



Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection



Backyard Exploration Series



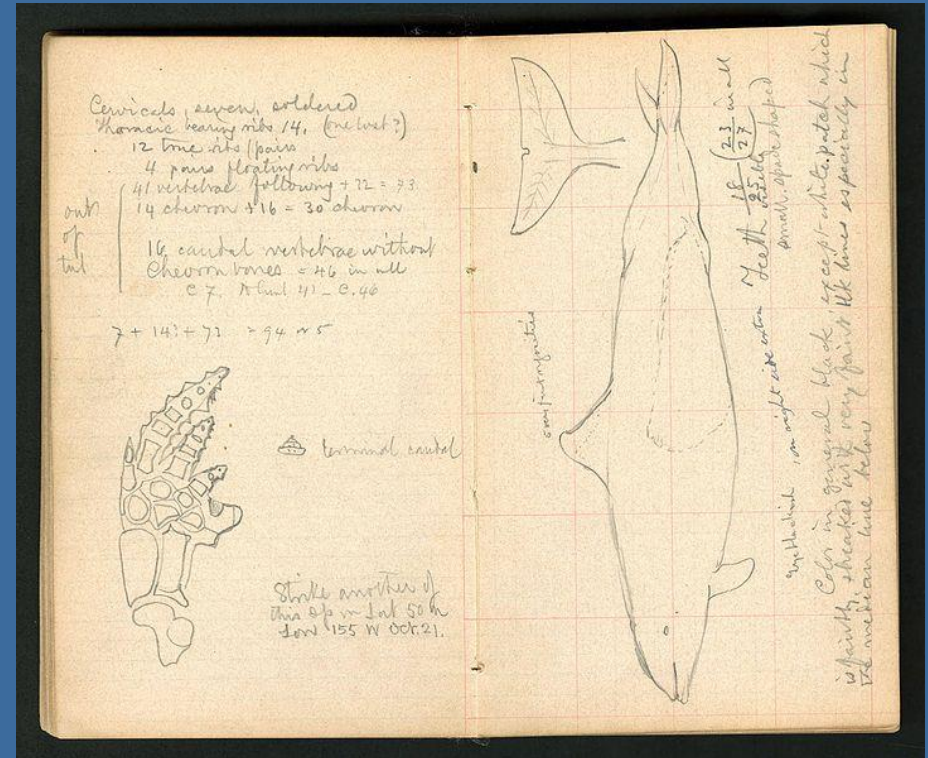
Nature Journals



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What is a nature journal?

- A nature journal, also known as a field notebook, is a place to write down observations, thoughts, and questions.
- It can help you remember details and notice more things. Putting thoughts on paper creates room in your brain for new thoughts.



These pages, from the journal of 19th century American naturalist William Healey Dall, show both written notes and drawings.



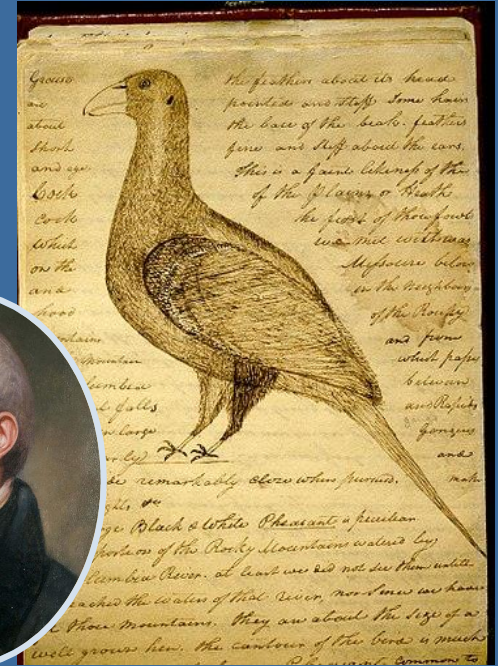
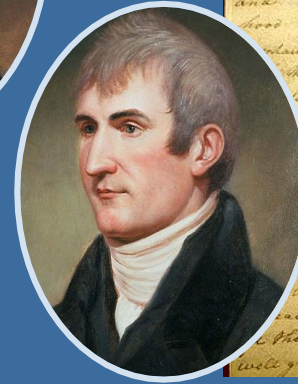
What does 'observation' mean?

- An **observation** is something that you notice with any one of your five senses (sight, smell, hearing, touch, taste).
- Look and listen around you. What are five observations you can make right now?



What purpose do field journals serve?

- Scientists use nature journals to keep a record of their research and discoveries.
- Today we study past field journals to see how things have changed over time.
- Field journals today can help scientists in the future!



When the explorers Lewis and Clark traveled across America, they kept careful notes on everything they observed.



What purpose do field journals serve?

- The observations made in nature journals can be used to create works of art, poems, books, field guides, songs, and more!



Louis A. Fuertes studied birds. He had a keen eye for observation and made thousands of paintings and sketches.



How to make your own:

- You can use a three-ring binder, a spiral notebook, a composition book, or any other kind of journal.
- Or you can make your own from scratch by following a tutorial like this one:



If you don't have a hole punch at home, what could you use instead?

What could you use instead of a stick?



Using Your Journal

Write down the DATE, the TIME, and the PLACE.

Describe with words what you observe.

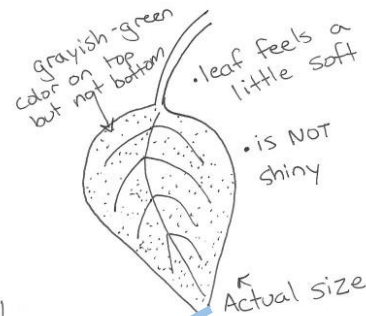
Don't be afraid to experiment!

Include SIZE: how large or small is it?

Sept. 1, 2020 3:10 p.m. My Backyard

I noticed that the leaves of one of the bushes in my backyard has much paler leaves than other plants. The leaves look very grayish, like if they were covered with dust. The underside of the leaves is more normal green (looks kind of like the color of Mama's dining room). Greyish color is not even; spotty like wax paper.

- If I rub the leaf, the grey color goes away!



I wonder why the leaves look so different from other leaves. Did something happen to this plant, or did it grow this way?

Update (3:47pm): I found another bush just like it on the west side of the house!

Go out and find something to study.

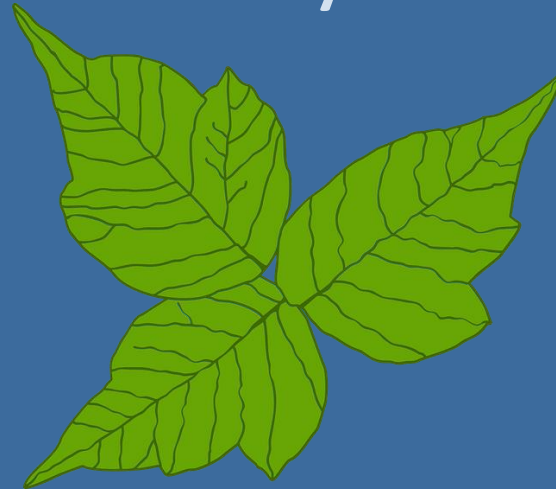
Draw what you see. Add labels.

Write down any questions you have, anything you are wondering about, anything that seems odd to you.



Always Respect Nature

- Do not harm animals.
- Do not remove or destroy plants.
- DO NOT EAT WILD PLANTS.
- Watch out for poison ivy!



Leaves of
three,
leave it be.



Beyond Your Backyard

There are lots of opportunities to observe things beyond your own backyard. You can stream from animal webcams, or visit a local park.

- Take the [self-guided quiz tour](#) of the Kellogg Environmental Center and write down what you see.
- In the spring, you can watch birds raise their young on webcams, including at [Hammonasset State Park](#).
- Belding Conservation Management Area features a [Species of the Week](#) – see if you can find it in your area!

