

## *The Naturalist's Journal*

**Why keep one?** Journals can help you become more connected to and engaged in nature. They can translate your outdoor experience into a story that helps you remember and reflect, and explore further. A journal also helps you use science and art. Both require creativity and observation. Both help you ask questions and learn more about the world around you.

**What skills will I use?** A naturalist's journal helps you practice observation and writing skills. It helps you record events, use all of your senses, and express yourself. Drawing in your journal can capture a large amount of information in a small space and a short amount of time; they don't have to be perfect.

**What do I need?** Any paper will do, but a bound book with blank pages may be the most practical choice. It gives you a hard surface to use and keeps all your work in one place. You'll need a pencil and a good eraser as well.

**What do I draw?** Try sketching the following things.

- The outline of a bird or leaf.
- Animal traces left behind (tracks or a half-eaten pinecone)
- Animal behavior in stick figure (flying, perching, sitting)
- Shapes of where you are (horizon, trees, bushes)
- A simple map of your corner of the garden or what you see in a square foot of forest floor around your feet.

**What do I write?** Add text to your drawings to provide detail.

- Ask questions - who, what, when, where, why and how. Why and how questions may be more difficult and require more thought and reflection.
- Use precise language in simple declarative sentences. Lists (of colors, birds or plants seen) are useful too.
- Include names, dates, location, time, weather conditions, sounds, sights, smells, movement, colors, and textures.
- Revisit and expand your notes at some point. Use your memory and field guides to fill in the day's experience. A good rule for field work is to complete the day's expanded notes before you sleep.