

# Field Journaling



*How can field journaling be used to support student-centered learning in nature?*



# HOW TO TEACH NATURE JOURNALING

CURIOSITY • WONDER • ATTENTION

John Muir Laws and Emilie Lygren

Foreword by Amy Tan



## Modeling a Journaling Activity: *To Each Its Own*

from:

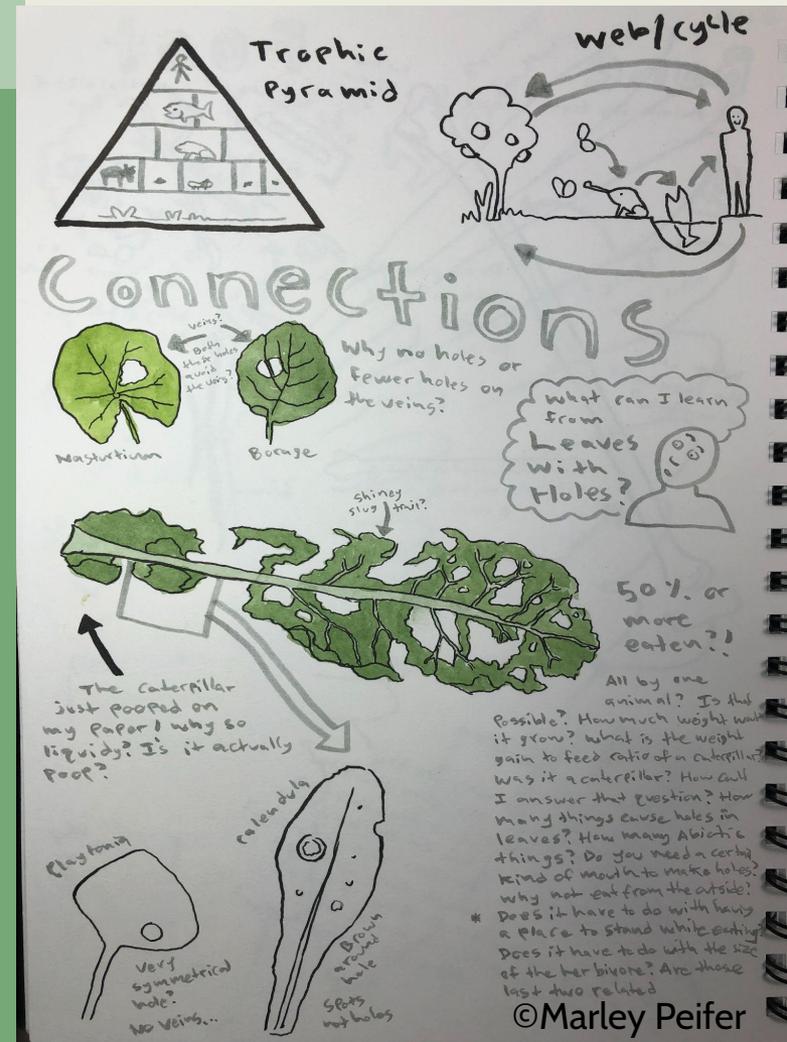
*How to Teach Nature Journaling*

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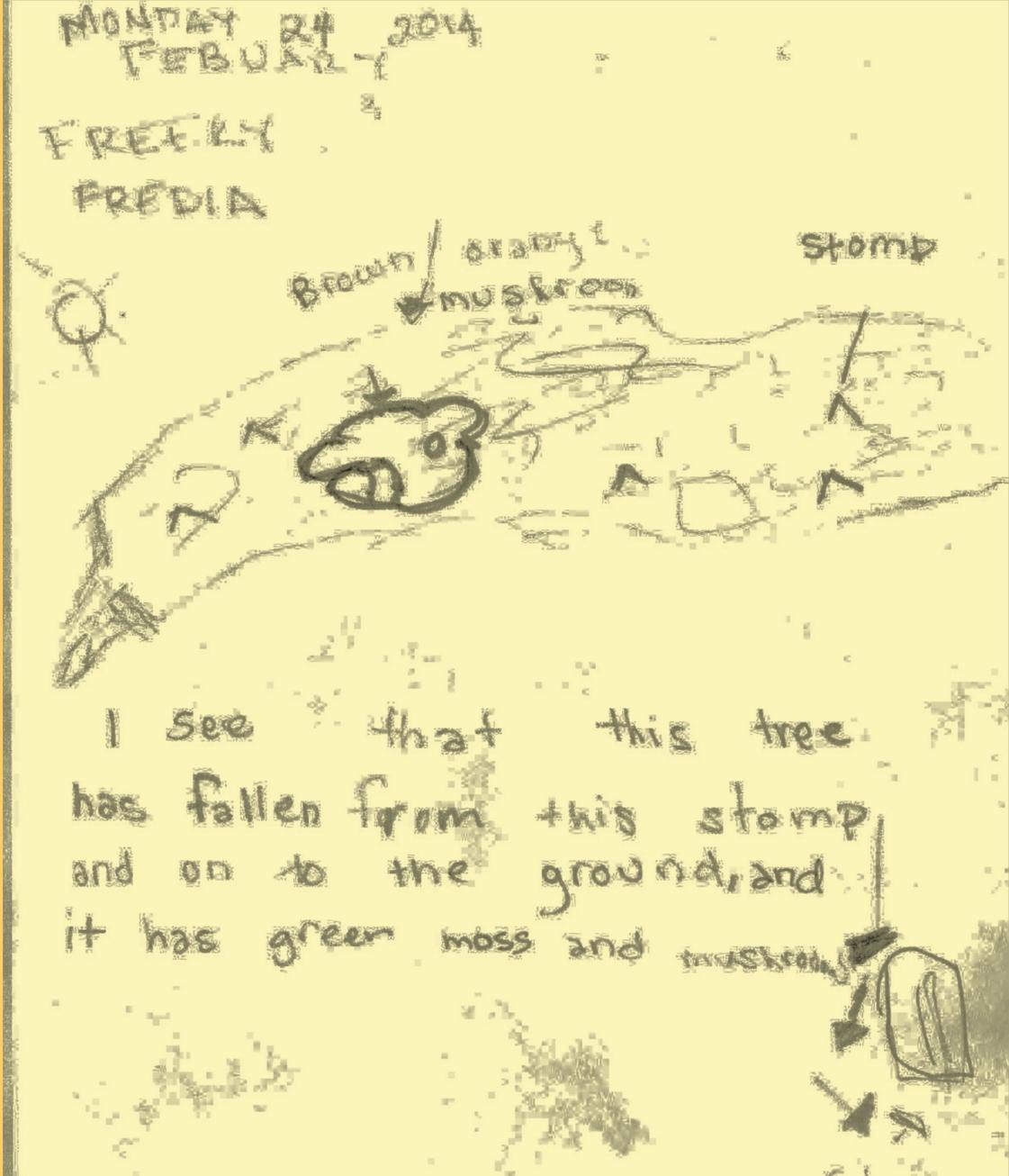


# Model Field Journal Pages

- What do you think the goal was for this journal entry?
- What information is the naturalist, scientist, or thinker trying to capture?
- What strategies (e.g., writing, drawing, diagrams, numbers) did the author use to record this information?



# Focus on Observation and Thinking



\* Journal Entry: \*

Name: Nol Ortiz

Location: On my couch in my veranda in Aptos, CA.

Date: 4/14/17

Time: 2:30 pm

Weather: Sunny.

Notes:

- alone, no other birds around
- caught worm
- when it went away → glided through air

Birds' flight pattern:

≈ 7 inches

blue tail feathers with black stripes

- black head
- blue mark on head
- black/blue beak (generalist)

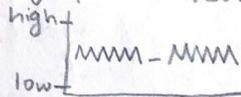
- blue breast

↑  
(Steller's Jay)

I wonder...  
Where do these birds migrate to during the winter?

Notes:

- call/song sounded like soft/fast whistling
- graph = call/song:



- after 5-6 chirps, this bird (Steller's Jay) took a rest, then started again

Pinched on high tree branch (watching me)

Q: Is it a male or female?

Use words, pictures, and numbers together to record information.



# Modeling a Journaling Activity: *Plant Timeline*

From: *How to Teach Nature Journaling*  
By John Muir Laws and Emilie Lygren  
Free Download at:  
[howtoteachnaturejournaling.com](http://howtoteachnaturejournaling.com)



# Common concerns instructors have about journaling with learners:

- Journaling won't work for high-energy groups.
- Learners who don't like drawing or writing will “shut down.”
- Journaling won't fit into my lesson or field experience.





## Supporting learner engagement:

- Be attentive and responsive to group and individual needs.





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- Offer structure and scaffolding that guides and supports student learning.

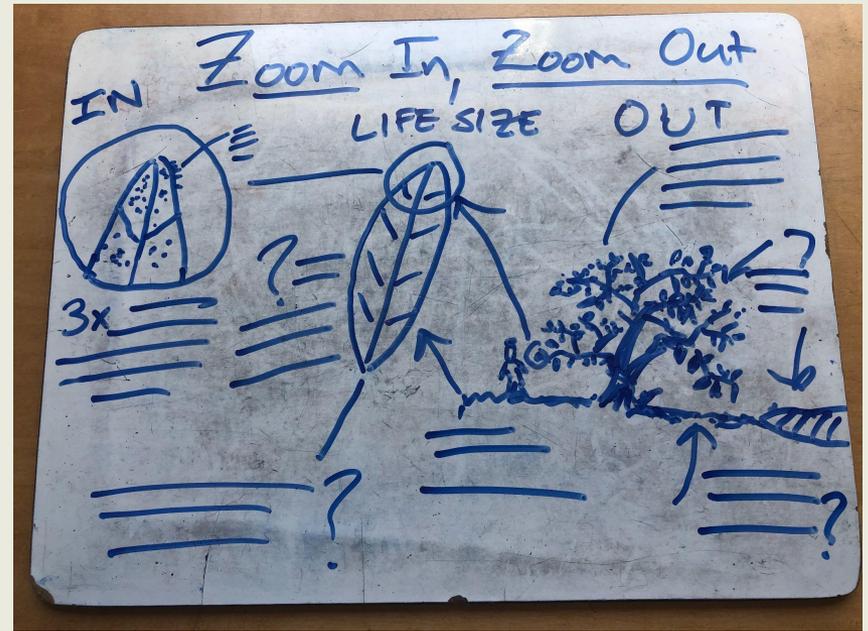


# Structure and Scaffolding:

1. a part of nature to focus on (e.g., leaves, insects, flowers, spiderwebs, etc.)

2. a goal or focus for the observations (e.g., comparison, mapping, behavioral observation, etc.)

3. strategies for recording information (e.g., ideas for page layout; suggestions for integrating words, pictures, and numbers; ideas for using labels and arrows to connect information on the page, etc.)





# Modeling different journaling activities: Comparison; Zoom in, Zoom Out; Mapping; and Field Guide

From: *How to Teach Nature Journaling*  
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# Debriefing the Prompts

In your groups, briefly summarize the prompt you did and some interesting things you learned as a result of answering it. Then, discuss one or more of the questions below:

- When and why might an instructor choose to use this prompt with learners?
- When might it be useful for learners to build this type of understanding during a field experience?
- Are there any lessons you already teach that could be supported by one or more of these prompts?



## Supporting learner engagement:

- Be attentive and responsive to group and individual needs.
- Provide structure and scaffolding that guides and supports student learning.
- Connect journaling activities and phenomena with learning goals.





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- Connect journaling activities and phenomena with learning goals.
- Give appropriate, supportive feedback.





# Offering feedback on learners' journals

- Avoid the tendency to comment on how pretty the drawings are.
- Comment on observations and the strategies used to record them.
- Be nonjudgmental.
- Circulate and support learners who are struggling.



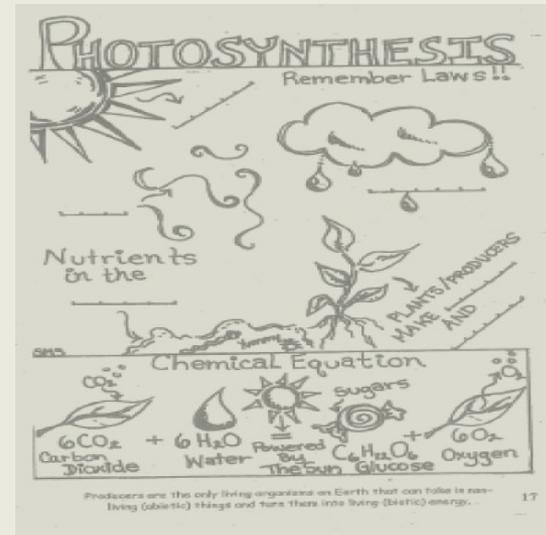
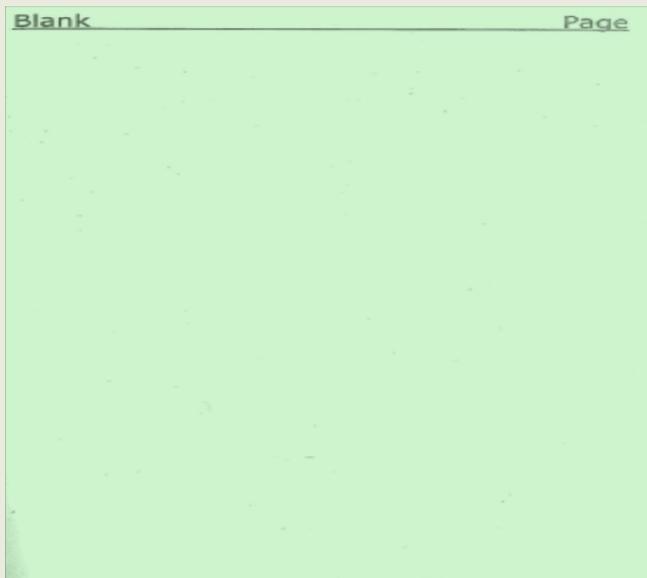
## Supporting learner engagement:

- Be attentive and responsive to group and individual needs.
- Provide structure and scaffolding that guides and supports student learning.
- Connect journaling activities and phenomena with learning goals.
- Give appropriate, supportive feedback.
- Offer learners the materials that support meaningful journaling experiences.



# Field instructors who use journals frequently with learners recommend:

- more blank space to write and draw like in an authentic field journal.
- more pages that can be used for multiple activities.
- fewer pages that remain unused or don't require engaging with nature, such as word searches and fill-in-the-blank diagrams.





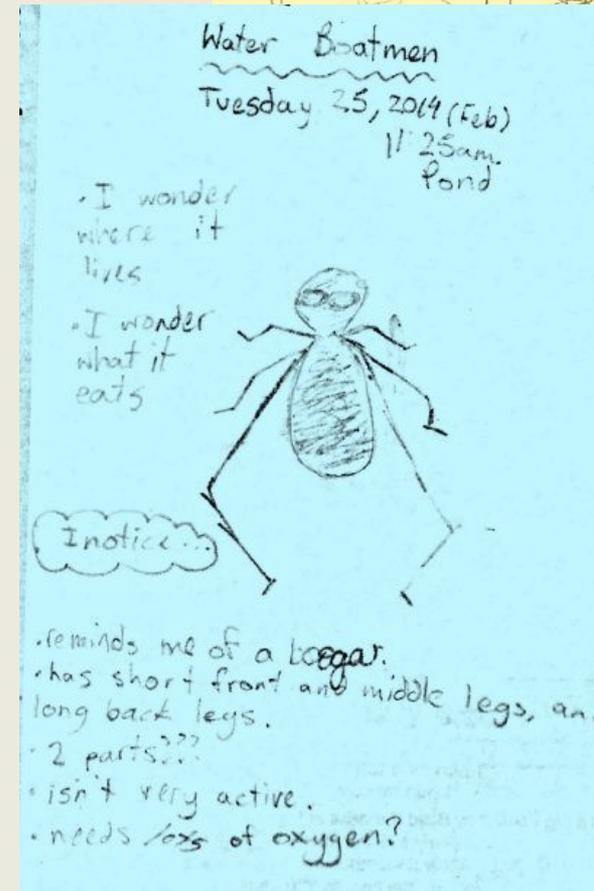
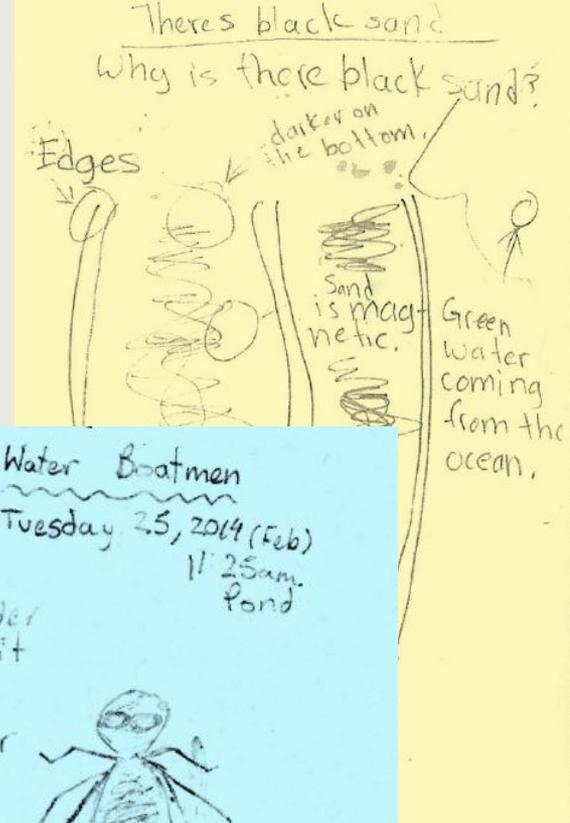
## Supporting learner engagement:

- Be attentive and responsive to group and individual needs.
- Provide structure and scaffolding that guides and supports student learning.
- Match scaffolding with learning goals.
- Give appropriate, supportive feedback.
- Offer learners the materials that support meaningful journaling experiences.



# The Benefits of Field Journaling

- Engaging in science practices.
- Making careful observation and connecting with the natural world.
- Creating science text and opportunities to share experiences and perspectives.
- Supporting language acquisition.
- Supporting conceptual understanding and the learning process.
- Recording memories.



# Reflection

- When and for what purpose might you choose to use journaling with learners?
- How might you integrate journaling into activities you are already doing?



What are  
some  
benefits of  
printed  
journals ?



# What are some issues or challenges with printed journals and how they are used in outdoor science programs?



# Examine several journal pages and discuss:

- What do you think is the intent of the page? Is it useful?
- Does it encourage authentic use of field journaling?
- Do you think it would be successful with or useful for most learners?
- Can it be used for multiple activities, or can it only be used with one particular activity?



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