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Local scout earns all merit badges

Katie Tiller Oct 24, 2018



Cutler Shiver earned all 137 merit badges—a feat that has been completed by only 387 Scouts since the organization was founded in 1910. [Photo by Katie Tiller]

Eagle Scout Cutler Shiver of Troop 149 last month received the William T. Hornaday Award for his work in conserving monarch butterflies around Oconee County.

But even more impressive, Shiver was also recognized for earning all 137 merit badges a scout can earn.

Monarch butterfly conservation

"I've always been interested in conservation and my seventh grade teacher talked to us a lot about the monarch butterfly and the problems they face," said Shiver, who is now a junior at Oconee County High School.

Shiver helped design and plant the butterfly way station at Rocky Branch for his Eagle Scout project, after learning that a teacher at the school was interested in making one.

"We planted an acre's worth of milkweed and other nectar-giving perennials that are native to the area," said Shiver.

In the past 20 years, the monarch butterfly population has declined by over 90 percent. This year at Rocky Branch Elementary, students and teachers are now learning to identify, observe, raise and release monarch butterflies.

"It's pretty strenuous requirements, it must be for conservation," Shiver says of the Hornaday Award. "It's more in-depth than an Eagle Scout project and you need to prove your project made a difference. You also have to earn various conservation-related merit badges, such as soil and water conservation, sustainability, environmental science, various things like that."

Shiver says that he sees more conservation work in his future.

Merit badge achievements

Even more rare than receiving the Hornaday Award, which only receives about 50 applications a year due to the high standards, Shiver was also recognized for earning all 137 merit badges—a feat that has been completed by only 387 Scouts since the organization was founded in 1910.

Shiver finished his last badge—the pet care badge—this year, having acquired 83 badges when he earned the rank of Eagle Scout in 2017.

His first merit badge was earned just a few months after he joined the Boy Scouts at 11 years old—the communications merit badge.

"I used to be absolutely terrified of speaking in front of people, but since earning the communications badge and being senior leader of my troop has really helped with that," said Shiver, who joined the Scouts after watching his older brother earn his Eagle ranking.

"When I was a little kid, my brother, Clayton, did his Eagle Scout and I thought the Boy Scouts were so cool, so I finally got to join," said Shiver, who joined the same Troop his brother had been in.

The merit badges he has decorating his merit badge sash run the gamut, from coin collecting to sculpting to an adventure badge emblazoned with Indiana Jones' iconic hat and whip.

"A lot of them are a lot of fun," recalled Shiver. "Scuba diving was one of the more recent ones I did. The biggest process was getting scuba certified, which involves learning how to dive, knowing what to do with most problems you can face underwater."

Shiver says that the hardest merit badge was his backpacking badge, which he also traveled the furthest for.

"Backpacking took a long time; we went to the Philmont Ranch in New Mexico and did about 80 miles in ten days," he said. "In hindsight, we probably should have picked a less strenuous course, but it was a lot of fun. I finished the badge up on the Appalachian Trail."

Shiver said that many of his merit badges put him out of his comfort zone and challenged him.

"Backpacking and cycling, I hadn't done those in a while—it certainly gets uncomfortable after 30 or 40 miles," he said. "And again communications, public speaking, things like that, I was totally uncomfortable with it, but after doing it a few times, I got more used to it and I'm not as uncomfortable with it now."

Now, Shiver's role in the troop will be to teach younger scouts what he knows, from knot tying to first aid to planning and leading trips.

Life lessons from scouting

With his eye is set on the Air Force Academy, Shiver says that he's learned invaluable life lessons from scouting—including even earning his aviation badge.

"Because of Boy Scouts, I have had so many experiences that I never would have had otherwise," said Shiver. "I've been snow skiing and water skiing, scuba diving and whitewater kayaking. I've backpacked in the mountains and gone spelunking in caves. I've swam with the manatees and biked on the Silver Comet. I've learned how to survey and program computers and even how to weld. I could list 137 different things I've learned or experienced from scouting, but more [important] than the specific things is the whole experience together."

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Congressional Award Gold Medal Recipient



Eagle Scouts Continue to Excel!

Eagle Scout Cutler Shiver was the recipient of the Congressional Award Gold Medal on June 20. The award ceremony in which Cutler received this prestigious award took place at the United States Capitol Building and was presented by Georgia Representative Jody Hice.

Earning the Congressional Award Gold Medal is no easy task. At least 400 hours of voluntary public service are required. Cutler used hours from his Eagle project, his Hornaday Award, and additional hours helping other scouts

with their projects. *BUT THAT'S NOT ALL*. Recipients are also required to complete 200+ hours of personal development, which Cutler did by earning merit badges relating to nature and the world around him. In addition, he completed an exploration/expedition and used his trip to Philmont and his experience as "navigator" toward the personal development requirement.

While in our nation's Capital, Cutler met with Larry Chase, BSA National Commissioner Service Chair. Cutler gives credit to Scouting as the foundation for earning the Award.

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