

Woodcock Nature Center  
56 Deer Run Road, Wilton, CT 06897

Number of Stamps: 9 plus Girl Scout patch

Distance: .84 miles

Time: 1 hour

Difficulty: Easy

Items to Bring: Compass (can be found on your iphone too)

Clothing: Wear pants and socks with sturdy shoes

Parking Instructions: Please park in the lower lot directly after the Woodcock Nature Center sign. You should see a map kiosk.

**Please make sure to return each stamp back where you found it, so that other Girl Scouts can enjoy.** Thank you. Any questions – feel free to call Tiffany at 914-980-4229.

### **Swiper Letterbox Fun**

One day Dora and Diego decided to head off to Woodcock Nature Center. It was Earth Day and Dora was throwing a party for the Girl Scouts. Everything was decorated. As Dora's friends arrived, she looked back at her decorations only to notice that her special Girl Scout patches for the party were gone. Swiper had taken the patches!!! Swiper, being the tricky fox that he was, however, left Dora and Diego clues to where she can find her missing patches, however, she needed her Girl Scout friends to help.

Dora and Diego stood at the map near the parking lot. As everyone sat staring at the map, Dora spoke up saying, *"Girl Scouts follow me. Stay close and stay on the path. Here's our first clue from Swiper!"*

*"Hi Dora. Sorry I took the Girl Scout patches. I wanted the Girl Scouts to learn some facts about the environment before celebrating Earth Day. I promise not to be too tricky, but I love the Woodcock Nature Center so wanted everyone to learn more about the flora and fauna. Each of my clues will have fun facts to learn along the way. Make sure you remember these facts as you might need them when you get to the final stop where I have hidden the patches. Enjoy!"*

First - take a picture of the map, Girl Scouts. This is important so you know where you are.

From the map, walk across the bridge. Listen quietly at the sounds all around you. What do you hear?

Directly after crossing the bridge, look at the trail marker or trail blaze - the color streak on the tree. Trail blaze/markers help hikers know that they are on the correct trail. They can be symbols carved or painted on trees to help us navigate along the path. Most important is to stay on the path and not go

your own way. Remember how you took a picture of the map. Take a look at the picture of the map that you took. The color on the trail marker (in this case orange, like me) corresponds to the trail that you are going to hike on. This is how you follow a hiking trail to stay safe. Look to the left of the tree with the orange trail marker. Do you see a tree with moss on its trunk? Look behind that tree and you'll find your first stamp. Place your first stamp in the box below. Once you make your stamp in the box, make sure to put the stamp back in its container with its lid tightly secured and place it back where you found it.

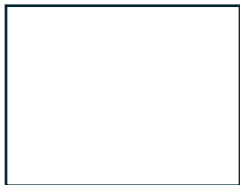


Great job! Now head back on the trail and walk about 20 steps down the trail. Do you see a big mound of dirt on the right? Walk behind the mound of dirt and see a log. Look behind the log for Stamp number 2.



Great job. Now that you've got the hang of it, I might make things trickier. Now come back to the trail. Continue walking and count 4 trail markers until you get to the edge of a dead tree lying on the ground before the bridge.

Face 200 degrees. Do you see the short gnarled trees with leaves? This is Connecticut's State flower – the mountain laurel. Facing 200 degrees, look behind the dead tree for Stamp number 3.

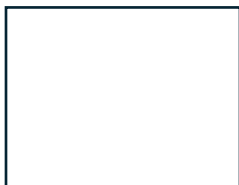


Wow! You're doing great. Here's a challenge...try and balance on the dead tree and walk along it until you reach the end. Did you know that dead trees provide habitat to animals, including squirrels, racoons and insects? A habitat is a natural home for a plant or animal. Dead trees both upright and on the ground create habitats for many species, including owls, bats, and various insects. The cavities in these trees are perfect nesting spots, and they also provide for food sources, like insects that live under the bark. Plus, as they decompose, they enrich the soil promoting new plant growth and maintaining the overall health of the forests. So, even though they might look lifeless, they're super valuable for the environment.

Do you see the bridge ahead? This area is known as a wetland. Wetlands are super important to our environment. Wetlands and vernal pools are essential for biodiversity, flood control, and water filtration. Vernal pools provide crucial breeding habitats for species like wood frogs which are key indicators of a healthy ecosystem. Count 11 posts, face southwest, and look down the post to find Stamp number 4.



Heading southeast on the bridge, go to the very end. Do you see the rocks on the southwest side of the trail? See the large cracks? Cracks in rocks can come from when rain freezes inside of them, expanding the crack. Moss and lichen often grow on these rocks, contributing to the breakdown of rocks into soil. See the shiny spots on the rocks, that's quartz. Quartz is a hard, weather-resistant mineral found in many rocks. Look inside one of the cracks to find Stamp number 5.



Continue down the path and step over the dead tree. One thing to notice is a bush next to the trail called burning bush. The burning bush is known for its bright red fall color, which is why many people planted it in their gardens. But the problem is, it can escape and invade natural areas. Once it gets growing, it can outcompete native plants for resources like sunlight water and nutrients. This can really disrupt local ecosystem and make it harder for native species to thrive.

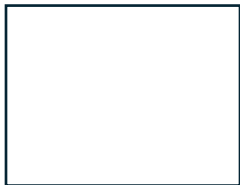
Follow the direction of the fallen log and notice the logs leaning on the rock wall? Stone walls are evidence that this wasn't always a forest. European settlers cut down most of the old forests and turned them into farmland. The rocks in the stone walls were dug up from the ground where farmers wanted to plant their crops. Stone walls were used as property boundaries, or to divide up land for

different purposes like grazing livestock. Most of the stone walls in were built between 1750 and 1850, but some are even older going back to the early 1600s. Many of these farms had become abandoned as farming became less profitable and farmers found better land out west. Over time, the abandoned farms turned back into the forests that animals and humans enjoy today. I found a tricky spot within the rock wall behind the leaning logs for Stamp number 6.

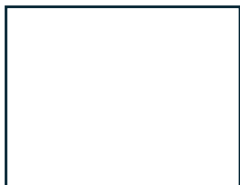


Count 3 trail markers. While you walk, did you know that Ridgefield is home to eastern box turtles which can live for over 100 years? Wild turkeys are also something you can find. Frogs, like the American bullfrog's are known for their deep croaks which you can often hear during the warmer months. And of course, there are squirrels, coyotes, deer, snakes, and owls. Can you hear any animals or have you seen any animals?

Face 90 degrees. Do you see large rocks that are leaning on each other? Look behind and you might find Stamp number 7.



Great job Girl Scouts! You are almost there. Hopefully, you've been learning a lot. Keep walking down the path until you see a road/T-intersection. Don't worry...you aren't lost. Head south on the street. You'll see a circular green open space in the middle of the street. Do you see a tree stump? I use it to sit and plan my next trick on Dora/Diego. Look at the tree closest to you. Don't touch the tree as the vine that is growing up it is poison ivy. Poison ivy causes an itchy rash due to urushiol oil. It has three glossy leaflets and can grow as a vine or shrub. It is mostly found in wooded areas, fields, and alongside roads. Go around the circular green space and notice the trail sign. This is where we will continue our hike and it's also where you'll find your Stamp number 8.



Keep heading south. Continue walking down the trail past 4 trail markers. Look up. Do you see a tree that's branch curves over the trail. If you look down that tree holding the branch curving over the trail, you might spot Stamp number 9. Yay!

If you look to the right of the trail, you'll see an edge habitat. Edge habitats are the areas where two different ecosystems meet, like a forest and a Meadow. These spots are super rich in biodiversity because they offer a mix of resources and conditions from both ecosystems, making them great homes for a variety of and animals.



Wow! You're almost at the end. Keep walking until you see a bird blind. A bird blind is a camouflaged structure used to observe birds without disturbing them. It allows close observation in natural habitats, often found in wildlife refuges and parks. Head into the bird blind. Notice that the bird blind was created by an Eagle Scout from Troop 20 and that there is a Girl Scout project from troop 50390 that shows you information about the birds you might be able to spot? Do you see any of these birds? Warblers are small, colorful songbirds known for their beautiful songs. They migrate long distances and mainly eat insects. They live in forests, wetlands, and gardens.

You might notice that my tricks aren't over! In the lock box are the missing patches that Dora was going to hand out during the Earth Day celebration. You need to code to get in. Solve the 3 puzzles below to open the lock box. You'll need to remember some of the facts above to help solve the puzzles. Good luck Girl Scouts.

1. Vernal pools provide crucial breeding habitats for species like wood \_\_\_ \_\_\_  \_\_\_ which are key indicators of a healthy ecosystem
2. A  \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ is a natural home for a plant or animal.
3. Dora needed her Girl  \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_ friends to help her find her missing patches!

- A = 0
- B = 1
- C = 2
- D = 3
- E = 4
- F = 5
- G = 6

The Lock Box Code numbers can be found using the key to the left and the 3 corresponding letters in the boxes above.

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