



Nature Journaling for Relaxation

Submitted by Karen Houlding

A unique way to enjoy our beautiful Trossachs greenbelts is through nature journaling! There is a world of infinite beauty in our winding trails and cattail lined ponds if we slow down, observe and listen. Nature offers us peace and a place to find calm in our busy lives.

Nature journaling is an activity for all ages and can be done as a family with toddlers to grandparents! It is the process of observing plants and animals out in the field, then sketching and recording the details in words and drawings. Look for patterns, colors, shapes and measurements. It is not an art project to display, but rather your personal journal for expressing and learning about what you have observed! We have a continuous parade of wildlife that passes through Trossachs, and what better way to learn about them by sketching them or their habitat and researching interesting facts!

You might wonder, why can't you just take a picture, then sketch at home? Try stepping outside and sketching in the field! You'll notice the feelings of the experience as you listen to the birds, feel the breeze or the sun's rays. It can be done in all seasons and you can even get sketchbooks called "Rite in the Rain" which are weatherproof! It can be a mood shifter for redirecting anxious feelings and promotes relaxation which is good for your overall health, both physical and mental! It's a journey to learn about the plants and animals you are observing, creating a memory, noting fun facts, measurements and color.

There are only 2 supplies you need to get started!

- Sketchbook, journal, or paper
- Pencil, watercolor pencil or black ink marker (waterproof Micron 05 pen or thin sharpie)
- Once you have recorded some basic sketches and observations, you can color your drawings with watercolor pencils, watercolor paints, colored pencils, markers or simply outline them in black marker.

While nature journaling, there are some questions you can ask yourself that nature journalist and Scientist John Muir Laws inspired, 1. I notice, 2. I wonder, 3. It reminds me of. Here's an experience I recently had in my own backyard! I noticed a large scattering of pinecone scales under the big evergreen tree. A busy squirrel had been taking apart the cones to get at the 2 seeds that sit on the inner part of the cone on every scale. There were still a few seeds lying on the ground

so when I picked them up and broke them open, I discovered they were full of pine sap! I wondered if the squirrels were eating the pine sap? When I researched this, I found out they do indeed eat the sap. The sap had the most amazing pine fragrance, but had a sticky texture. It reminded me of the sap I saw as a child oozing from the bark of evergreen trees that I accidentally leaned against!

I hope you will give nature journaling a try! Feel free to contact me with questions or to see a list of my most favorite resources as well as sample journal pages at giftzbykaren.wordpress.com. Happy journaling!

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