

Nature Journaling - What to Draw

by Julie Tennis for Pacific Education Institute

Sketching in nature is one of the fastest ways for you and your students to learn about the natural world. Two skills are used that inevitably draw people in - our natural tendency towards asking questions, and taking the time to observe what's around you. A beautiful drawing is not the goal of nature journaling; it's not about artistic talent. Nature journaling is all about getting you to concentrate on your subject and to record your observations.

It can be challenging to know what to look for when you are starting your nature journaling practice. The following lists will help you remember what details to capture from different subjects, in order to use your notes back in the classroom or office to identify what you've seen:

Details to Capture when Sketching Plants:

- Flower details: color, size, shape, number of petals
- Leaf details: simple or compound, leaf arrangement on stem, leaf margin (shape), how it attaches to the stem, vein pattern, color, size
- Stem details: size, branching pattern, cross-section, woody or herbaceous, color, texture, accessories (thorns, prickles, spines, hairs)
- Description of habitat

Details to Capture when Sketching Mammals:

- Overall shape
- Shape of body
- Length of Legs relative to body
- Foot Shape (plantigrade, digitigrade or unguligrade)
- Length of Neck relative to body
- Shape of Face / length of snout
- Size and shape of ears
- Thickness of fur
- Overall color
- Special markings or colorations
- Description of behavior

Details to Capture when Sketching Birds:

- Overall shape and body angle
- Wing shape and markings
- Tail shape and markings
- Beak shape and color
- Eye markings and color
- Leg shape and color
- Placement of toes
- Body color
- Head, throat and chest markings
- Description of behavior

Details to Capture when Sketching Insects:

- Shape and color of head, thorax and abdomen
- Length, shape and color of antennae
- Size, shape and color of eyes
- Shape and color of wings
- Shape and color of legs
- Description of behavior

**Enjoy
sketching!**

