Friends of SCNP -

Nature Journal Challenge

There are so many things to notice at Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve! Various kinds of habitat, like the upland oak forest, small prairie openings, or ponds and the special places around the edges of ponds. Lots of plants and animals live in those places.

How can we slow down and really see and hear all these things? Many people keep a journal, kind of like a diary, in which they write and draw about their explorations and discoveries in nature. It doesn't have to be fancy – it's just something that helps you notice more of what is around you and remember it.

So here is our challenge:

- 1. Download this guide, including the sample pages with prompts for writing or drawing
- 2. Take it along you can write and draw on the sample pages or on a notebook of your own
- 3. Let us know how it went!

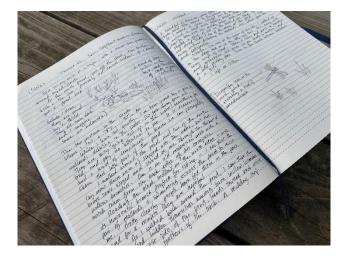
What do you notice?

It's easy to just see the trees, grasses, soil and sky as one thing, just nature. We can hear birds calling and breezes moving the trees as a background soundtrack to a great day outside. But it can be so rewarding to dig a little deeper, noticing how tree trunks grow straight or bend around, the musical calls of some birds and the raucous cawing of others, or the shades of color in the grasses. Maybe we focus in on the colors or patterns in butterfly wings, or the way sunlight lights up a sunfish's fins in blue and green as it swims near the surface.

How does a nature journal work?

Writing or drawing in a journal helps us slow down and notice things. As we sit and draw or write, we focus on what we see and hear along with such things as the smell of wet leaves and soil after a rain. We become so focused that we can remember our walk in detail long afterwards, even without looking at our journal.

But it's also fun to look at the journal later on and re-live some of the details of a day at the preserve.



Notebooks, pen, pencils, paint ...?

Don't get anything fancy until you know how you like to journal. Do you just want to write? Just draw? (Hopefully you will do some mix of the two.) What's a convenient size to carry? Do what is comfortable and workable for you.

Why not just use a camera to preserve some memories? We love cameras, but they only capture what you see (and video can include sound). The most important thing is that writing or drawing will get us to slow down and notice more, instead of snapping a photo and moving on.

While on the trail or when I get home?

Maybe you can stop where you are and sit while you draw or write. Looking at a flower or lizard, then looking at what you are drawing, and then looking back at your subject gives you a priceless opportunity to study details.

It's similar for writing. Sit by the trail and write about your experience *right then* if you can. If you write later on, you try to recall all the details but cannot remember everything. The moment will have passed and your reactions to that moment have faded a bit.

If you cannot journal while it's happening, maybe you can write or draw at the end, before going home. Write or draw as close as you can (both in location and time) to what you are journaling about.

Using the sample journal page

On the next page we provide some suggestions for what to include in your writing. There are some prompts for what to notice and describe, but you don't have to write something for every single prompt. They are only suggestions.

You could write paragraphs or you could write in bullet points. Find a way that captures details and describes the impressions they leave you with. Find a style that works for you.

When you're done

Identifying when and where your journal entry was done	Including details about plants or animals
Spending all or part of the time without using your phone	Wondering about what you experienced
Stopping to look, listen, etc. for 1+ minutes at least once	Describing your emotions or impressions
Including details about the sky, land, temperature, etc.	Drawing or sketching

Give yourself credit for any of these that you did:

Thanks for taking our Nature Journal Challenge!

Please visit Friends of Sheri Capehart Nature Preserve at <u>https://FriendsofSCNP.org</u>. You can contact us at <u>info@FriendsofSCNP.org</u>. We are on Facebook at <u>https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofSCNP/</u>.

Sample Journal Page for Writing

"On this date and time, I am at this place" (information about date, time, and place)

"I am noticing ..." (Take time to be aware of what you see, hear, smell, taste and touch)

Some prompts:	
"The sky"	
"The light"	
"The air around me"	
"Trees or shrubs nearby"	
"Grasses and flowering	
plants''	
"The shape of the land"	
"The water"	
"The insects, birds, or	
other animals	

"I wonder..." (about anything-how things affect each other, what will happen later, how things work, live, survive, and so on)

"What I notice makes me..." (emotions, sense of connection or separation, gratitude, 'reminds me of ... ')