

Creating A Nature Journal

Keeping a journal of your experiences in nature is a fun way to record your discoveries and thoughts, and like some scientists are discovering, journals can be valuable historical records hundreds of years later. Reading historic journals, such as those that Henry David Thoreau kept while living at Walden Pond, Massachusetts, are providing valuable insights into long-term changes in the spring blooming period of plants, spring and fall bird migration timing, dates for the emergence of insects and frogs and much more.

Activity Supplies

- Journal, Notebook, or Papers held together with an o-ring (included) or staples
- Pencil (included), pen, or writing utensil of your choice
- Colored pencils (included), crayons, or markers

Activity Instructions

1. Decorate the cover of your nature journal to reflect your personal style. Be creative and include some of your favorite aspects of nature.
2. With an adult's permission, grab a pencil and head to the nearest window or venture outdoors.
3. Include these four pieces of information at the start of each journal entry so that you can make comparisons over time:
 - a. Date
 - b. Time
 - c. Location
 - d. Weather (Is it sunny, rainy, cloudy, snowy? Do you have a thermometer or weather app to document the temperature?)
4. Make a quick sketch of something that you see in nature (plant, animal, clouds, insect).
5. Consider responding to one of these prompts:
 - a. I see (or hear, smell, feel)...
 - b. I wonder...
 - c. It reminds me of...
 - d. My best experience in nature was the day...
6. When you are in nature, just make quick sketches. Later, when you get home, try to identify what you saw and then look up a picture of it online or in a book so that you can do a more detailed sketch. You can add color and details later, maybe on a rainy day.

Essential Questions

How can using your senses affect your observation skills?

What changes do you notice in the same location over time?

How does the weather impact plants and animals in a specific area?

How do plants, animals, and people change a habitat?

How can we observe nature without disrupting the plant and animal life?

Supporting Information

You do not have to be an artist or poet to keep a journal, nor do you have to show it to anyone. Just do your best sketching and writing about your observations.

Possible Theme Ideas for Nature Journals:

1. "From My Window": Record what you observe from a window in your house. Sit at the window a few minutes each day and record what you see—birds, trees starting to bud, dandelion flowers turning to seed heads, the shadows of clouds passing overhead, the rustle of wind through the leaves, leaves starting to show their fall colors, etc.
2. Flowers: Record when the plants emerge from the ground, when color starts to show on the buds, the day the flowers open and when they start to wither.
3. Bird Feeder: Spend a few minutes each day and record the birds that visit the feeder. What species of birds are visiting? How many of each? What are they doing (feeding, chasing other birds away, loafing, etc.)? Expand your notes to include observation of bird activities--drinking from a puddle or bird bath, collecting nesting material, feeding their young and so forth.
4. List of Firsts: Keep a running list of the first time you observe certain animals or plants. Examples include the first hummingbird at the feeder, first morel, first ladybugs, first monarch, first oriole, first snow, etc. Compare the list from year to year.

Outdoor activity to correlate with project

Consider taking your journal to Lincoln Memorial Garden. Do you see any similarities or differences between the plants and animals at LMG and your own yard?

Take your nature journal to a park. What do you notice about the trees, flowers, and wildlife there? Do you see any insects?

Follow up questions

Compare the park you visited to LMG. How are they alike? How are they different?

How do you predict your sketches will look different in summer, fall, winter, and spring?

Additional links and Resources

https://www.journalbuddies.com/journal_prompts_journal_topics/nature-writing-prompts-for-kids/

<https://www.plt.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Nature-Journaling-handout.pdf>

<https://www.printablesfairy.com/nature-journal-for-kids/>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UBqXXEZnkLzq-X05F3qxOZbTOj6PBRrk/view>

Books to Check out from the Library:

• **Keeping a Nature Journal: Discover a Whole New Way of Seeing the World Around You**
All ages. ISBN: 978-1580174930
Published by Storey Publishing, 2000
Authored by Clare Walker Leslie and Charles E. Roth

• **Watching Nature**
Ages 9 and up. ISBN: 978-0806995151
Published by Sterling Publishing Co., Inc. 1998
Authored by Monica Russo