



4-H Club Meeting 1

Exploring Nature's Space in Your Place



Supplies

- Pens/pencils

Nature Journals

- Thin cardboard (e.g., cereal or cracker boxes)
- Paper
- Rubber bands
- Sticks (appropriate size for binding)
- Scissors
- Hole punchers
- Rulers
- Decorating materials (e.g. markers, stickers, etc.)
- Paper trimmer (if available)

Walkabout

- Binoculars
- Magnifying glasses and/or hand lenses
- Device to take photos (e.g., camera, cell phone, etc.)
- DIY nature journals

INTRODUCTION

In this club we will explore nature in our own backyard. Today we will create our own nature journals to record observations made with our senses during a walkabout outdoors.

PRIOR TO THE MEETING

1. Make an example of a natural journal, using the same materials you plan to provide.
2. Identify an appropriate nature space near the meeting area for a walkabout.

What to Do:

WHY NATURE JOURNALS?

A nature journal is a place to grow your thoughts, feelings, ideas, activities, observations, and relationship with the natural world. Your own nature journal provides an opportunity to study the natural world, to grow a deeper relationship with the Earth, and to develop a greater awareness and appreciation for the Earth. A nature journal is an opportunity for personal growth and to study the changing natural world.



WHAT IS A WALKABOUT?

Historically, a walkabout refers to a rite of passage in Australia during which Indigenous male adolescents would undergo a journey where they live in the wilderness for as long as 6 months to make a spiritual connection and traditional transition into adulthood. Today, environmental educators use the term to refer to an experiential way of connecting individuals with nature. As the word implies, a walkabout simply involves walking about without a plan, exploring nature as it comes to you, stopping to investigate when the mood strikes, and observing the wildlife, plants, sounds, scents, and other natural phenomenon that one may come across while walking about.

Activity #1 DIY NATURE JOURNALS



Time: 20 minutes

1. Create the front and back cover of the journal using cardboard. Use scissors or a paper trimmer to achieve the size desired, making sure both covers are the same size. Rulers will be helpful to keep the lines straight.
2. Cut the paper that will fill the journal using the cardboard covers as your template to ensure they are the same size. Aim for about 20 pieces of paper.
3. Begin to construct the binding using a hole punch to make two holes about a quarter of an inch from the edge on the same side, one near the top and the second near the bottom. Do the same with the paper, making sure the holes in the front cover, back cover, and paper line up.

Note: If there is a design on the cardboard, decide now what side you would like to be visible when the journal is closed. There will be time to decorate the cover at the end.

4. Cut a stick to match the length of the journal's binding. With the paper and cardboard covers stacked in the order desired for the finished journal, align the stick over the punched holes.
5. Complete the binding by looping one end of a rubber band around the stick, and pull the other end through the hole at the top of the journal. Turn the journal over and pull the rubber band down the backside of the journal, bringing the free end through the bottom hole, and back to the front of the journal. Wrap the free end of the rubber band around the bottom end of the stick.
6. Decorate the journal using markers, stickers, or natural materials!

See this link for images: <http://themagnifyingglass.typepad.com/weblog/2011/03/bookmaking-for-children-nature-journal-with-twig-binding.html>



Time: 20 minutes

1. Escort participants to the predetermined walkabout location. Make sure they bring their DIY nature journals and a pen or pencil. A nearby stream, pond, forest, park, or natural trail is ideal, but if none of these are nearby, a backyard, playground, or an empty lot are also options. Keep in mind, this location will need to be accessible throughout the year so that participants are able to make comparisons between visits (e.g., weather, new wildlife, different insects, color changes in plants, etc.).
2. Distribute observation tools such as binoculars, hand-lenses, magnifying glasses, cameras, or any other available equipment that might enhance exploration. Encourage participants to use these tools to explore their surroundings, setting boundaries for safety if necessary.
3. Participants can record their findings in written or picture form inside their DIY nature journals. Encourage them to use their senses (e.g., what do you see, hear, feel, smell, and possibly taste?) and to keep their thoughts brief. Deeper reflections will occur in the next activity.
4. If appropriate, students may pick grasses or leaves to press in between the pages of their DIY nature journals. Express the importance of only taking a small sample size to maintain the habitat.
5. If your nature space to explore is especially small, it is also an option to have students select a “sit spot.” Walk with the participants to the chosen destination, and have each of them choose their own spot within that space where they can sit quietly for 10 to 15 minutes to watch, listen, and examine the nature around them.



Time: 10 minutes

Once participants have had the opportunity to explore freely, it is often helpful to provide them with concrete prompts of what to write or draw in their nature journals. Here are some ideas that should help participants get started.

1. Once they are done exploring, bring them to a designated journaling space. This may either be outside or back in the meeting room.
2. Set up a journal entry. This may include the date, location, time, weather conditions, vegetation characters, human impacts and disturbance, etc.
3. Ask students to write the following in their journal:
 - a. One word or sentence to describe something they heard
 - b. Two words or sentences to describe something they saw
 - c. Three words or sentences to describe something they felt
4. Additional ideas to inspire youth:
 - a. Draw a detailed sketch of something they saw (plant, insect, tree, whole scene, etc.)
 - b. Trace a pressed leaf, grass, seed, flower, etc.
 - c. Field guide information about a plant or animal they see
 - d. Write a poem about what they see, hear, feel, or smell
 - e. Writing prompts:
 - i. "I notice..."
 - ii. "I wonder..."
 - iii. "It reminds me of..."
5. Allow time for participants who are willing to share what they wrote or drew in their journals.



Reflect

- What was the coolest thing you saw today?
- What more would you like to know about that "cool thing?"

Apply

- How does recording your observations and thoughts in a nature journal help you better connect or understand the natural world?
- How could you answer your question about the "cool thing" you discovered? Consider designing an experiment.



4-H MISSION MANDATES

Citizenship

Youth will explore the outdoors in their neighborhood, allowing them to be engaged and well-informed about their natural surroundings and gain an understanding of their place within it.

Healthy Living

Youth will be encouraged to spend more time outdoors, building healthy habits to achieve optimal physical, social, and emotional well-being.

Science

Youth will practice inquiry to make observations about the natural world. They will use scientific tools to collect and record their findings.

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

Belonging

Exploring the natural world together and eventually sharing their findings, thoughts, and ideas with each other will help to create a connection with their peers and their surroundings.

Independence

Learning about the importance of their backyard habitat will provide youth with the knowledge and motivation to protect these important ecosystems.

Generosity

Youth will learn the importance of respecting the natural world.

Mastery

Youth will practice using scientific tools to improve data collection techniques.

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