

# Nature Journaling

By Mark Phillips, Homeschool Coordinator

## Three nature journaling “handles”:

- **Writing words** (last e-zine)
- **Drawing pictures**
- **Keeping track**

## Drawing pictures

Drawing pictures is a fun part of nature journaling! It all starts when you observe something in nature – hopefully not in a rushed way, but taking time to notice details and relationships. It is completed when you take what you’ve observed and recreate it in your journal using your mind and hands and an art medium. (Taking pictures is a separate issue and a very valuable practice! It can go hand-in-hand with nature journaling very nicely!)

### Observe nature.

Drawing pictures helps you think about what you are seeing. It makes you look at textures and colors and sizes and shapes and how things fit together. It makes you ask, “Is the cheetah’s tail longer than its leg, or shorter?” “Are a rhino’s eyes right under its ears or out in front a bit?” It makes you really think about how things fit together.

### Recreate what you have observed.

Observing carefully starts the process.....but don’t stop there. Recreate your observations in your journal. This is your chance to have fun doing your creative work! YOU recreate the best picture YOU can of the part of nature that YOU observed – not a picture created by a camera, or an artist, or your teacher or friend. This is what YOU create.

I mentioned earlier that we use “an art medium.” An art medium can be a pencil, paint, a pen, crayons, colored pencils – you can experiment and discover your favorite! Here is the list of things Darius Steed used to produce his picture of the Scimitar-horned oryx that we saw in the last e-zine: cardboard; poster board; glue; black construction paper; grey, white and gold paint. That sounds like a recipe for fun!

Experiment and have fun with it! There need be no contest or grade; no pressure to have your picture chosen to become a bill board! And you have a whole lifetime to keep working at it!

One final tip on drawing: start with what you know. Let me explain. You might have never drawn a giraffe, but I bet you have drawn ovals and triangles! When you look at a giraffe, you can see the whole animal at once, or you can break the full picture down into simpler parts. So, its body is like an oval on its side, its neck is like a long thin oval, its head is like an upside down triangle. You know this stuff! The front legs are like a tall ‘W’ and its ossicones (horn-like structures) are two short rectangles. You can draw those things! So, one way to go about it is to look for the shapes you know in a picture and start by drawing them.

### **Keeping track**

This is the part that many of us have a hard time with! I know I do! If I had a nickel for every sketch I had made of a bird or a tree THAT GOT LOST, I could take all of Texas out to dinner! That means you have to have your journal - or one of your journals - handy when you need it. That just requires the discipline of keeping a place for your journal(s) and putting them back after using them, AND the discipline of putting a sketch into your journal with tape or a staple, or putting it in a file. Sometimes when you come in from a field trip you are tired and just want to go to bed, but if you can take a moment and put your sketch or journal in its place, you and others will have the reward of seeing and reading the things you've journaled!

Nature journaling is simple! Many people find it both a helpful part and a fun part of developing as a well-rounded student. So we offer you these three simple handles – Writing words, Drawing pictures and Keeping track - that we hope will help you to grab onto and enjoy this rewarding habit!

**HAPPY JOURNALING!**