



Reptile and Amphibian Study Merit Badge at Riverbend Park

Welcome to the Reptile and Amphibian Study Merit Badge program at Riverbend Park. The program may be held at either the Riverbend Visitor Center located at 8700 Potomac Hills Street in Great Falls, or the Riverbend Nature Center located at 8814 Jeffery Road. Please review your confirmation email or call the park at 703-759-9018 for location.

Important general Merit Badge information for parents:

Be sure that you are familiar with the requirements for the merit badge your scout has selected. Some badges may take considerable time and planning to complete and may not be appropriate for younger scouts. Blue cards must be signed by your Troop Leader prior to attending the merit badge class. Park staff will not sign off on any blue cards missing this signature.

Most merit badges are not designed to be completed in a single session with an instructor, so it is not always possible to walk away with a completed and signed blue card at the end of a program. Every badge requires some independent work by your scout.

Please be prepared for the possibility that you may have to stay for the program and not just drop off your scout. We encourage that one or more adults remain. There is no fee for adults and you are sure to learn something. This will allow the instructor to concentrate more fully on the difficult task of imparting all the required information and assisting the boys individually if necessary. Additionally, adults may help keep the atmosphere calm and productive. It is also in keeping with the scouting guidelines for youth protection.

Below is the recommended homework to be completed before the program:

Please download the merit badge worksheets from meritbadge.org and bring these worksheets to class. These worksheets help scouts organize their homework and classwork. We will go over all of the merit badge requirements during class but it is helpful if the scout has reviewed the worksheet ahead of time.

Requirement 1. Describe the identifying characteristics of six species of reptiles and four species of amphibians found in the United States. For any four of these, make sketches from your own observations or take photographs. Show markings color patterns, or other characteristics that are important in the identification of each of the four species. Be prepared to discuss the habits and habitats of all 10 species.

Requirement 2. Come prepared to discuss the approximate number of species and general geographic distribution of reptiles and amphibians in the United States. Prepare a list of the most common species found in your local area or state.

Requirement 7. Describe in detail six venomous snakes and the one venomous lizard found in the United States. Describe their habits and geographic range. Tell what you should do in case of a bite by a venomous species.

Requirement 8. Do ONE of the following:

- a. Maintain one or more reptiles or amphibians for at least a month. Record food accepted, eating methods, changes in coloration, shedding of skins, and general habits; or keep the eggs of a reptile from the time of laying until hatching; or keep the eggs of an amphibian from the time of laying until their transformation into tadpoles (frogs) or larvae (salamanders).
- b. Choose a reptile or amphibian that you can observe at a local zoo, aquarium, nature center, or other such exhibit (such as your classroom or school). Study the specimen weekly for a period of three months. At each visit, sketch the specimen in its captive habitat and note any changes in its coloration, shedding of skins, and general habits and behavior. Find out, either from information you locate on your own or by talking to the caretaker, what this species eats and what are its native habitat and home range, preferred climate, average life expectancy, and natural predators. Also identify any human caused threats to its population and any laws that protect the species and its habitat. After the observation period, share what you have learned with your counselor.

Requirement 9c. Using visual aids come prepared to give a brief talk on three different reptiles and amphibians.

Requirement 10. Tell five superstitions or false beliefs about reptiles and amphibians and give a correct explanation for each. Give seven examples of unusual behavior or other true facts about reptiles and amphibians.

What to bring to the program:

- Bring your completed homework. It is OK if you cannot complete the homework before class. You can bring completed homework in at a later date for sign-off.
- Come prepared to discuss and present your homework. As we move from one topic to the next during class, scouts will be asked to present homework elements completed.
- Bring a tent, if you have one.
- Bring your blue card. (Riverbend does not have blue cards.)
- Bring/wear weather appropriate clothing/outerwear. We will not go outdoors in heavy rain or thunderstorms. Boy Scout uniform not required.
- Bring a pencil and pen.
- Download the merit badge worksheets from meritbadge.com and bring these worksheets to class.
- Bring a snack and drink or money to purchase some at the visitor center. Bring more substantial food if your program is longer than four hours.

Work completed after the program:

During the program, the merit badge counselor will do a demonstration or explain the process for completing the final merit badge requirements. Your scout must provide evidence of completion in order to obtain blue card sign-off. Digital photographs of your scout doing the element and a picture of the completed requirement will be sufficient evidence, unless otherwise stated.

If your scout needs blue card sign-off after the class date, please call 703-759-9018 to arrange a time to meet with a merit badge counselor.

We're looking forward to working with your scout.

Riverbend Park
703-759-9018
8700 Potomac Hills Street
Great Falls, VA 22066
<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/riverbend-park/>