

Montville Girl Scouts collecting socks to help weasels

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The Bulletin

Posted Feb 04, 2012 @ 10:54 PM

Montville, Conn. — When Lily Simon found out her Girl Scout troop was charged with finding as many old socks as possible, she thought it was a strange task.

But when Lily learned the socks would help researchers in California study and potentially save the Pacific fisher, a rare weasel, she wanted to do what she could to help.

Montville's Girl Scout Cadet Troop 63033 has put out collection boxes all over town to collect as many socks as possible.

When the collection period is over, the girls will send the socks to the University of California Berkeley.

Researchers there need about 250 socks per month, or about 2,000 per year, to fill with food to lure the rare weasels into the open, where motion-activated cameras will snap photos and collect information. The creatures used to be all over the Sierra Nevada, but now can only be found in northern and southern pockets.

The project will study the effects of forest thinning on the weasels.

Troop Leader Mary Fitzgerald said she thought the project would be an easy, useful way for the Scouts to do community service and help the environment at the same time.

The project is part of 100 hours of community service the troop has to log by March 11, which is the 100th anniversary of Girls Scouts.

"They wanted to do something that benefits animals," Fitzgerald said. "We figured no one else around here would be doing it either."

At first, Lily said, she didn't know how people in town were going to respond to the request.

"It's socks," she said. "I didn't think people were going to donate that much."

But so far, the troop has collected hundreds.

Each Scout is responsible for collecting the socks from boxes that have been put out at such places as Tyl Middle School, Town Hall, Raymond Library and the senior center. The socks can be worn and old, but not ripped, Fitzgerald said.

Reilynn Grant, 12, said she thinks the project is a great way to help animals, even though they're in California. She said she and her mother have been responsible for checking the box at Town Hall.

"I think it's benefiting not only the weasels, but also the environment," Suzie Fitzgerald, 14, said. "It helps the community."

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