through the experience of living in nature, Rover Scouts develop an appreciation and a special bond to the environment and a commitment to its preservation and protection.

Life in nature is very useful for the social development of young adults. Whereas, in town, group problems can be avoided by simply leaving and going home, once out in nature, questions need to be addressed and the small group can become a stronger and more stable entity and the individuals within form stronger relationships. In nature, commercial or 'outside' trappings are forgotten and respect is given based on demonstrated skills and abilities. Facing together a real situation, struggling together to satisfy vital needs, creates a real feeling of cohesion between the group members, a powerful feeling of "togetherness" and brotherhood.

Nature provides an ideal ground for spiritual development of young adults. Life in nature shows how precious and tenuous life can be, and teaches us how fragile the life cycle of the world is. Gaining an understanding of how easy it is to destroy something and how impossible it is to repair it, teaches values and develops respect for nature and others. Nature and the outdoors supply a magnitude of possibilities to appreciate the wonders of creation and man's place in it. Expressing one's Faith and Beliefs can take on a special meaning when enhanced by the elements of nature.

B-P sums up his concept in the following words:

> *"Nature knowledge is a step to realizing God. Humility and Reverence... can be gained by commune with Nature: on the Seas, in the Forest, among the Mountains."* [6]

Development of a moral character faces practical and real implications in an outdoor setting where sometimes in nature we can take our life in our hands. Regardless of the amount of organization or preparation we cannot always predict what will happen but must be prepared to react nonetheless. Life in nature confronts young adults with the natural elements and helps them understand themselves, respect themselves and others. Life in the outdoors confronts the young adults with unique situations where they need to trust each other and recognize the need for action.

Rover Scouts "use the forge of the outdoors to temper the steel of youth. But how does the outdoors build character? It does so by creating situations which confront us with the reality of ourselves. The mirror of nature enables us to see ourselves for who we really are. In this way we come to know our strengths and weaknesses, and learn to use the one and work on the other."[7]

In conclusion, nature and the outdoors have always played a key-role in Scouting's methodology. There is no reason, however, to believe that we should not continue to update our methods to ensure that they are responsive to today's youth needs and expectations, in particular, by making full use of nature and the environment as an educational tool in Scouting.

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By definition, Scouting is and has always been deeply rooted in the community. The role that Scouting can play in the improvement of the quality of life in society permeates the whole of B-P's writings. And summarizing it, he said in his "last message":

> *"Try to leave this world a little better than you found it."* [8]

4. Conclusion

As young adults with responsible attitudes towards nature and the environment Rover Scouts understand the need for mankind to change its habits in order to protect and preserve the world as we know it.

Developing contact with nature in the Rover Scout Community is not just a question of activities, it is also a matter of promoting a simple life style in general and a basic respect all things living. Nature, as an element of the Scout Method, refers to the immense possibilities that the natural world offers for the development of the young adult.[9]

Resources

The World Scout Environment Programme is a collection of tools, resources and initiatives to support the development of environment education in Scouting around the world. The programme is based on a set of environmental principles and aims that provide a foundation for environment education in Scouting. The World Scout Environment Programme provides support for Scouts to engage in environmental education activities, to learn about nature and the environment and to make informed choices about the environment, people and society – choices that reflect Scouting's Promise and Law. More information at www.scout.org/environment

The Scouts of the World Award (SW Award) is a special award showing that a young adult is aware of world issues and has acquired through a voluntary service the necessary experience and skills to become a citizen of the world. The Scouts of the World Award concerns global citizenship-preparation for young adults and emphasises three core-themes which demand understanding, skills and knowledge, for improved life on a small planet: Environment, development or peace. More information at www.scoutsoftheworld.net

"Scouting, and the Environment" As the world enters a new century and a new millennium, the environmental problems facing mankind have moved to centre stage. Being a matter of education, it is a matter which concerns Scouting and is today at the forefront of non-formal educational youth movements all over the world. This is what this reference document is all about. Find this publication in the online resource area at www.scout.org/environment

"Scouting, and Spiritual Development". This reference document shows how through its principles, method, activities, group life, etc., Scouting creates an atmosphere that is conducive to the search for inner peace and truth. In so doing, Scouting seeks to contribute to the development of young people who are strong in their convictions yet who are open and tolerant, firm in their faith while respectful of the faiths of others - far away from fanaticism. In view of the widespread indifference to religion and invasive materialism, the importance of this is obvious. Find this publication in the online resource area at www.scout.org

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ROVER SCOUTS IN ACTION

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Global Development Village Caravan in Mongolia

The Scouts recognised that people's knowledge of health issues is very low, particularly in the rural areas. There is also a lack of awareness of the relationship between health and the environment. The vulnerability of children and young people and the need to educate the younger generation to change attitudes in the future was also recognised.

Therefore, the Mongolian Scout Association decided they could use the Global Development Village concept to take health and environment messages into the local communities. As Mongolia is such a vast country without a very developed infrastructure, it was important to physically take the messages to the people – hence the idea of the Global Development Village Caravan.

Rover Scouts organised a bus caravan around the country and took health and environment messages to about 7,000 children and young people in the provinces. They covered a total of 4,500 km over a period of three months.

The following year the Mongolian Rover Scouts teamed up with Australian Rover Scouts to take the Global Development Village Caravan and the important health messages to 5 western and 3 eastern provinces. They travelled 3,900 km and reached more than 10,000.people in the process.

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"This picture-chart of your voyage to success shows some of the bigger rocks that you have to look out for. They may loom up dark, but don't forget that the sunny spot for which you are aiming lies beyond them, so if you get round them they have got their bright side too. You will find it if only you don't let yourself be carried on to them, but navigate yourself wisely past them. By this I mean two comforting things. There is a bright side to the darkest rock; and there is a reward for being active in working your own success, instead of passively drifting to ruin you gain "character" as you round each rock and you gain your goal of Happiness in the end.

N.B. See that star high up in the sky ? Hitch your waggon on to that. Take the star as your guide. In other words, "Aim high."

"Rovering to success", Baden-Powell

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