Nature Journaling + Distance Learning

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Workshop Agenda

1. What is a Nature Journal?
2. Teaching students how to journal effectively
3. Application and lesson planning ideas

What is a Nature Journal?

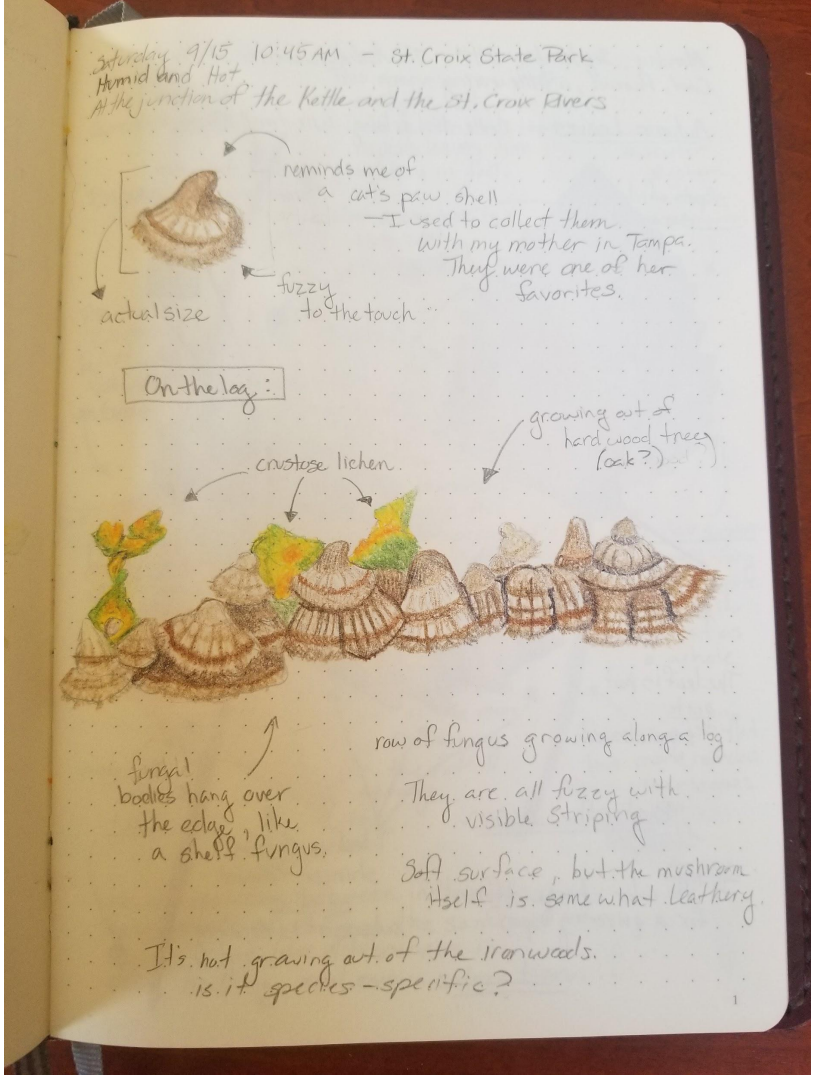
What key features do you notice in this nature journal page?

Purpose = To record information about the natural world for later use.

Primary Features

A good entry will have...

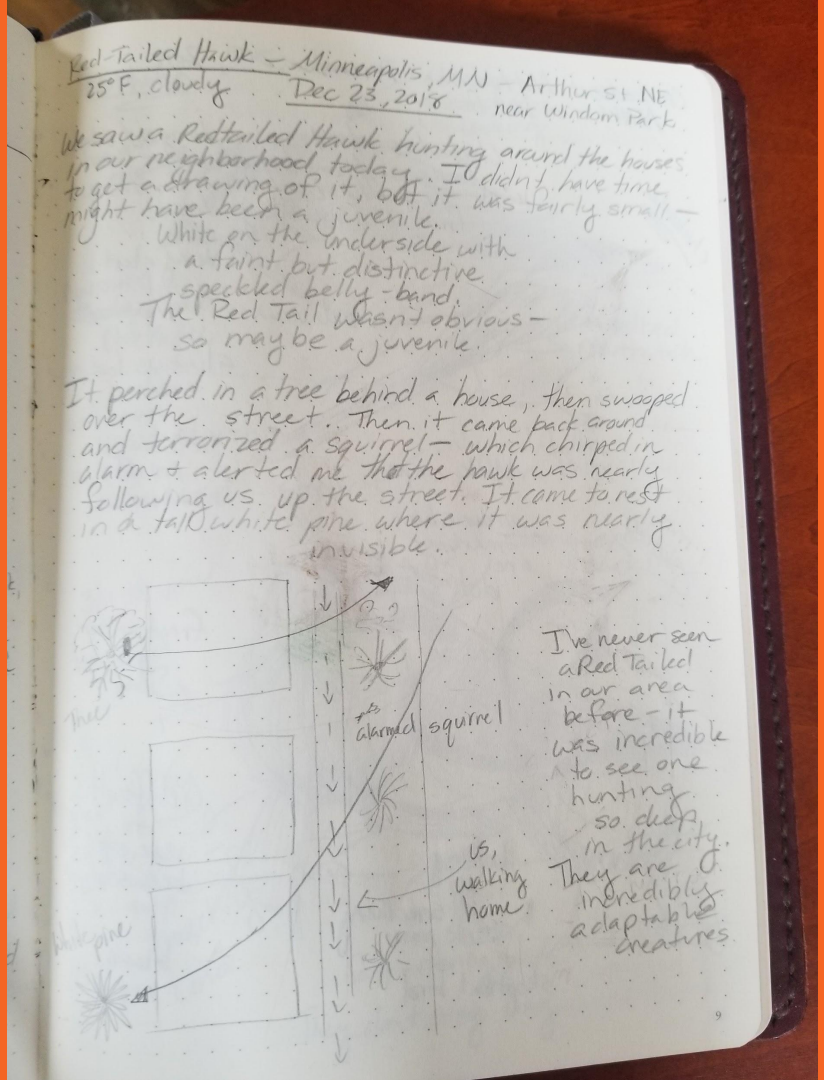
- Date, Location & Weather
- Detailed written observations
- Visual representation
- Purpose
- Questions!



- Date, Location & Weather
- Detailed written observations
- Visual representation
- Purpose **
- Questions!

This Isn't Instagram...

Nature Journals can look lots of different ways. Pretty drawings are not the purpose.



How to Teach Students to Journal

1. Develop a Curiosity Mindset
2. Show models/examples
3. Purposeful Practice
4. Repeated Application + Student Autonomy

Practice Curiosity

Good Journaling comes from Good Questioning

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder?
- What does it remind you of?

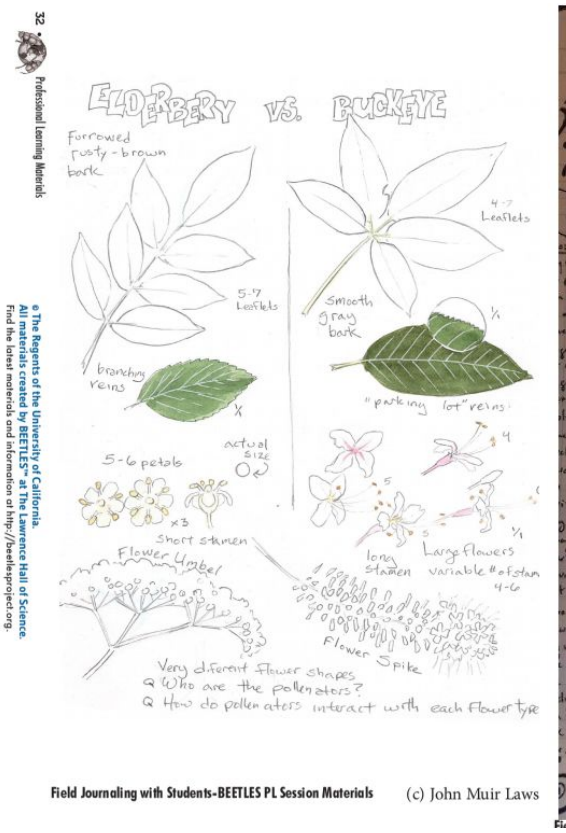
Differentiation

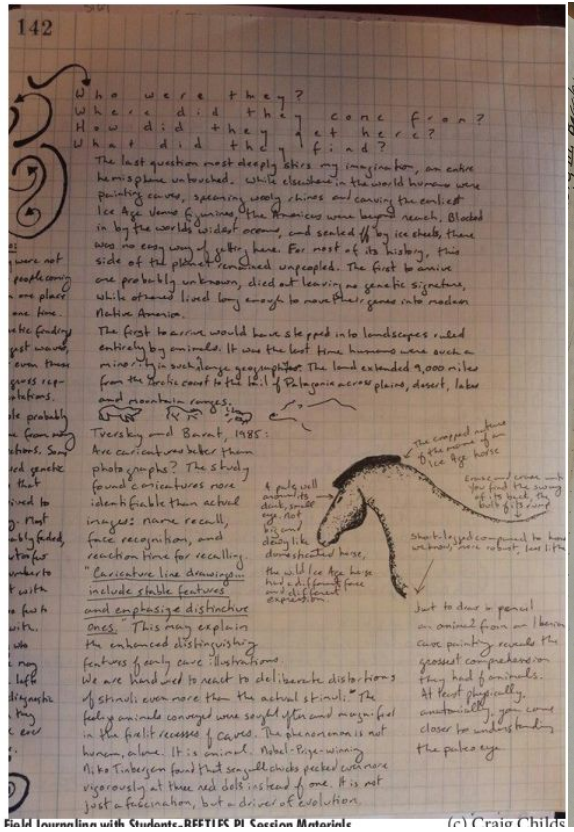
Frontloading to consider...

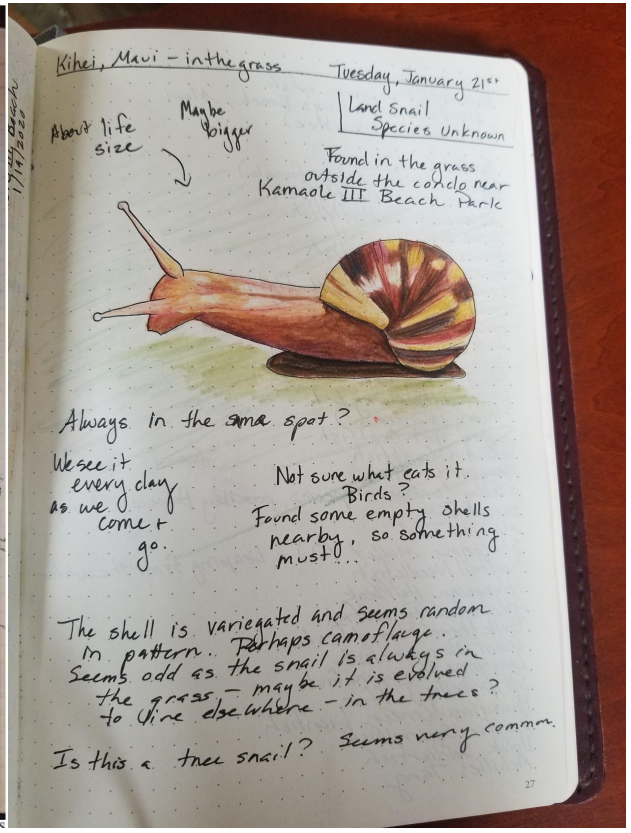
- Describing words/Adjectives
- Fact vs. opinion
- Pattern recognition
- Broad vs. Narrow questions
- Hypothesis/scientific method

What is the benefit of looking at model texts for students?

© Heather Murphey -- BEETLES Project, Field Journaling with Students







Left to Right: © John Muir Laws, © Craig Childs, © Emily Porter

What do you notice about the model texts?

Purposeful Practice

Clear purpose will improve product

Recording for Identification

1. Each student creates a page about a natural object
2. Other students must be able to identify that specific object out of a group of similar objects

In the Field...

1. Select a leaf
2. Direct students:
    a. Find a leaf that is this same shape
    b. Create a journal entry for your leaf so that your classmates can tell which leaf is yours
    c. When finished, put the leaf in the center with the other leaves.

Distance Adaptations

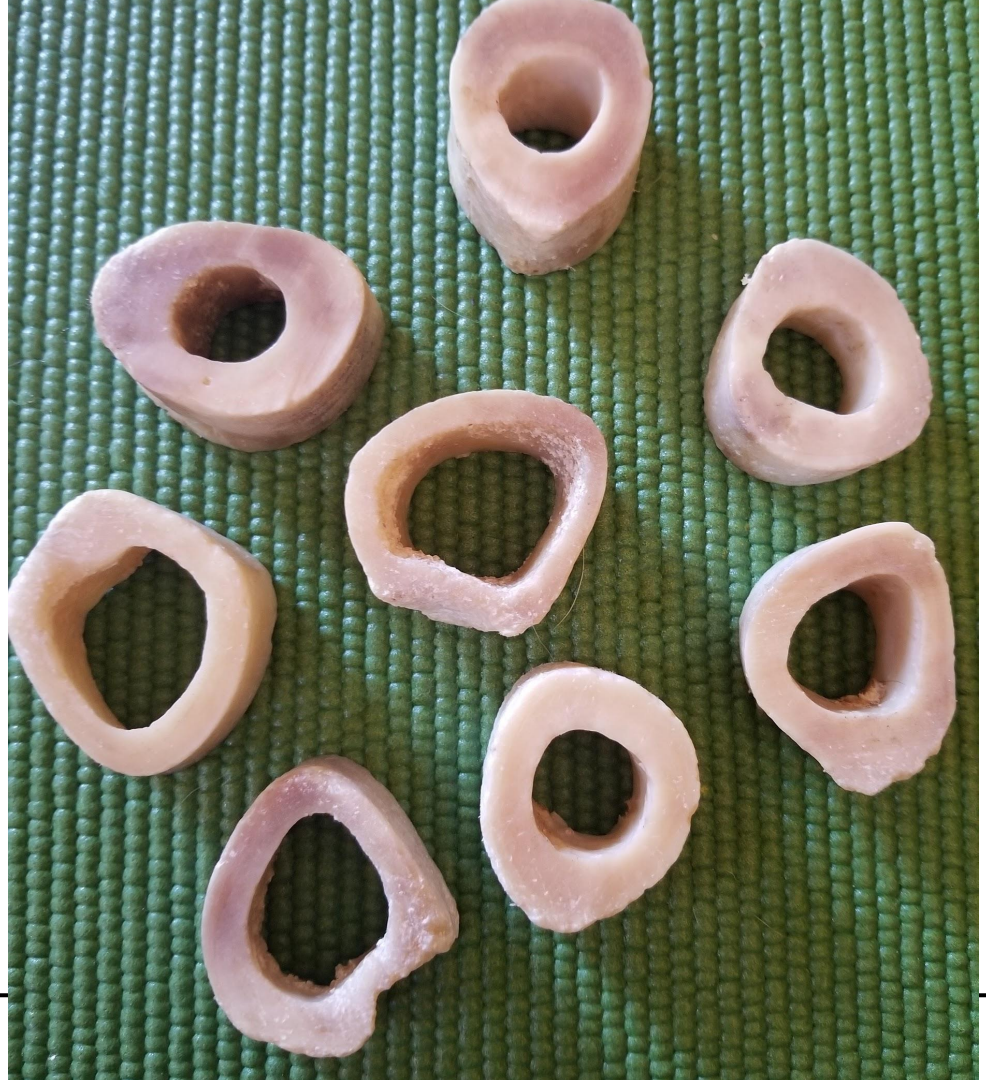
Nature Journaling at Home

Students can use household or backyard items to complete this activity

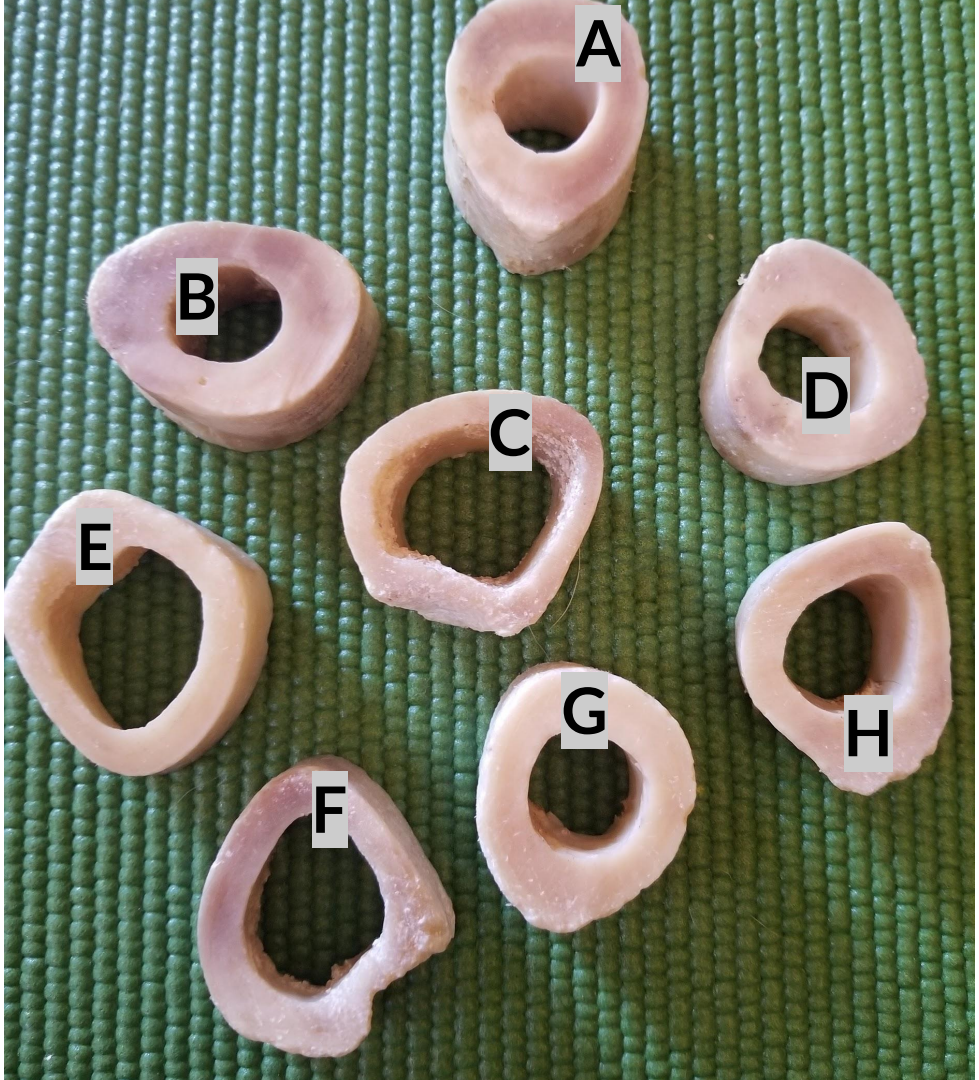
The items must be organic, so that they have natural variation!

Share pages digitally by posting photos

Left: Garlic cloves; Right: clementines



A collection of dog bones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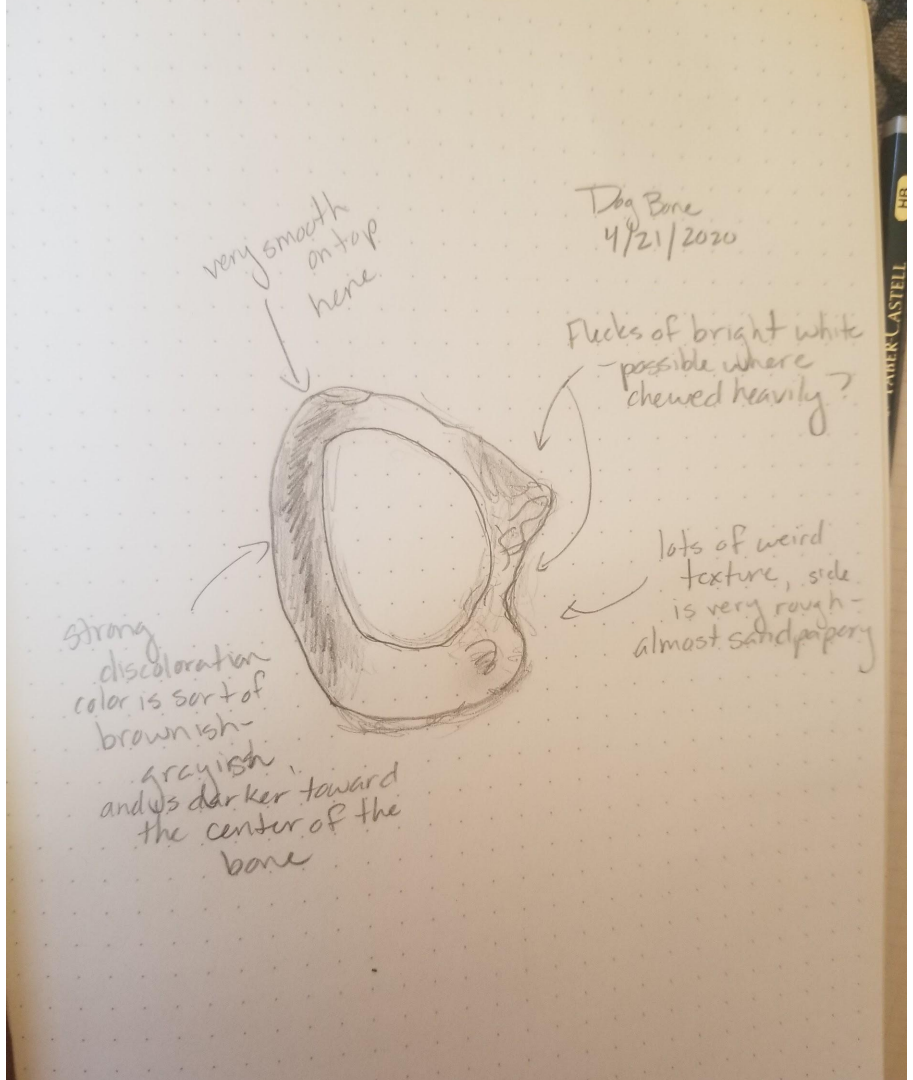

Dog Bone
4/21/2020
very smooth on top here
Flecks of bright white - possible where chewed heavily?
lots of weird texture, side is very rough - almost sandpapery
strong discoloration color is sort of brownish-grayish and is darker toward the center of the bone

Now What?

Distance Learning Applications

- Mental health/wellness
- Longitudinal data
- Experimental design
- Cross-Disciplinary skills
- Independent study
- etc...

Unit/Lesson Design

1. Determine your purpose
2. Build in student autonomy
3. Set a journaling schedule or time limit
4. Focus student attention
    a. Subject matter
    b. Prompt (“I notice, I wonder…”)
5. Display, Debrief & Discuss

Issues of Access

What is “Nature”?

- Backyards & gardens
- Boulevards
- Local parks
- Pets!
- Houseplants
- Window-Watching
- Live Webcams
- Pictures

Middle Grades: Independent Study

Purpose:
Research paper on
a MN organism

Students choose
an organism that
lives in their
backyard

Must observe the
organism every
day for 15 minutes

Daily prompts
focus on body
paragraph
topics

Student post
pages daily &
include them in
their final papers

Secondary: Cross-disciplinary Skills

Purpose:
Improve observation skills by creating a field guide

Students choose a category of organism that they can observe (e.g. “flowers”)

Observe a different organism each day for 30-40 minutes

Same prompt daily: create a field guide entry for identification

Student publish their field guide. Other students use the guide to attempt to ID organisms in their own neighborhood & share photos of positive IDs.

4th grade + : Longitudinal Data

Purpose:
Collect wildlife data in order to draw conclusions as a class

Students choose a time of day that they are in charge of observing a webcam

Record observations of a live webcam for 20 minutes a day

List of key behaviors to watch for with times: eating, preening, etc.

Students share data and then use the information to draw conclusions about the animal's behavior, adaptations, etc.

Share your expertise: What other applications can you think of?

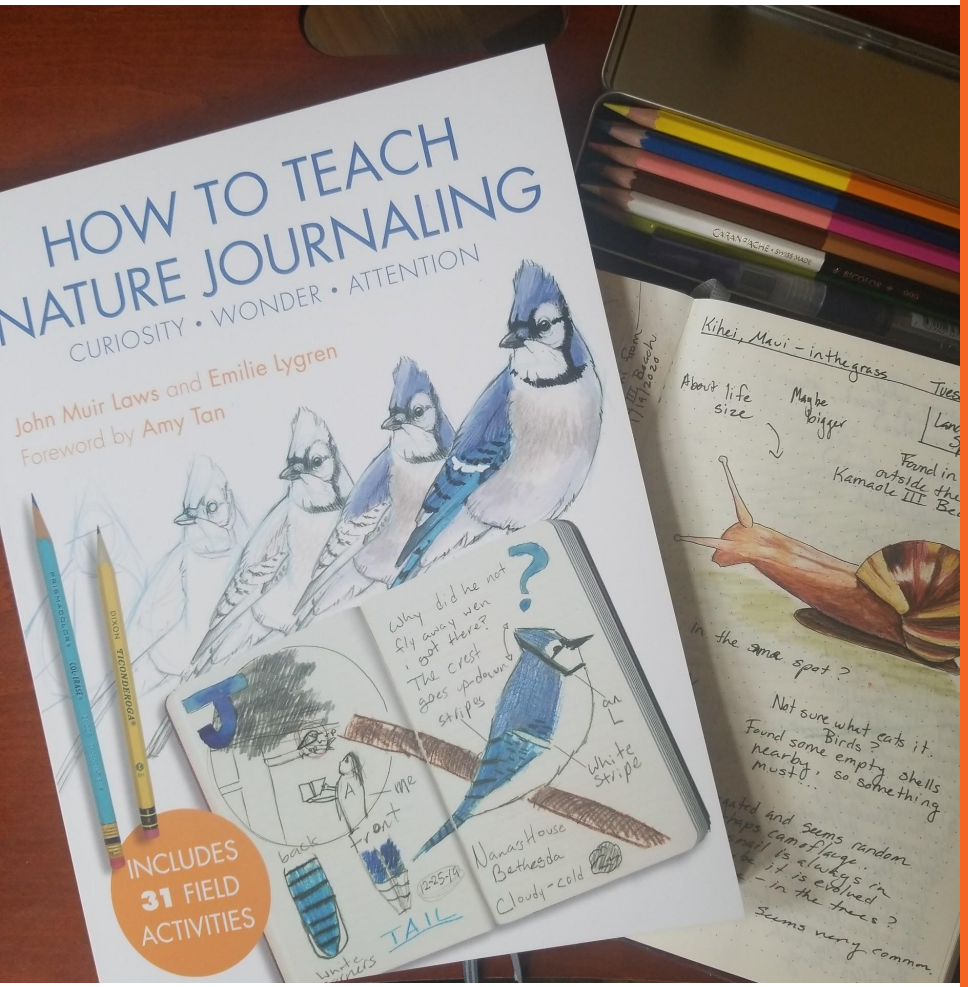
Frequently Asked Questions

- I’m not an artist! How do I get kids to engage with drawing in a meaningful way?
- Students always tell me they are “done” after 3 minutes! How can I get them to engage for longer?

Implementation

Set reasonable goals for yourself and your students

1. Start by engaging curiosity
2. Consider frontloading activities
3. Look at models
4. Purposeful practice (be ready to do this more than once)
5. Meaningful application



More Resources:

- *How to Teach Nature Journaling* by Emilie Lygren & John Muir Laws (Free PDF online)
- BEETLES Project "Field Journaling with Students" (Free online)