

The Fable of Troop 500

With thanks to Lone Star Girl Scout Council

Please read the Fable of Troop 500 and underline the things that are harmful to the environment and that do not fit into the concept of minimal impact camping.

Once upon a time there was a troop of Junior Girl Scouts who went on a cookout in a wooded area just outside their town. They had never heard of minimum impact camping so they didn't realize that they were doing things that were hard on the environment.

When they arrived at the campsite, they began to prepare for their meal. While they were working, the leader turned on a portable radio to entertain the girls. One group went into the woods and gathered up every stick of wood they could find for their fire. Another group lashed a table between two trees so they would have a place to prepare food. Since there was no dead wood on the ground (the wood gatherers had taken it all), they decided to cut down a few young trees to make their table. They rationalized this by deciding that when they left the site, they would leave the lashed table in place for the next group.

The fire builders decided that they didn't like the place where the established fire circle was located, so they built a new one on a bluff overlooking the lake. They carefully scraped away the grass and leaves from their new circle and threw the debris over the bluff. They then laid an enormous campfire that would surely last all evening. With this done, they went back into the woods and cut 24 green sticks from the live bushes and dragged them back to the fire circle. The rest of the group gathered with their jackknives and stripped and sharpened the green sticks to roast hot dogs and marshmallows over their enormous fire. Since the sticks were green, the scraps of bark and leaves trimmed off were not useful for burning and were left on the ground around the fire circle.

After dinner, the girls dug a hole and buried all the garbage including some aluminum foil and several cans that had held part of their food. They threw all the paper plates and foam cups that they had used into the fire. They broke up the used green sticks and threw them into the woods.

They sat around their campfire after dinner for quite a while, but before the fire was burned out, they got tired. They doused the half-burned wood and other debris with water until the fire was all dead. They decided to leave the charred wood for the next time they came to the site, or for anyone else who might come by. Before they left, they put a sign on the lashed table saying "this table courtesy of Troop 500".