

Marine Awareness

Activity 1

SEASHORE JOURNAL

Marine Biodiversity & Ecosystem Functioning



How to get started?



Materials you will need

A **Journal**, a **Pencil**, **extra Sketch Paper** for drawing or painting your pictures, **Glue sticks** for putting drawings into books. Also coloured pencils and watercolours if you like to colour in your drawings!

The majority of nature journals are notepads or books of plain white paper. Lined paper generally interferes with drawing, but it may be suitable for your purposes. You can put loose sheets in a binder or buy an artist pad. Since you will be taking your journal to the seashore, you'll want to make sure it's sturdy and protected.

Note: ensure that the pages are well secured, either in good book binding or spiral binding and that you have a good cover.

The best way to get started is to go out on a nature walk of the seashore

What do you put into your Diary?

- **Observations:** Creating a nature diary is about observing, and not so much about how much you write. No matter where you are on the seashore you can observe nature in some form. Get out and watch. You can sit silently or take a leisurely stroll. Don't worry about writing or drawing right away; just pay attention to what is going on around you.
- **Record on the shore:** Do your writing on the seashore. A diary is most valuable if you use it in the field to record your observations as you are observing them. If you rely on your memory to write in your journal later, chances are your journal will be less accurate and you might not be as encouraged to concentrate on your environment in the field.
- **Basic information to include:** Begin each entry with the location, date, and time. Like any diary, you'll want to be able to look back at your nature journal and know exactly when and where you were when you wrote each entry. If your journal is for scientific purposes, you'll need to be very specific, and you may need to include other basic information, such as weather specifics — overcast, sunny etc.
- **Drawings or paintings:** A lot of people consider themselves bad artists, and you may be one of them. No matter what your current artistic ability, you should to at least try to do some drawings of plants, animals or scenes that you observe. Draw a plant, for example, and you are naturally forced to pay attention to the shapes of the leaves, the differences between each leaf, the many different colours, and other details that you might otherwise miss. Thus, it's not particularly important to draw well- drawing simply helps you observe better. Of course, if you're recording your observations for scientific research or to help you identify a plant when you get home, the quality of the drawing *does* count.
- **Your drawings will get better with time and practice, so don't give up.**

- **Photographs:** If you just can't bring yourself to draw, then take a picture on your camera. Even if you're a great artist, you may want to add photographs to your journal from time to time. Photographs can be useful, creative, and sometimes absolutely necessary, but be sure to at least try doing some drawing, too. If you're going to take pictures, be sure to leave some space in your journal to paste them in later.
- **Write about what you observe:** What and how you write should be customized to the purpose of your diary, but for a general-purpose nature journal, you can write just about anything.
- **Be descriptive:** Try to ignore what you know about things you see, and write about them as though you're seeing them for the first time. Be as descriptive as possible so that another person could pick up your journal 100 years from now and be able to picture the bird you wrote about and learn about it even if that bird no longer exists. While this may seem silly, keep in mind that nature journals provided us with much of what we know about some of the many animals that became extinct in the past two centuries.
- **Choose your own style:** You may develop a consistent style for each entry into your journal, or you may just write and sketch in whatever manner feels right at the moment. How you write and how you structure your journal are choices that you alone can make (unless you're working on a school or work assignment). Some people like to write their entries as though they're writing a letter to a friend or to themselves. Others like to include poems or little stories. **Just write!**
- **Learn more about what you've seen:** A journal can be a catalyst to learning. Once you've gone out and observed things in nature, go back home or visit the library and read more about what you've seen, especially if something in particular interested you or if you have unanswered questions. For example, you may see a plant you're not familiar with. Armed with your sketch and description of the plants, you can then look it up when you return. Use your journal to write down any questions you have e.g. What was that bird doing when it kept moving its head up and down? Why was the sand so much wetter on one side of the shore? and try to find the answers to these questions. If you're keeping a journal on a specific animal or ecosystem, you'll probably find it beneficial to do as much research as you can before you go out in the field.

Tip: It may be useful to draw a ruler line in your journal so that you can estimate the size of different animals and plants you come across.



Classroom Activity:

Go back to your class mates and report your discoveries after 1 month of observation and research on the seashore and its animals and plants.



- A. Make a **Poster** based on your findings
- B. Write a **Story** or **Poem** telling your class-mates about all the animals and plants you have come across on the seashore.



Discuss with your class mates

- A. Human influence on the seashore (marine pollution etc.)
- B. Why different animals and plants are found in different locations on the shore (zonation)
- C. What would the seashore be like if there was no humans! Would it be better???
- D. What would you do to protect your local shore?

