

Swim Tests for the Watchu Experience

The Colorado Tour for our Philmont contingents includes a half-day whitewater rafting trip. This means that each crew participating in the Watchu program needs at least one mature and conscientious adult, age 21 or older, who is trained in BSA Safe Swim Defense and Safety Afloat. This person is responsible for ensuring that all participants in their crew complete the Swim Classification test and that the appropriate Swim Classification form be completed and signed by the appropriate trained individual if the Crew Advisor is not present during the swim test.

The BSA Swim Test is required to be administered annually. It is best practice and highly recommended that the Swim Test be administered at the beginning of each swimming season and not based on the prior season even if within the one year period.

Since most Council provided swim tests take place either during the Summer camping season or late June, these tests may not be convenient for many Philmont crews. In these instances, the crews need to arrange for their own swim tests.

The swimmer classification test defined in Safe Swim Defense may be administered at the unit level following procedures specified in Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346.

The swimmer test demonstrates the minimum level of swimming ability required for safe deepwater swimming. The various components of the test evaluate several distinct, essential skills necessary for safety in the water. A precise statement of the swimmer test is:

- Jump feet first into water over the head in depth.
- Level off and swim 75 yards in a strong manner using one or more of the following strokes: sidestroke, breaststroke, trudgen, or crawl;
- then swim 25 yards using an easy, resting backstroke. The 100 yards must be completed in one swim without stops and must include at least one sharp turn.
- After completing the swim, rest by floating.

The test administrator must objectively evaluate both the ease of the overall performance and the purpose of each test element. Any conscientious adult who is familiar with basic swimming strokes and who understands and abides by the guidelines as set forth in Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346 can administer the test.

For more detailed information regarding administering a swim test, please see BSA publication Aquatics Supervision, No. 34346.

Also attached is the BSA Unit Swim Classification Record for your convenience.

Note about upcoming Watchu Grams: Watchu Grams are sequenced to provide all the information necessary to prepare for a Philmont trek, metered to be sent as you need the information so as not to overwhelm with everything at once. Normally, the next group of Watchu Grams would be in preparation for the Watchu Mountain Adventure, but with it being postponed four weeks, those Watch Grams will likewise be postponed. To fill that gap, several Watchu Grams normally sent later will be sent sooner this year, and the numerical sequence will be disrupted (#47 will be the next sent).

Phil Fact: *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* was a popular half-hour documentary television program airing on Sunday evenings from 1963 to 1971, with occasional new episodes through 1988 and a second version that aired on Animal Planet from 2002 to 2011. A third version can now be seen on a Youtube channel. Host Marlin Perkins and his assistant, Jim Fowler, travelled around the world filming animals and their behavior in the natural environment with handheld 8mm and 16mm cameras. In many respects, it was a 1960's reality show. "[The Philmont Trail](#)" first aired during the third season in November 1964 and consisted of a series of staged events in the area around Ponil, including the closing with the crew chasing a bear cub in the corral. Kit Carson Council picked Air Explorer Squadron 99 of Los Alamos to be the crew for the episode. Crew Leader Jim Van Heck later served on staff from 2004 to 2013 as Assistant Manager and Manager of Camping Services, and wrote an article for the Philmont Staff Association magazine providing background about the week of filming.

Looking forward to seeing you on the Philmont trail,

Marlin Perkins

Director, St. Louis Zoo, and Host, *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom*, St. Louis, Missouri