

# MERIT BADGE SERIES



# FISHING



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA  
MERIT BADGE SERIES

# FISHING



*"Enhancing our youths' competitive edge through merit badges"*



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

# Requirements

1. Do the following:
  - a. Explain to your counselor the most likely hazards you may encounter while participating in fishing activities, and what you should do to anticipate, help prevent, mitigate, and respond to these hazards.
  - b. Discuss the prevention of and treatment for the following health concerns that could occur while fishing, including cuts and scratches, puncture wounds, insect bites, hypothermia, dehydration, heat exhaustion, heatstroke, and sunburn.
  - c. Explain how to remove a hook that has lodged in your arm.
  - d. Name and explain five safety practices you should always follow while fishing.
2. Discuss the differences between two types of fishing outfits. Point out and identify the parts of several types of rods and reels. Explain how and when each would be used. Review with your counselor how to care for this equipment.
3. Demonstrate the proper use of two different types of fishing equipment.
4. Demonstrate how to tie the following knots: improved clinch knot, Palomar knot, uni knot, uni to uni knot, and arbor knot. Explain how and when each knot is used.
5. Name and identify five basic artificial lures and five natural baits and explain how to fish with them. Explain why baitfish are not to be released.

6. Do the following:
  - a. Explain the importance of practicing Leave No Trace techniques. Discuss the positive effects of Leave No Trace on fishing resources.
  - b. Discuss the meaning and importance of catch and release. Describe how to properly release a fish safely to the water.
7. Obtain and review the regulations affecting game fishing where you live. Explain why they were adopted and what is accomplished by following them.
8. Explain what good outdoor sportsmanlike behavior is and how it relates to anglers. Tell how the Outdoor Code of the Boy Scouts of America relates to a fishing sports enthusiast, including the aspects of littering, trespassing, courteous behavior, and obeying fishing regulations.
9. Catch at least one fish and identify it.
10. If regulations and health concerns permit, clean and cook a fish you have caught. If you are unable to catch a fish for eating, acquire a fish, clean the fish you acquired, and cook the fish you acquired. (It is not required that you eat the fish.)

Earning the BSA Complete Angler Award could help you expand your fishing knowledge and experiences. To become eligible for the award, start by earning these three merit badges: Fishing, Fly-Fishing, and Fish and Wildlife Management. Then complete one or more of the following projects:

- Teach a Fishing or Fly Fishing merit badge skill to your troop, crew, or team as part of a unit program activity.
- Help instruct Cub Scouts on fishing skills or fishery management as part of a Cub Scout meeting or outing.
- Participate in a local fishing derby or tournament, either a Scouting or community event.
- Complete a conservation project that will benefit a local fishery.

With the Complete Angler Award, you can become a mentor for younger Scouts, sharing your knowledge and helping others to enjoy a positive fishing experience. For more information, visit [www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/fishing/](http://www.scouting.org/outdoor-programs/fishing/).



# Fishing Resources

## Scouting Literature

*Scouts BSA Handbook for Boys, Scouts BSA Handbook for Girls, Conservation Handbook, and Fieldbook; Camping, Cooking, Environmental Science, First Aid, Fish and Wildlife Management, Fly-Fishing, Kayaking, Lifesaving, Soil and Water Conservation, and Swimming merit badge pamphlets*

With your parent's permission, visit the Boy Scouts of America's official retail website, [www.scoutshop.org](http://www.scoutshop.org), for a complete listing of all merit badge pamphlets and other helpful Scouting materials and supplies.

## Books

Baron, Frank P. *What Fish Don't Want You to Know: An Insider's Guide to Freshwater Fishing*. Ragged Mountain Press, 2004.

Bashline, Sylvia. *The New Cleaning & Cooking Fish: The Complete Guide to Preparing Delicious Freshwater Fish*. Creative Publishing International, 1999.

Circle, Homer. *Bass Wisdom*. Lyons Press, 2000.

Earnhardt, Tom. *Boats for Fishermen*. Lyons Press, 2001.

Kaminsky, Peter, and Greg Schwipps. *Fishing for Dummies*, 2nd ed. John Wiley & Sons Inc., 2011.

Maas, Dave. *Kids Gone Fishin'*. Creative Publishing International, 2001.

National Audubon Society. *National Audubon Society Field Guide to Fishes: North America*, 2nd ed. Knopf, 2002.

Pfeiffer, C. Boyd. *The Complete Book of Rod Building and Tackle Making*. Lyons Press, 2013.

Rosko, Milt. *The Complete Book of Saltwater Fishing*. Burford Books, 2013.

Schultz, Ken. *Ken Schultz's Fishing Encyclopedia: Worldwide Angling Guide*. IDG Books Worldwide, 2000.

Sousa, Robert J. *Learn to Fly Fish in 24 Hours*. Ragged Mountain Press, 2006.

Vick, Noel. *Fishing on Ice*. Human Kinetics, 1999.

Wilson, Geoff. *Geoff Wilson's Complete Book of Fishing Knots and Rigs*. Australian Fishing Network, 2015.

## DVD

*Casts That Catch Fish*. On the Fly Productions, 2010.

*Joan Wulff's Dynamics of Fly Casting*. Miracle Productions, 2001.

## Organizations and Websites

### American Sportfishing Association

1001 North Fairfax St., Suite 501  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Telephone: 703-519-9691  
Website: [www.asafishing.org](http://www.asafishing.org)

### Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum

1031 Old Route 17  
Livingston Manor, NY 12758  
Telephone: 845-439-4810  
Website: [www.cffcm.com](http://www.cffcm.com)

### Fly Fishers International

5237 U.S. Highway 89 South, Suite 11  
Livingston, MT 59047  
Telephone: 406-222-9369  
Website: [www.flyfishersinternational.org](http://www.flyfishersinternational.org)

### Future Fisherman Foundation

5998 North Pleasant View Road  
Ponca City, OK 74601  
Telephone: 330-993-0014  
Website: [www.futurefisherman.org](http://www.futurefisherman.org)

### International Game Fish Association

300 Gulf Stream Way  
Dania Beach, FL 33004  
Telephone: 954-927-2628  
Website: [www.igfa.org](http://www.igfa.org)

### Izaak Walton League of America

707 Conservation Lane  
Gaithersburg, MD 20878  
Telephone: 301-548-0150  
Website: [www.iwla.org](http://www.iwla.org)

### National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries

1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910  
Telephone: 301-427-8029  
Website: [www.fisheries.noaa.gov](http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov)

### National Park Service

1849 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
Telephone: 202-208-6843  
Website: [www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)

### Trout Unlimited

1777 N. Kent St., Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22209-2404  
Toll-free telephone: 800-834-2419  
Website: [www.tu.org](http://www.tu.org)

### U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1849 C St., NW  
Washington, DC 20240  
Toll-free telephone: 800-344-9453  
Website: [www.fws.gov](http://www.fws.gov)

Fly Fishers International, International Game Fish Association, and Trout Unlimited have each signed a memorandum of mutual support with the Boy Scouts of America that emphasizes an ongoing relationship to promote mutually beneficial programs for recreational fishing.

## Acknowledgments

The Boy Scouts of America thanks Douglas Precourt; Robert J. Sousa, Ph.D., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (retired); and Ben Jelsema, volunteer Scouter, for preparing this revised version of the *Fishing* merit badge pamphlet. Sousa and Jelsema have put in countless hours through the years as coordinators of the fishing programs for the national Scout jamborees. Thanks also to Howard Kern, Master Leave No Trace Trainer, for his valuable assistance.

We are grateful to Howard E. Evans, Ph.D., and Edward Brothers of Ithaca, N.Y., for their expertise and invaluable input, and to Bob Cary, who wrote and illustrated the previous edition of the pamphlet, upon which this edition was based. Several of his illustrations remain in this edition. Thanks also to Trout Unlimited for its support.

The Boy Scouts of America is grateful to the men and women serving on the National Merit Badge Subcommittee for the improvements made in updating this pamphlet.

## Photo and Illustration Credits

Brand X Pictures, Bugs and Insects CD—  
page 74 (*wasp*)

Dan Roberts, courtesy—pages 68, 77  
(*filleting*), and 85

Norm Kasch, courtesy—page 32 (*casting*)

Shutterstock.com—cover (*background*,  
©Mike Mareen; *bobber*, ©Dan Thornberg;  
*rod and reel*, ©Kovalchuk Oleksandr);  
pages 4 (©MPH Photos), 8 (©Ethan  
Daniels), 9 (©FedBul), 11 (*pike*,  
©D7INAM17S), 13 (*fish*, ©Solodov  
Aleksey; *larvae*, ©drag152), 16 (*sturgeon*,  
©Alexander Raths), 17 (*fishing rod*,  
©underworld), 25 (*bait*, ©Alexander  
Ishchenko), 26 (*bait*, ©Khwanchai  
Khattinon), 36 (*yellowtail*, ©holbox), 43  
(*Woolly Bugger*, ©David W. Leindecker),  
44 (©trindade51), 52 (*weighted bobber*,  
©Carolyn Franks), 62 (©Sebastian  
Vereertbrugghen), 66 (*vest*, ©lauraslens),  
68 (©Photo Spirit), 85 (©Erickson Stock),  
and 89 (*arrowheads*, ©eurobanks)

Robert Sousa, courtesy—page 21 (*grayling*)

USDA Agricultural Resource Service/Scott  
Bauer, Bugwood.org, courtesy  
—page 74 (*attached ticks*)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, courtesy  
—cover (*fish, bottom left*); pages 15, 21  
(*top*), and 83

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Duane Raver—  
pages 23 (*walleye*), 24 (*all*), 26 (*striped  
bass*), 27 (*bluegill*), 28 (*catfish*), 31  
(*brook and rainbow trout*), and 35 (*both*)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Timothy  
Knapp, courtesy—page 30 (*both*)

Wikkipedia.org, courtesy—pages 12 (*bear*),  
14 (*lily pads*), 16 (*both*), 18, 25 (*small-  
mouth bass*), 26 (*striped bass*), 27 (*rock  
bass*), 28 (*both*), 29 (*pike*), 78 (*fish and  
rice*), 79 (*fish and chips*), 80, 82, 84, and  
89 (*backcountry*)

All other photos and illustrations not  
mentioned above are the property of or are  
protected by the Boy Scouts of America.

Central Florida Council—page 38

Dan Bryant—cover (*landing net, floating dive  
plug, spoon, jig*); pages 23 (*bobber*), 43  
(*fly*), 50 (*all*), 51 (*bottom three*), 52 (*all*),  
55–58 (*all*), 59 (*three artificial lures*),  
63–64 (*all*), 88 (*cathole*), 92 (*both*), and  
93 (*all*)

Ben Jelsema—pages 13 (*trout*), 15, 28 (*fish  
head*), 31 (*fish in water*), and 79 (*fish  
frying in pan*)

John McDearmon—illustrations on pages 10,  
39, 40 (*bait-casting reel*), 41, 42, 43, 45  
(*arbor knot*), 46 (*Palomar knot*), 47 (*all*),  
48 (*loop-to-loop knot*), 49 (*all except  
circle hook*), 60 (*surf rig, fish-finder rig*),  
61 (*all*), 75 (*all*), and 77 (*all*)

Brian Payne—pages 17 (*surf fisher*), 20, 34,  
38, 65, 66 (*boots*), and 70

Bruce Levitt—page 22

Randy Piland—page 88 (*wastewater*)

Rob Schuster—illustrations on pages 40  
(*spin-casting reel*), 45 (*improved clinch  
knot*), 46 (*uni knot, uni to uni knot*), 48  
(*surgeon's knot*), and 49 (*circle hook*)

Julie Zickefoose—illustrations on pages  
11–12 (*both*), 14, and 19