



Fenton Eagle Scout John Trecha reaches unique milestone, with 135 merit badges

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Eagle Scout John Trecha, 14, poses for portrait at his home on Wednesday, June 2, 2013 in Fenton. Trecha, who first started as a Cub Scout in 2006, has earned all 135 merit badges, which has taken him on a five-day, 30-mile backpacking trek, a 50-mile bike ride, certification in scuba and even flying a plane. Jake May | MLive.com

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FENTON, MI – Fenton Eagle Scout John Trecha has reached a milestone few other Boy Scouts his age have attained.

Earning **merit badges** at a rate of 50 per year starting at age 11, Trecha got all 135 merit badges in the Boy Scouts -- one month after turning 14.

"The boys definitely have to be dedicated to do that," said Ann Norris, program assistant at Boy Scouts Michigan Crossroads Council's Water and Woods Field Service Council. "It's quite an accomplishment."

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Norris said a typical amount of badges earned by the time Scouts turn 14 is near 50, which include the 21 necessary to advance to Eagle Scout -- the highest rank in Boy Scouting.

After earning his first merit badge, Trecha told his father he wanted to earn at least 100. Once reaching the 50 mark in 2010, the sash that contained his sewn-on merit badge patches would need extra accommodation.

"If your goal is 100, we're going to have to extend this," father, Jeff Trecha remembered thinking, as the sash had been full with patches.

Soon after earning 100 badges, John Trecha changed his mind.

"I wanted to earn them all," he said.



John Trecha salutes at his first Cub Scout meeting in this 2006 photo.
Courtesy Jeff Trecha

After starting as a Cub Scout in 2006, he remembered being "so enthused" and eagerly agreed to continue through the Boy Scout program.

But it wasn't always as easy as a change of mind.

"I was so scared," he said. "No one from my class was in my Tiger Cub (troop)."

Eventually, he overcame his fear -- which may have happened while earning a cinematography badge. It involved making a five-minute, stop-motion movie.

"It was my favorite merit badge," John Trecha said. "I would have never ventured into theater if not for Boy Scouts."

As he continued, John Trecha would undertake wildlife and nature studies at different locations in Fenton that had him identifying species of birds, plants and trees while learning soil and water conservation, forestry, and mammal, fish and water life. He's also scuba-certified, after training for at least six weeks to perform a 30-foot-deep open dive in Lake Fenton.

"He came home and for two and a half years, he would spend a half hour every day and an hour or two on weekends dedicated to at least five or six (merit badges) at a time," Jeff Trecha said.

The amount of work required to earn just one badge is challenging, John Trecha said.

John Trecha had stayed five days and four nights in the Kalkaska area on a 30-mile backpacking trek to earn one badge. Another project had him tending to a garden for an entire season, growing at least 10 different kinds of vegetables. One project even had him raising a tree frog.

"They barked every night for three months straight," Jeff Trecha said of the frogs found near the pool in his backyard.

John Trecha considered medicine and scuba diving merit badges to be most difficult, while basketry and art badges also proved challenging.

"I wasn't interested in them -- that was my biggest challenge," he said of the two and a half hours it took to weave a basket for the badge.

John Trecha said his determination and passion to earn all merit badges stemmed from competition within the family, which houses a dynasty of Eagle Scouts ranging from a grandfather who attained the rank of "Second Class" in the late 1930s to his father -- **Fenton Troop 219** Scout leader -- who was 15 when declared an Eagle Scout. Jeff Trecha said there are seven Eagle Scouts in the family.

"It feels like it's going to be a competition where it's always going to be one person trying to one-up the next," he said. "I wanted to one-up my dad by getting all the merit badges. It's a tradition."

Aside from the competition, which John Trecha said he loves, there's another motivation.

"I love being able to display what I've been doing on my (sash)," he said, adding that had it not been for joining Boy Scouts, he might not be able to do things he enjoys like camping and backpacking, nor have met two good friends. "My life has been greatly impacted by Scouts."

John Trecha said he had taken part in community projects in Fenton with Troop 219 including a cleanup of Silver Lake Park, blood drives and a DVD drive for those stationed in Afghanistan. His Eagle Scout project involved building two benches and landscaping a 30-foot area for prayers at St. John's Catholic Church in Howell.

He doesn't plan to end his involvement in Boy Scouts even though he's earned all merit badges available, citing his love for camping and the "adventure aspect of Scouting."

"I'm still pretty Scout-busy," he said. "I enjoy being a leader and getting things accomplished."

The second merit badge he obtained helped deepen his interest in law so much that he would like to pursue a career as a lawyer, while helping others earn their Eagle Scout ranking.

John Trecha's achievements are scheduled to be recognized with a certificate from Genesee County Commissioners on Wednesday, July 10.

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