

# A MILLION HANDS

## Plastic pollution and waterways resource pack

**In partnership with**



**Canal &  
River Trust**

Making life better by water

[scouts.org.uk/join](https://scouts.org.uk/join)

**#SkillsForLife**



**Scouts**

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# A Million Hands Big Moment

## Why plastic pollution?

Plastics are used because they are lightweight and durable, and sometimes they're necessary. However, we know that plastic pollution is a huge issue in our waterways and oceans. One of our Scout Ambassadors, Steve Backshall, explains:



**'Plastic pollution is a huge problem across the world and it's not going away. Plastic takes so long to break down and most is not biodegradable, so nearly all the plastic ever created still exists today. A lot of it is not recyclable and in the UK alone, it is estimated that overall plastics waste is around 3.7 million tonnes per year. Of this, around 2.2 million tonnes is estimated to be plastic packaging waste. These plastics often end up polluting our waterways and oceans, causing serious harm to wildlife.'**

**As Scouts, we're part of a worldwide movement and have the chance to make a real difference. Let's protect the wild places we enjoy so much on our outdoor adventures. With support from DEFRA, we've teamed up with our Million Hands partner, the Canal & River Trust, to create some resources to help you explore the issue and take action. Let's tackle this together.'**

## Steve Backshall, Scout Ambassador

## Who are the Canal & River Trust?

The Canal & River Trust is an organisation that cares for 2,000 miles of waterways. You can find out more about the Canal & River Trusts' work to combat plastic pollution in the UK's waterways [here](#).

## How does this link to the Global Goals?

This links to the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), known as the [Global Goals](#). These are goals that people and governments all over the world are trying to achieve to make the world a better place. You can find out how Scouts across the world are getting involved at [sdgs.scout.org](https://sdgs.scout.org).

[Goal 14 \(Life Below Water\)](#) seeks to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources by making sure we reduce marine pollution, conserve coastal and marine areas, and protect and restoring ecosystems.

There are some really simple things you and your young people can do support this Global Goal, such as using less plastic. This resource will help you start to tackle this global problem on a local level.

## Calendar

Take part in the A Million Hands Big Moment in June, by joining other Groups around the UK to take action, and share your story with us at [stories.scouts.org.uk](https://stories.scouts.org.uk).

<p>March 2019</p> <p><b>Understand the issue</b></p>	<p>April 2019</p> <p><b>Understand the issue / Plan action</b></p>	<p>May 2019</p> <p><b>Plan action</b></p>	<p>June 2019</p> <p><b>Take action</b></p> <p><b>(A Million Hands Big Moment)</b></p>
<p>July 2019</p> <p><b>Learn and do more</b></p>	<p>August 2019</p> <p><b>Learn and do more / Tell the world</b></p>	<p>September 2019</p> <p><b>Tell the world</b></p>	

Some useful dates are also provided, which you might like to tie into your project.

- World Water Day (22 March)
- World Environment Day (5 June)
- World Oceans Day (8 June)
- Zero Waste Week (2 - 6 September)
- Recycle Week (23 - 29 September)

# Understand the issue

## Banding together – understanding the impact of plastic on wildlife

**Overview:** This activity encourages young people to think about the impact plastic pollution has on wildlife.

**Outcome:** Cubs will have a better understanding of the impact plastic pollution can have on animals.

**Time:** 25 minutes

**Equipment:** Rubber bands (one for each Cub)

### Linked badges:



### Could contribute towards:



### Activity instructions:

1. Discuss with the Cubs the kind of plastics that might end up in our waterways and oceans. This could be rubbish such as bottles or carrier bags, if they're not recycled. Or 'Ghost Gear' which is the name for abandoned or lost fishing equipment. Talk with them about the potential damage this can cause, the types of wildlife that might be affected, and how they might be affected.
2. Ask a Cub to volunteer so you can demonstrate. Put a rubber band across the back of their hand, using their thumb and little finger to hold it in place. Ask them to try and remove the rubber band, without using their other hand, or teeth, or rubbing it against anything.



3. Hand out one rubber band to each Cub so they can try it themselves. Tell them to pretend that their hand (and arm) is a fish or bird.
4. Tell them to place the rubber band around their hands and give them 30 seconds to try and free themselves from the rubber bands without using their other hand (or anyone else's – no helping!).
5. Have a discussion about how difficult it was to get free and what plastics the rubber bands might represent for birds or underwater life, such as drink can rings or plastic bags.
6. Explain that plastic pollution in waterways such as canals and rivers affects the animals and wildlife that live there. Plastic pollution in waterways often reaches the ocean and affects the wildlife there too. The consequences for animals can be dire – they can suffocate or starve.

## Plastic diary

**Overview:** This activity encourages Cubs to think about how much plastic they use, where they might find plastic in their day-to-day lives, and the harm plastics can cause.

**Outcome:** Cubs will gain a better understanding of plastic use and the problems with plastic.

**Time:** Session one: 20 minutes  
Session two: 10 minutes

**Equipment:** Plastics diary template

**Linked badges:**



**Activity instructions:**

Session one:

1. Ask the Cubs to think about all the items they use in their day-to-day lives that have plastics in. This could include plastic lunchboxes, food wrappers, toys, or water bottles. Some everyday items you wouldn't think have plastic in actually do, such as some teabags, clothing, and drink cans.
2. In groups, ask the Cubs to look around the room and see if they can identify different plastics. Come back together as a group, and encourage the Cubs to share their findings.
3. Give each Cub a copy of the plastics diary template to take home. Before the next meeting, they should record all of the plastics they use in one day.

Session two:

1. During the next session, ask the Cubs to look at their plastic diaries and discuss what they found:

### Some questions you could ask:

- Were you surprised at how much plastic you used?
- Was there anything that you didn't know was made of plastic?
- How did you dispose of plastic you used? Was it recyclable? Did they clean it and put it in a recycling bin?
- Can you think of ways that you could reduce your plastic use?
- How do you think this links to plastic pollution in waterways and oceans?

# Plan action

**Overview:** This activity will get Cubs to think about how waterways are affected by pollution, including plastics.

**Outcome:** Cubs will learn about their local area and develop an understanding of how pollution affects waterways and local areas.

**Time:** Session one: 20 minutes  
Session two: 1 hour

**Equipment:** Pens and paper  
Become a Waterway Detective activity sheets  
Waterway Visit or Litter Hunt activity sheets (optional)

## Linked badges:



## Activity instructions:

Session one:

1. Ask the Cubs to think of some reasons why people might visit a waterway. Some examples might include going for a walk, kayaking or to look at the wildlife.
2. Now, get them to think of some reasons why people might not want to visit. Some examples might include litter, water pollution, poor access for wheelchair users, or poor lighting at night.
3. Give everyone a copy of the Become a Waterway Detective sheet to take home. Ask them to talk to family members, friends, or neighbours, and find out about how they use their local waterway.

Make sure you let parents or carers know, so that they can support them to do this.

Session two:

1. Visit your nearest waterway, beach, or pond and identify the issues in more detail. For example, if the Cubs found that water pollution was a barrier to people accessing waterways, see what type of pollution is there, and how much pollution there is.

If you're in England or Wales, you can find your local waterway on the Canal & River Trust website at [canalrivertrust.org.uk/local-to-you](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/local-to-you)

Remember to follow the [Yellow Card](https://scouts.org.uk/watersafety) at all times, and use the guidance on being safe around water at [scouts.org.uk/watersafety](https://scouts.org.uk/watersafety).

2. Cubs could complete the Waterway Visit or Litter Hunt activity sheets during their visit. If they complete a Litter Hunt, their findings can be shared with the Canal & River Trust at [millionhands@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:millionhands@canalrivertrust.org.uk).

3. Talk to the Cubs about the issues they have identified about their local waterway, beach, or pond, but make sure the Cubs understand plastic pollution, how it affects the whole world, and how they can take action. Ask them to think about actions that would help to make their local waterway better. Here are some ideas:
  - Collecting plastics and other litter from a waterway
  - Planting wildflowers around the waterway
  - Campaigning or raising awareness around plastic pollution
    - This could be writing to your local MP, creating a story to influence others, making posters, or running a community event.
    - The section could also get involved in the Environment Agency's Yellow Fish campaign, which focuses on issues with waste being put down drains.
  - Reducing plastic use in the Colony, such as planning a plastic free sleepover.
  - Make a recycling station at the meeting place, to recycle things that can't go in household recycling bins
4. Ask the Cubs if they have any ideas for making their action sustainable – is there anything they could do to help its impact continue for a longer period of time? One way to achieve this could be by adopting their own stretch of waterway through the [Canal and River Trust Pocket Adoption Scheme](#), which would help them to focus on sustainable action in one area.
5. Ask the Cubs why they may want to invite others from your local community to support their action. How could other members of your community help? Who could the Cubs invite? How would the Cubs invite them? Ensure you follow the [Yellow Card](#) at all times.

# Take action

**Overview:** This activity will be different depending on what you have learned about your local waterway.

**Outcome:** Cubs will take practical action on an issue that affects their local area.

**Time:** Dependent on action

**Equipment:** Dependent on action  
Our Action sheets (optional)

## Linked badges:



## Tips for taking action:

- If you're planning to take action on or around a local waterway, get in touch with the Canal & River Trust at [millionhands@canalrivertrust.org.uk](mailto:millionhands@canalrivertrust.org.uk) to see if they can support. Groups can adopt their own stretch of waterway through the [Canal & River Trust Pocket Adoption Scheme](#).
- Make sure you check whether you need to notify the local council or the Canal & River Trust before taking action.
- Before taking the action, remind the Cubs why they have chosen to take action in this way – what barriers were preventing people from accessing their local waterway? How is your action going to improve the waterway, or help more people to access it?
- With permission, take plenty of pictures and videos of the Cubs taking action. These will be useful for the Tell the World section.
- Cubs can use the Our Action sheets to record their planned action.

# Learn and do more

**Overview:** This activity will help Cubs to think about how to reduce plastic pollution, in order to avoid more serious problems in the future.

**Outcome:** Cubs will know how they can reduce, reuse and recycle, and how they can encourage other members of the community to do so too.

**Time:** 40 minutes

**Equipment:** Paper and pencils or pens

## Linked badges:



## Activity instructions:

1. Ask the Cubs to reflect on the action they have taken. What went well? What would they do differently next time? What did they most enjoy? How did they make a difference?
2. Ask the Cubs if they know what people mean when they talk about 'Reduce, reuse, and recycle'.
  - Reduce the amount of waste you create
  - Reuse everyday items
  - Recycle products that can be recycled

Do they know what they can put in their recycling bins at home? What needs to be taken to a recycling centre or collection point (eg. at a supermarket)? What is not currently recyclable?

You can find out about what can be recycled in your local area and where, using the recycling locator at [recyclenow.com](https://www.recyclenow.com).

3. Help the Cubs to think of three challenges they could take to reduce, reuse, and recycle:

Does their meeting place need recycling bins? Could they use have reusable plates and cutlery at meetings and camps? What happens to a Cub's uniform when they move on to Scouts?

4. Make posters of these actions, and display them in your meeting place. Now you can easily refer back to them when planning for activities or cleaning up afterwards.

## More activities

Looking for more activity ideas? Why not try plastic bag weaving or making an eco-brick? You can find activity instructions in the Beaver and Cub activity book.

# Tell the world

**Overview:** This activity will spread the word about your actions and help others to tackle plastic pollution.

**Outcome:** Cubs will creatively share their knowledge and learning with the wider community.

**Time:** One hour

**Equipment:** Paper, pens, printed photos, scissors, computer access, and video content

## Linked badges:



## Activity instructions:

1. Give the Cubs the photos of their action, and ask them to decide how they want to tell others about what they did and what they learnt. They could create a poster, short play, video, or song to showcase what they did, and the most important thing they learned.
2. If you weren't able to take photos of the Cubs, use photos of the area where they took action or ask them to draw pictures.
3. Alternatively, the Cubs could create a poster, short play, video, or song to use as a campaign, encouraging others to tackle plastic pollution and reduce plastic use. They could focus this on the concept of Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.
4. With permission, share the Cubs' creations on social media.
5. Share your story with us at [stories.scouts.org.uk](https://stories.scouts.org.uk).