

Make Your Own Field Journal

Your World, Your Story

Summary:

Scientists use field journals to record their observations in nature. These notes can lead to new discoveries. They also tell people what the world was like at a specific time and place. Making a personal Field Journal can remind you what you saw, how you felt, and what you were thinking about.

Guiding Questions:

What do you see, hear, smell, and feel?

What is interesting to you?

How would you describe the plants and animals you found?

Experience Goals:

- Take time to experience nature.
- Grow aware of your surroundings.
- Record observations.

Supplies:

- Empty notebook or loose paper
- Pencils, pens, markers, or crayons
- Outdoors or window views
- Optional: Tape or glue
- Optional: Field guides, internet, or other animal identification resources
- Optional: Binoculars, magnifying glass, camera

Steps:

1. Gather your supplies

- a. Get your notebook and pencil. Or fold paper and staple it along the crease to make your own notebook.
- b. Check the weather first. *What should you wear outside to feel comfortable? Do you want to bring field guides, binoculars, a camera, or a magnifying glass?*

2. Explore the Outdoors

- a. Go outside! Have an adult help you find a good place to observe nature. Nature can be found everywhere!
 - Parks
 - Plant beds along sidewalks
 - Yards
 - Even city streets have plants and animals if you look closely!
- b. Look around. *Do you see any movement? Get closer to plants, animals or insects if you can! Move slowly, keep very quiet. Look from different spots. Look up in the tree tops and down in the dirt. If you have them, use binoculars and your magnifying glass. Do you notice anything new?*

3. Record your observations

- a. While you are outside, open your journal and start recording your observations. Field Museum scientists start with information like the date, location, time, and weather conditions. You decide what you put in your journal, follow your interests and inspirations! Here are some examples that can help get you started.
- b. Focus on your senses
 - What do you smell?
 - What do you hear?
 - What do you see?
 - What do you feel (on your skin, beneath your feet)?
 - How do you feel (in your mind, in your body)?

c. Classify Creatures

- What animals can you see? If you can't identify it, record details that might help you remember and identify it later. Example: a bird the size of a robin, grayish brown color, and making a *Wheeeeeeeeeooooo* sound.
- How many are there?
- What are they doing?

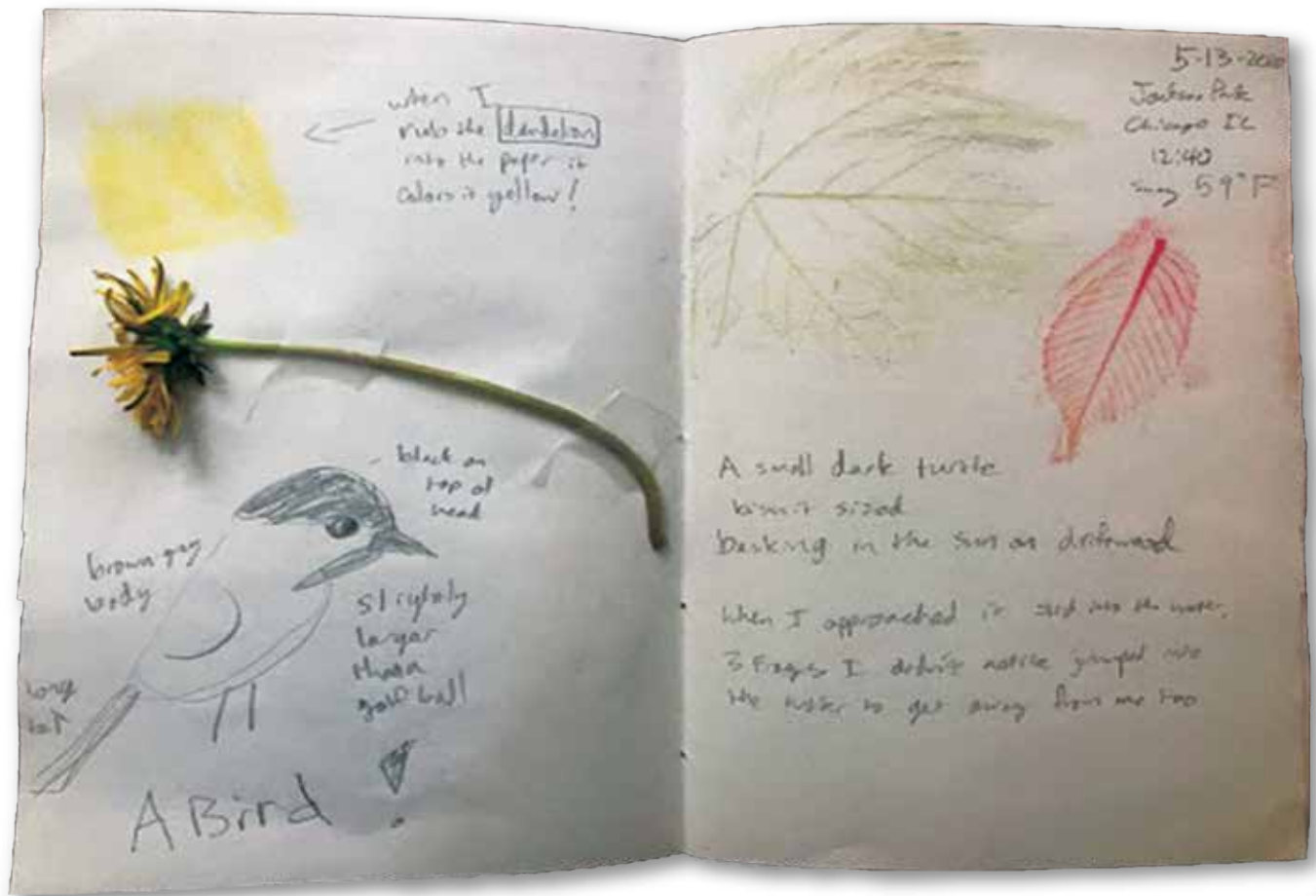
d. Preserving Plants

- Look for leaves, sticks, seeds, or other plant parts. Here's a few ideas of how to document them.
- Make a rubbing:
 - Put a leaf underneath a page of your notebook.
 - Lay a crayon down flat on top of the page and rub the crayon over it softly.
 - This can work with pencils too if you use the side of the graphite, not the point. This shows the shapes and texture of the leaf.
- If you collected any plants, you can tape or glue them into your journal!
- If you see a plant starting to grow or bloom, make notes about its appearance. Try to visit it again in the future and see how it has changed.

e. Journal your own way! The journal is a tool for you to keep track of your nature observations and experiences. Only you can decide the best way to record your adventures.

Variations:

- You could use your journal as a sketchbook to draw or paint. *What are you inspired by when in nature?*
- If you can't get outside, try making observations from a window. If possible, open it to feel the effects of sun and wind for your observations.



Extensions:

- After doing your journaling for the day, try to identify the different types of plants and animals you found. Look through [Field Guides](#) and see if any of your plants and animals match what's in the guide. If you can take pictures, post them on [iNaturalist](#), where an online community can help you identify them. You could even make a Field Guide of all your identified creatures!
- After a week, go back to read through your observations. *Do you notice things in your journal that are really unique? Do you see any patterns? How do you feel when reading over your past observations? Is there something you are inspired to revisit in nature?*