

Notes from Nature Girl Scout Activity

Equipment Needed:

- Table(s)
- Chairs (enough to have two chairs for each computer)
- Computers connected to the internet open to <https://www.notesfromnature.org/>
 - It helps to have two monitors using the extended setting so that volunteers can easily help scouts with their transcriptions. It is also nice to have keyboards with large keys and mice with pads.
- Power cords
- Specimens
 - It is helpful to acquire specimens that complement the project you are transcribing.
- Fun rewards
 - We have used biodiversity bookmarks, stickers, and Libraries of Life cards.
- Volunteers
 - It is important to have someone at each computer to guide scouts through the activity.

General Script:

- Today we are going to help scientists by getting information off museum specimen photos.
- A specimen is something a scientist collects from nature.
- Museums are like libraries, but instead of books they have specimens. Here are examples of museum specimens (show specimens).
- The problem is that most people do not get a chance to look at all of a museum's specimens. They only get to see the very few that the museum decides to put on display in places like this building.
- To solve that, museums are putting information about their specimens online so that everyone can enjoy and study them.
- Today, you will help us by typing information you see on photographs of specimens into a database on the computer. The information that you type in will go right back to the museums and be shared worldwide for everyone to use.
- Your job is to decode the writing you see in each picture.
- You will need to find where the insect was found, when it was found, and who collected it. It can be tricky sometimes, so look closely!
- Each person in your group gets to enter one thing, so line up at the three stations we have, and don't forget to claim your reward for helping after you finish!

Example of specific script from an event:

Hi! Would you like to help museum scientists with their work? In a museum in California, like this one, scientists have taken pictures of their specimens, like these in this tray. Later, if you go to the back of the museum, you can see more of the Florida Museum of Natural History Collection of insects – a big library of life. See how each specimen has a small label? It tells us about where the specimen was collected, who collected it, and when. We need your help to type this information from the tiny label

Created by Molly Phillips

into the Museum's database. We are going to use an online program called Notes from Nature – want to try? Let's do one together to start with. These are leaf cutter bees – they are pollinators and they line their nests with little pieces of leaf! [Assuming we'll do the CalBug Notes from Nature]

Notes: During our event, scouts seemed especially excited about getting to help real scientists. They seemed to relate well to comparisons between museums and libraries to understand why digitization is important, and they seemed impressed with the fact that most of the collections they were helping to transcribe were made before computers were invented.

Choosing an Expedition on Notes from Nature:

As an example we chose the expedition CalBug Leaf-cutter Bees 2 because we thought that insect labels would be the easiest to transcribe. We recommend going through all of the expeditions up on Notes from Nature and choosing the one that is right for you based on your event or project theme, the age-range of participating scouts, and the expertise of your volunteers. Some labels are more complicated and harder to read than others. Labels with handwriting are especially challenging for younger participants.

Activity:

- When scouts approach your activity booth introduce them to the project (script) and invite them to line up at computer stations.
- Scouts can complete the activity one at a time, in pairs, or small groups.
- Have the correct Expedition open on the computer when the scouts sit down.
- Walk the scouts through each of the tasks. Help them find the drop-down arrows, interpret the labels, and check their spelling/grammar.
- There is flexibility in how many of the fields you ask each scout to fill-out which will depend on the age and ability of the scout, the time available, and the number of scouts at your event. Most of our scouts filled out one page of fields (half a transcription).
- As they are finishing up ask them why they think getting this information is important. Give them their prize, and emphasize that the work that they did directly benefits collections and science.
- Make sure the station is ready for your next group of scouts.