

# MAKE A FIELD JOURNAL

Grades 3-8



## Objective:

Students will learn the importance of recording their observations in regards to the world around us, by keeping a journal.

## Materials:

### Provided

*Make a Field Journal* worksheet

*Urban Texas Flora & Fauna* pocket guide\*

*Texas Birds* pocket guide\*

\*Found in select Texas Wildlife Association Discovery Trunks.

### Not Provided

Pencils, crayons, or colored pencils

Binoculars (if available)

## Procedure:

1. Discuss with your students the history of field journals in the discovery of the new species of plants, wildlife, and birds across the United States.
  - *President Thomas Jefferson instructed Lewis and Clark to keep field journals during their famous 1804 expedition. These journals included detailed daily observations of the unique geography, plants, animals, and even the Native Americans they encountered as they explored the territory between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean. This information about a territory previously unknown to European Americans was so valuable; the journals are a large part of why this expedition is one of the most successful in United States history.*
  - *John James Audubon published Birds of America, a field journal of the birds he observed during his adventures across America in 1827-1838.*
2. Use the first page of the journal worksheet to discuss the items to record in a field journal: date, weather, location, observations, and sketches.
3. Take the students outside and have them either sit in a stationary spot and make observations for their journal, or have them move along a path as if on a journey similar to Lewis and Clark.
4. If appropriate for your grade level, have students make note of both the biotic and abiotic components of the ecosystem. Students can also identify the levels of organization including organism, population, community, and ecosystem.
5. Once they complete a journal entry of their observations, discuss with the class what they saw and wildlife or bird species they were able to identify. If they were not able to identify certain species, provide your students with the various field guides provided in the trunk to identify their mammal, plant, or bird based on their sketches.

## Extensions:

1. Have the students observe the same habitat every day for a week.
2. Have the students observe the same habitat at different times of the day.
3. Have the students observe the same habitat in different months.
4. Based on their extended observations, discuss what they studied:
  - Are there different animals in the same habitat?
  - Discuss predator/prey relationships.
  - Are there seasonal changes in the diversity of species?
  - Are some animals only present during certain times of the day, or year?



## **What is a field journal?**

Naturalists have used journals for many years, as a way to record observations in the field. Recording information such as the date, weather, location, species, and behavior can help us learn about the world around us.

## **Why keep a field journal?**

Field journals are a written account of observations. For hundreds of years, scientists have used field journals to record details of discoveries such as the first record of a specific plant, the first observation of a new species of bird, or maybe the first record of a bird seen in a new location.

## **Making a field journal**

Make copies of the sample page provided or design one of your own. Cut out and staple the pages together to make a field journal, and then head out into the field!

## **Reviewing the basics of a field journal**

Before traveling outside, reviewing the sample journal entry on the next page, along with the sample questions below, can provide students with an example before their first journal entry.

## **Can you answer the below questions by looking at the page from Mary's field journal?**

1. On what day did Mary make her journal entry?

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2. Where was Mary when she made these observations?

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3. How many species of birds did she record?

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4. What was the weather like on this day?

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5. What bird behavior did she observe and record?

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Mary P.

Birds

Mockingbird  
White winged Dove  
Blue Jay  
Rock Pigeon  
Carolina Wren

23 July '11  
@ Sims Bayou  
Houston, TX  
Clear, HOT 99°

• Watched the bird feeder in the morning. Doves & pigeons on ground. Blue Jay mate in tree above - flying down to snack.



**MAKE A FIELD JOURNAL**



<p><b>NAME:</b> <b>DATE:</b> <b>LOCATION:</b> <b>WEATHER:</b></p>	<p><b>HABITAT:</b></p>	<p><b>BIRD:</b></p>	<p><b>FOOD:</b></p>
<p><b>SKETCH:</b></p>			<p><b>NOTES:</b></p>

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