



### Introduction

Nature journaling is a way to have your young naturalist record their observations in the natural world. This type of journaling involves a process that incorporates art and the close connection between nature and the wonders of what the young mind finds artistic. Being able to record things in the natural world can encourage many different things. Colour and shapes, along with details, work best when captured together on paper. Creating a journal is also a wonderful way to create memories and keepsakes to look back on whenever one wishes to. Nature journaling fosters keen observation skills and an appreciation for all the wonders of nature!

### Connect with the Long Point Biosphere Region

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### At A Glance

**Grade Level:** 6-7

**Learning Environment:**

Indoor classroom and any schoolyard, trail, natural wildlife area (NWA)

**Prep Time:** 15 minutes

**Length of Lesson:** 4 Hours

**Staffing:** 1 educator

**Materials:**

A sketchbook, pencil, ruler, water colours, glue, glue gun, pastels, markers, scissors, cereal box, red thread, stickers, beads, curiosity!

**Groupings:** no grouping

## Lesson Outline

Time	Activity	Location	Materials
1.5 hours	Personalizing the Journal	Classroom	Dollar Store sketchbook and items that can be used to embellish the cover (magazines, old greeting cards, glue, glue gun, scissors, beads, recyclables)
1 hour	Viewfinder Use	Classroom	Viewfinder Printout, red thread, cereal box, photo of an animal, ruler, scissors
1.5 hours	Journaling	Schoolyard, classroom, neighbourhood	Journal, pencil and eraser, water colours, pastels, colouring pencils, charcoal, markers

## Curriculum Expectations Grade 6

### VISUAL ARTS

#### D1. Creating and presenting

**D1.3** Use elements of design in art works to communicate ideas, messages, and understandings (e.g., design a letter of the alphabet using shapes, symbols, colour and font style to represent a selected animal and its habitat, etc.)

**D1.4** Use a variety of materials, tools, techniques and technologies to determine solutions to design challenges, for example:

- drawing: use charcoal to create a shaded drawing of the exaggerated details of a face, figure, or natural object (e.g., shell, pod) on earth-toned paper (e.g., tan construction paper)
- painting: use a variety of painting techniques (e.g., blending, scumbling, glazing) in a mural of a landscape or cityscape incorporating stylistic elements from contemporary pop culture
- printmaking: cut and gouge a variety of lines and marks in a softoleum, linoleum, or block print to enhance the background and negative spaces of a depiction of an endangered animal species
- technology: create a digital photo montage representing aspects of environmentalism

## Curriculum Expectations Grade 7

### VISUAL ARTS

#### D1. Creating and presenting

- D1.1 Create artworks, using a variety of traditional forms and current media technologies, that express feelings, ideas, and issues, including opposing points of view (e.g., performance art or an installation that portrays both sides of the struggle between humankind and nature, etc.) Teacher prompts: “How will your art work convey opposing perspectives on an issue that you have chosen to explore?” (e.g., consumerism versus sustainability, land development versus conservation, global warming, poverty, etc.)  
“How does your installation communicate the benefits and challenges of environmental stewardship?”

#### D2. Reflecting, responding and analyzing

- D2.1 Interpret a variety of artworks and identify the feelings, issues, themes, and social concerns that they convey (e.g., compare the mood of two different works by two peers, such as *Above the Gravel Pit* by Emily Carr and *Reflections, Bishop’s Pond* by David Milne, etc.)

#### D3. Exploring forms and cultural contexts

- D3.1 Identify and describe some of the ways in which visual art forms and styles reflect the beliefs and traditions of a variety of cultures and civilizations. An example teacher prompt:  
“Compare the ways in which impressionist artists and contemporary Cree artists depict nature. How are they different?”





## Background

The art of capturing observations of flora and fauna in nature through drawing, writing, photography and poetry is called nature journaling. A nature journal can include a record of your wildlife sightings, how you felt about your encounter, what you hope to encounter and scientific observations such as species at risk and invasive species.

Nature journaling is a wonderful way to get your class to connect with the natural world. Nature offers opportunities for healthy physical activity, social and emotional wellbeing, self-directed learning, developing and satisfying curiosity, and improving observation skills. Time spent in bright sunlight helps reduce nearsightedness and increases vitamin D levels. Observing nature also fosters intellectual development, creativity, math skills, problem solving skills, resiliency, science skills, and reduces stress hormones. Students are better able to cope with stress when they have access to nature.

Promoting exploration of and discovery through outdoor curriculum can motivate curiosity for learning and achieve greater engagement in the classroom setting. Spending time in the outdoors can enhance focus and lower ADHD symptoms, which will reflect on academic outcomes. Nature based education can also improve impulse control and curtail some disruptive behaviors. (Results show that school failure decreased, and the dropout rate was reduced from an initial 30% to zero in some years).



### SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Uebberman & Hoody (1998). [Closing the achievement gap](#): San Diego: SEER. Chawla (2015). [Benefits of nature contact for children](#). Berezowitz et al. (2015). [School gardens enhance academic performance and dietary outcomes in children](#). Williams & Dixon (2012). [Impact of garden-based learning on academic outcomes in schools: Synthesis of research between 1990 and 2010](#). Wells et al. (2015). [The effects of school gardens on children's science knowledge: A randomized controlled trial of low-income elementary schools](#). Li & Sullivan (2016). [Impact of views to school landscapes on recovery from stress and mental fatigue](#). [Land.scape Urban Plan](#). Wu et al. (2014) [Linking student performance in Massachusetts elementary schools with the "greenness" of school surroundings using remote sensing](#). R.H. 2010. [Student performance and high school landscapes](#). Moore & Wong (1997). [Natural Learning: Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching](#). Faber Taylor et al. (2002). [Views of nature and self-discipline: Evidence from inner-city children](#). Martensson et al. (2009). [Outdoor environmental assessment of attention promoting settings for preschool children](#). Wells (2000). [At home with nature effects of "greenness" on children's cognitive functioning](#). *Environ Behavior*. Berto et al. (2015). [How does psychological restoration work in children? An exploratory study](#). Faber Taylor et al. (2001). [Coping with ADD: The surprising connection to green play settings](#). Amoly et al. (2014). [Green and blue spaces and behavioral development in Barcelona schoolchildren: The BREATHE](#). Blair (2009) [The child in the garden: An evaluative review of the benefits of school gardening](#) Rios & Brewer (2014). [Outdoor education and science achievement](#). *Applied Environmental Education*. Bell & Dymont (2008). [Grounds for health: The intersection of green school grounds and health-promoting schools](#). Nedovic & Morrissey (2013), [Calm, achieve and focused: Children's responses to an organic outdoor learning environment Learn](#) Ruiz-Gallardo, José-Reyes; Verde, Alonso; Valdés, Arturo (2013) [Garden-based learning: An experience with "at risk"](#)

## Creating a Nature Journal

### Lesson 1:

The best way to keep this process inexpensive is to purchase an ordinary 11.5" X 8.5" sketchbook from a dollar store similar to the ones below.



Embellish the outside of the sketchbook with a collage of photos from magazines, old birthday cards and Christmas cards. You can also use other items found around the house or yard. A quick pop into the thrift shop for old books to cut photos from may prove useful, if required. Use a glue gun if you want to stick heavier objects to the cover like beads or leaves. Collect recyclables and see how creative you can be about this activity. Kleenex tissue boxes are great to use to make pockets in your journal to collect leaves and other assorted treasures that you find when out exploring nature.

## Creating a Nature Journal Continued

Be as creative as you can. Take a few minutes to go through Pinterest ideas, if you like. You don't have to invent a new mouse trap, sometimes working with someone else's ideas can actually help to motivate you to come up with ideas of your own. You can use scraps of material, pieces of old sweaters, buttons, ribbons, lace etc. Many of these items can be found at the local thrift store if you don't have anything handy. You can also go through your crafting supplies to see what you can use.

Try combining dried leaves and flowers to adorn the cover of you journal. Collect flowers from the garden and press them between the pages of a large book. Use a flower pressing kit if you have one to dry and flatten your botanical items. You can use old tissue paper that you can crumple up and stain with tea to give your journal a vintage look. If you find a snake shed, you could glue that to your journal and then colour it with markers to highlight the scales.

Collect butterfly wings from the butterflies that have finished their life cycle and can be found dead in different areas or that have been struck by a vehicle; include feathers that you have collected along the way. Maybe stickers are your thing. It's obvious that the sky is the limit! Highlight what interests you in this project.

Once you have collected your items and sorted out how you will do your layout, start attaching them to the front and back cover of your journal.

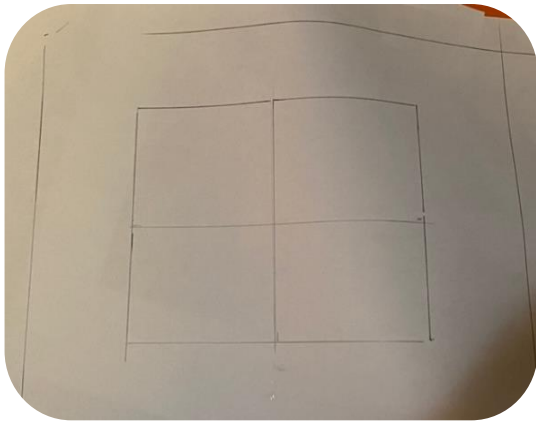


## A Lesson in Scale

### Lesson 2:

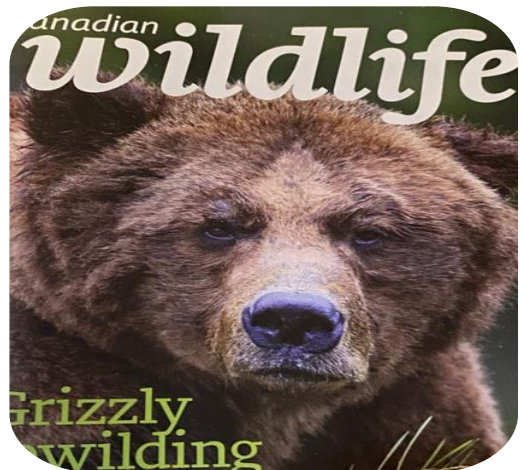
1. Print out the viewfinder that is at the bottom of this lesson plan onto cardstock.

2. Cut out the viewfinder. Glue it to a piece of recycled cereal box panel to make your viewfinder stronger. Snip the small lines on the outer edges. Insert red thread into the snips so that they are crossed in the middle. Tape the thread in place at the back of the cereal cardboard.



3. Place the viewfinder on a piece of plain paper in your journal. Use a pencil to lightly draw around the inside edge of the viewfinder using it like a stencil. Add the crossed lines through the middle with the help of a ruler.

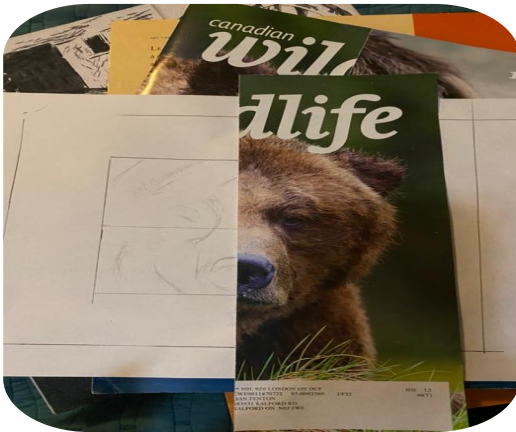
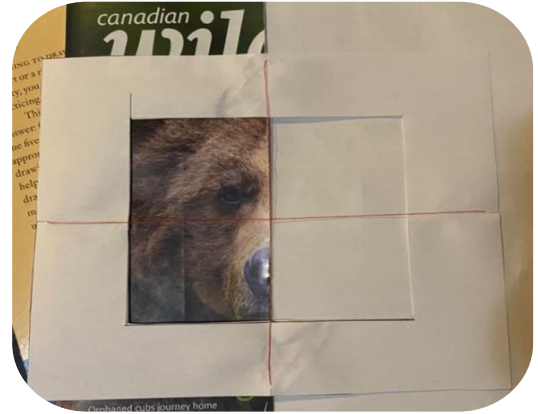
4. Pick a photo from a magazine that is symmetrical and fold the page in half. Cut the photo on the fold line. Now you should have two halves. Paste half of the page into your journal the same way it was oriented in the magazine.





## A Lesson in Scale Continued

5. Place the viewfinder over the remaining half of the magazine page with the cut edge on the center line. Now you can see how it's divided into two smaller quarters, with lots of reference points to help guide your drawing.



6. With your pencil, mark the points on the drawing grid on your piece of paper where the object crosses each line of the string and touches the inner edges of the viewfinder. You can estimate where the points are, or you can measure with your pencil tip and thumb.

7. As you work, look back and forth between the object and your drawing. Use the marks to help connect the lines. If you've have not drawn very much before, this seems like a lot to keep track of. Just go slowly.
8. Once you have your sketch completed gently erase the gridlines and fill in the voids created.
9. Now that you have finished your sketch, add colour to it!

You can use your viewfinder to do still life or landscape drawings. It simplifies your work as it creates boundaries to work within. Try it out!





## Connecting to Nature

### Lesson 3:



Today's youth has so many distractions that many never get that moment to step into nature. For many who grew up in the days of no technology and black and white televisions, discovering the natural world and exploring freely was all they had. Students are occupied by technology to the point that it is having an adverse effect on their physical and mental health and creating a huge disconnect with the natural world.

Where will our future stewards of natural places come from if we don't encourage students to connect with nature? There are two wonderful things that happen when we engage young minds in the connection with nature. Love for nature is a conscious and positive consequence for one, and the second is the desire to respect and preserve it.

Lead a hike in a nearby forest, neighbourhood or in your schoolyard. This activity will depend on what your school policies are. Have the students equip themselves with their journals, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, and viewfinder. Maybe bring a couple field guides with you so you can look up what you are observing and include that information in your journals. Now get outside and try your hand at nature journaling! Please use the tips below to record your observations. Remember that these are only suggestions, you can modify these activities as you see fit.

## Journaling Tips

### What is needed?

- Your nature journal
- A pencil
- Eraser
- Viewfinder
- Curiosity

### Change your perspective:

- Lay down on your belly, and look closely at all the tiny details!
- Look far, to the tops of the trees!
- Look through your viewfinder
- Sit on the ground

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When you start to notice the seasons change, mark the date and journal all the signs of changes that you noticed in your schoolyard or natural wildlife area. Some of those changes could be colour, new buds, smells, the temperature, the lack or abundance of insects, a deep rooted feeling, bird migratory behavior and any of your own personal observations.

Sometimes an evening execution can result in different encounters to journal. This is also something students, and you, can do as an at home activity. Go out with family or friends in the neighbourhood for a walk. Remember to take your nature journals and sketch the phases of the moon and the nocturnal creatures that are active at night.

### Be curious!

When you have your students out in the schoolyard, neighbourhood or forest for this lesson, journal together, and model the behaviours you want to see. Prompt students to notice colours, textures, sounds, and smells.

Nature is a sensory experience. Find a comfortable place to sit silently and try to journal all the sounds around you. What else do you sense?

- Can you feel the air on your skin?
- Can you smell the earth?
- Can you feel the wind?
- Can you hear nature?
- What catches your eye?

There is a printable nature journal page below that can be used for a quick outing or in the case of not having access to a budget for sketchbooks.

*“Our challenge isn’t so much to teach children about the natural world, but to find ways to sustain the instinctive connections they already carry.” ~ Terry Krautwurst*

# NATURE JOURNAL



DATE & TIME: .....

SPECIES: .....

## OTHER SPECIFICS

LOCATION: .....

WEATHER: .....

BEHAVIOR: .....

DRAWING:





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