

# Cub Scout Hiking Club

This hiking club “manual” is based on the implementation of Alamo Area Pack 601’s implementation of the cub scout hiking club described in Bryan on Scouting’s blog post at <https://blog.scoutingmagazine.org/2020/01/31/your-pack-will-get-some-serious-mileage-out-of-this-cub-scout-hiking-club-idea/>.

## The General Setup

- Membership in the hiking club is voluntary, but attending one meeting is a great way to fulfill outdoor adventure requirements!
- The goal of the hiking club is to hike  $2*12*n$  miles in an academic/scouting year, where  $n$  is the number of reasonably active pack members
- Webelos fulfill Tech on the Trail and Webelos Walkabout requirements by finding 2-mile hikes nearby to propose using online tools, complete with printing a topological map with a 2-mile hike marked with highlighter. When reviewing their suggestions to tweak and/or schedule them, consider shade and water access in summer and wind exposure in winter. Explain, Demonstrate, Guide, and Enable the Webelos den to plan and schedule the hiking club hikes rather than doing it all yourself.



- Two scouts of any rank (including Lion) are designated the hike leaders. One is the pathfinder, whose job is to follow the highlighted route on the topo map. (Excellent for Wolves working on Finding Your Way.) The other is the flagbearer, whose job it is to carry vertical windhorse flags at the very front of the group in order to define the front, past which nobody is allowed to go. Have the scouts choose an appropriate pitch or bend (depending on the length of rope and flag design) and tie the flags to a long pole. When the flag starts loosening, have the cubs re-tie it for knot practice.

• Both hike leaders’ job is to clearly lead the group along the right trail on the map, decide where and when to take breaks, and to make sure that the buddy system is followed

- The rear is defined by a parent or leader who makes sure that nobody lags behind



- Mileage progress on both the pack level and the scout level is tracked on a three-fold display that is presented at each pack meeting. Draw or paint the type of nature landscape you have on the board, then tape on the blank lists of hikes and scouts on the side folds, and a large blank Cartesian plot of miles hiked vs month in scouting year on the middle section using tape loops. (So that you can easily remove them and replace them with new blanks next year.) Complete it with a heading along the lines of “Pack XYZ Hiking Club”.

To make the long lists of hikes and scouts, print the files, cut off the header on the second page, and then tape the resulting table onto the page with the header left on it.

## Starting up the club

- Order vertical windhorse flags and buy a pole long enough to hold the flags.
- Buy wood slices with pre-drilled holes, a wood burner, leather cord that will fit through the hole in the wood slices, 15 mm diameter wood beads with 6.5-mm holes, and Unicorn Spit in yellow, orange, white, red, and blue.
- Buy cardstock, rings, and stampers (camping-and hiking-specific plus general assortment).
- Print the advancement tracking cards and the reminder card sets, preferably on cardstock to prevent stamp bleedthrough, and cut them apart. Punch holes in the top left corner and put on rings to keep them bundled. Select stampers for each requirement and create an example card for each rank's advancement card for reference. You may want to laminate the reminder cards, as they have a tendency to around the punched hole even with cardstock.
- Find or buy a common wild animal brochure and print pictures of common farm animals.
- Order *What Tree Is This?* from the Arbor Foundation and get a scat guide
- Print one copy of Paths for Everyone (consider laminating), and many copies of Outdoor Scavenger Hunt Lion and Outdoor Scavenger Hunt Wolf, Projections Recordings sheet, and Tree Inventory



- Buy highlighters (can be found cheap at dollar stores),
- Make the hiking club dongles by burning *PACK XYZ* on one side of the wood slices and *HIKING CLUB* on the other, then threading lengths of leather cord through the hole in the wood slice and knotting it off with a square knot.
- Make the hiking club beads by first burning 5, 10, 20, 30, and 40 onto the beads, then staining them with the Unicorn Spit: 5 yellow, 10 orange, 20 white, 30 red, and 40 blue. You can do a second layer with glitter paint on the yellow and white beads if you like.



- Print the bead cards and sew the award beads onto the cards loosely.
- Order *Leave No Trace for Kids* information cards from [Int.org](http://Int.org)
- If authorized to perform lhasangs, order a khata, desiccant packs, insta-light charcoal, dried juniper, and a copal incense burner (popoxcomitl, copalera or sahumero). (No sand needed with a popoxcomitl.) Store the charcoal with the desiccant packs.

## Preparation during yearly planning

- Identify a Webelos den meeting for planning hiking club hikes, either one meeting with internet access for explaining the 5Ws of planning a hike, looking for the places, finding the routes, going over SAFE, and scheduling them/voting on which ones to actually do or one meeting for the 5Ws and one meeting for going over SAFE and scheduling/voting. (In the latter case, assign the finding places and routes as homework.)

## Themed Hike Ideas

**Paint chip hike.** Distribute to groups sample paint cards from hardware stores. See if corresponding colors can be found in nature. Cub Scouts should not pick, pick up, or remove any items from their natural state.

**Drala/Nature hike.** Scavenger hunt for things that start with D, R, A, L and/or N, A, T, U R, E. You can use a Sharpie to make boxes with the words to remind everyone. Cub Scouts should not pick, pick up, or remove any items from their natural state.

**A-B-C hike.** Each group has a paper with A-Z listed. The object is to find something in nature for each letter.

**Babies hike.** Look for baby plants, baby animals. This is a great one in early spring. **Another babies hike.** Everyone look at eye level of a baby. What can you see down lower to the ground?

**No-talking hike.** Look first, talk later. What details can you remember? Key in on specific sounds: water running, bird sounds, wind, leaves crunching under feet, etc.

**Blind walk.** Also a controlled hike. Hikers can follow a trail laid out by stringing ropes between trees, or another hiker can lead them. Have various stations set up with things to be felt, to see if the hiker can identify items without the use of sight.

**Five senses walk.** Hikers travel to stations set up for each of the five senses. Caution: for the taste section, these items should be brought from home and commercially processed, not picked up off the ground in the forest. This hike takes more preparation ahead of time than most, but is one of the most rewarding.

**Flashlight hike.** This is a good hike to calm everyone down, possibly right after campfire when the campers are not quite ready for bed. This is a study in contrasts. Which things look and sound different during the day than they do at night?

**Four on a Penny.** Can you find four different things that will fit together on the head of a penny?

**Circle hike.** This is an excellent idea if you are dealing with physically challenged hikers. A circle is marked on the ground and you make a list of all the things you can discover about what is living in that confined circle.

**Different in the dark hike.** Hike a short path during the day, instructing the youth to remember what they saw and heard. Then, repeat the hike at night and have them tell you what is different.

## Conservation Project Hikes

**Apple Snail Hike.** Look for apple snails after dark in the summer months. Have a trained River Warrior adult remove the snails.

**City Nature Challenge.** Have parents download iNaturalist, then venture out into an urban green space to catalogue plants and animals during the City Nature Challenge.

- Print new advancement tracking cards, preferably on cardstock to prevent stamp bleedthrough, and cut them apart. Punch holes in the top left corner and put on rings to keep them bundled.
- Re-print handouts and information sheets as needed.
- Update the pack hiking club board with new, blank lists and cumulative miles hiked plot
- Make a hiking club leader expanding file folder or refresh the existing one with the dongles (for newcomers), reminder cards, handout sheets, LNT cards, highlighters, etc, and a box with the dignity beads, hiking stamp cards and stampers, and lhasang supplies to put in the car the morning of.

## Preparation before each hike

### The Mental Samboghakaya Things

- Check who's coming and put uncompleted cubs' hiking adventure cards on a separate ring. Make sure you know whom you're expecting so you can wait for everyone at the trailhead. Depending on the hike, you may need them to fill out a liability waiver for a guided hike.
- Write down who will earn their next bead at the next hike if the hike goes to plan, and what mileage are they at now? (In case the hike doesn't go to plan.)
- Find out what animals are common in the area, both domesticated and wild, and what signs they leave behind.

### The Physical Nirmanakaya Things

- Snack - for example ice cream for summer, hot chocolate for winter, fruit salad or a pumpkin cake for spring and fall
- Backup ice water in summer in hot locales
- Windhorse flag
- Dongles, bead cards, lhasang supplies if using
- Your own Scout Essentials, especially topo map and compass
- Check the trail first aid kit for completeness - moleskin, band-aids, ACE bandage, aloe vera, sunscreen, water, electrolyte drink
- Crayons, colored pencils, and pack of pencils
- Paths for Everyone worksheet, one copy
- Outdoor Scavenger Hunt Lion, several copies
- Outdoor Scavenger Hunt Wolf, several copies
- Projections Recordings sheet, several copies
- Tree Inventory, several copies
- Many sheets of plain paper, bring a few on the hike but most can stay at the trailhead

- Highlighters
- What Tree Is This?, scat guide
- Wildlife trifold guide and printout of farm animals tucked inside
- (optional) El Camino Real de Tejas Junior Ranger Booklets and/or Junior Cave Scientist booklet pages

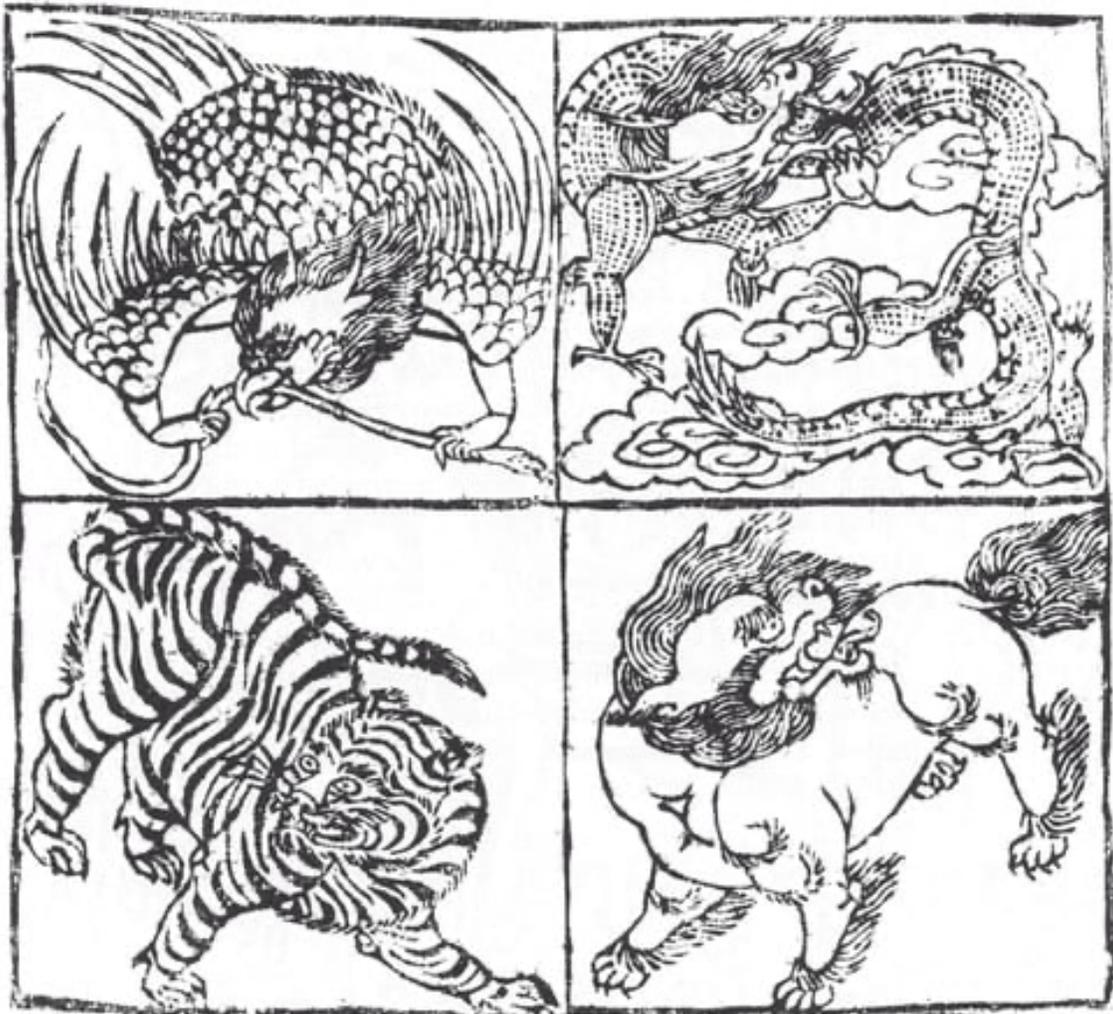
## The awards

Each new hiking club member gets a leather cord with a wood slice that says 'Pack 601 hiking club' on it. As scouts accumulate miles, they are presented beads to thread onto the cord at 5, 10, 20, 30, and 40 miles of accumulated hiking. At 50 miles of accumulated hiking, they receive an engraved hiking stick.

The 5-mile bead is yellow, for the warm sun in your heart that gives your feet wings when they are tired.

The 10-mile bead is orange, for the meek tiger that is powerful yet mindful.

The 20-mile bead is white, for the cheerful snow lion that bounds joyfully from peak to peak.



The 30-mile bead is red, for the outrageous garuda that flies beyond all limits.

The 40-mile bead is blue, for the inscrutable dragon that is one with the wisdom of the Universe.

Together, the sun in your heart and the four dignities form a path to windhorse, the sense of flow and can-do energy that we have when things are coming together naturally. The Four Dignities and the Windhorse are what's on the flags! With windhorse, we can effectively be of help to others and keep our own mood up.

The Four Dignities are old Vajrayana and Shambhala Buddhist symbols for the sacred qualities and attitudes that bodhisattvas and Shambhala warriors develop on the path to enlightenment. (As a symbol, even the tiger is mythical.)

The order of the colors is part of the symbology. The first step on the path is to rouse bodhicitta, the desire to liberate all sentient beings, also known as awakened heart in Shambhala. This is symbolized by the sun, because the sun always shining even behind the clouds is a common analogy for buddhanature/tathagatagarbha or basic goodness, which is what allows bodhicitta to arise.



Tiger is the start of the journey. Tiger is very powerful, but has no need for showing that off. Tigers step mindfully and precisely through the jungle without making a sound, perfectly aware of their surroundings. On the spiritual path, tiger is starting to tame our minds with peaceful abiding (śamathā) meditation. When it comes to hiking, tiger is logging enough miles to feel like hiking is a thing that you do, developing a sense of routine.



Snow lions are white with turquoise manes, tails, and long leg fur. Their main quality is joy - they live in the highlands, where they jump joyfully from peak to peak. This joy is the joy that naturally bubbles up as your mind starts clearing and stabilizing with more meditation under your belt, or more miles in the case of hiking. Routine turns into joy with more experience.



Garuda is a red half-man, half-bird that clutches two snakes. Garuda is the king of birds who hatched full-grown out of an egg and never has to land. Garuda is fearless and outrageous in the sense of not hewing to conventional behavior and simply pursuing truth. Garuda is not limited in how far or fast he can fly, and flies beyond space. Garuda is the start of a shift in perspective from conventional (get through the day, worry about what people think) to the transcendent (do what is needed to do good). In hiking, Garuda is enjoying a

challenge - tackling an uphill with joy, because you know it will make you a stronger hiker.



Dragon is Asian dragon, symbol of wisdom. It is turquoise and clutches jewels in every claw. Dragon is outrageous, so wise and committed to compassionate action that its actions cannot be fathomed from the conventional point of view. In hiking, this could be pursuing the hiking merit badge, including a 20-mile hike in a single day. By the time a cub scout has hiked 50 miles, they certainly have reached the inscrutable level of hiking for such a young person!

## Presenting the awards

- The beads are presented loosely sewn onto business card-size cardstock cards with the respective dignity and a summary of the symbolism on it.
- (If authorized) Prepare a lhasang and have the cards to present ready on a tray, covered with a khata. Have the scouts line up to your right.
- Before presenting the bead cards, pass each one through the lhasang smoke. Have the scouts come up, one at a time, to stop in front of you.
- In order to present a bead, face the scout, do a scout salute, put the bead card into their outstretched hand, tell them to “Be prepared”, and have them reply “I will do my best!”
- Have the scouts line up with their cards to the left. When everyone has their bead, ask them to thread their dangle with the new bead.

## After each hike

- Note the miles hiked per person, sum, and length of hike on the hiking club trifold.
- Log the miles hiked per person in Internet Advancement.
- Mark off the Outdoor adventure requirements that were fulfilled
- Replace any bead cards handed out in the kit

## Snack notes

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### Spring/Summer

Ice cream requires dry ice on top of the ice cream. A good cooler also helps prevent melty popsicles at the top on the cooler.

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## Fall/Winter

For hot chocolate or tea, bring a thermos of boiling water and some with cold. One old-school Stanley thermos won't make hot chocolate for seven cubs, even if some of them have smaller cups in their mess kits, and the ones who get some will have chocolate too hot to drink. Dilution with cold water solves both problems. One pack of Anna's Gingerbread is enough for seven scouts.

## Event Descriptions

<month's> hiking club hike will be at Mitchell Lake Audubon Center, where <stuff>. Lions, Tigers, Wolves, Bears, and Webelos all have a rank required hiking adventure! Here's an opportunity to get that done with the pack. Afterwards, we will have <snack> while we finish up the requirements and hand out any earned beads. Please bring your mess kits. If you're running late getting to the trailhead, please let Teresa know at 217-721-1961.

### What To Bring

Mess kits, Six or Scout Essentials (cubs must find and bring them themselves), hiking board (if your cub has one)

Lions and Tigers will need their handbooks if they haven't completed their outdoor adventure. (They have specific pages they need to complete.)

Bears will need to bring a camera or paper and drawing supplies if they have not yet completed Bear Habitat requirement 5 (Take Only Memories).

### Advancement at this Hiking Club Meeting

At this Hiking Club meeting, we will fulfill all of the requirements for Mountain Lion, Tigers in the Wild, Paws on the Path, and Bear Habitat, as well as requirements 1, 3, 6, and 7 of Webelos Walkabout. We will also complete Math on the Trail and the relaxation requirement of all of the Personal Fitness adventures, and Tech on the Trail requirement 4.

### Exception to Mobile Device Policy

While we do not allow scouts to have mobile phones at scout events in general, if you would like to lend your cub scout yours to use for plant and animal identification using iNaturalist, to check the weather and fire danger rating with, to take pictures, or to track how far we've walked with a step counter or Footpath, you may do so during this hike. However, this is not required, and we don't want cub scouts staring at phones instead of talking to each other and connecting with nature.

### What if your scout already has finished their hiking adventure?

Those who have already completed their rank hiking adventure can count this hike towards the Outdoor Activity Award. All miles hiked are logged and count towards the 100 miles required for the Scouting America National Outdoor Award for Hiking. (Although one must attain First Class rank in the Scouts BSA program to earn it, miles hiked as a Cub Scout count towards the 100 miles.)