

Field Notebook

Each morning, you will spend 15-20 minutes making an entry in your field notebook.

This is a solitary exercise: take a few minutes to walk to a spot where you can make your observation. You should vary the place from where you make your observation each day. Begin by entering the following information into your notebook:

1. The date
2. The place; be as precise as possible. We'll be in the vicinity of Big Springs each day so write something like: "In the wooded area, approximately 200 m south of the Big Springs Pond, Lakeside, Arizona"
3. The time of day
4. A description of the weather
5. A description of the surroundings. Are you in a clearing? In the woods? If so, what is the dominant tree species? Are you observing the pond? The stream?

Next, sit or stand quietly for 15-20 minutes and use all of your senses to observe what is around you. You can close your eyes for part of this time to focus on sounds you hear. You can focus on just one thing for your observation if you want. For example, if you spot ants, they are invariably doing something interesting: moving about, carrying objects, etc.

At the end of your observation period, write down what you saw, heard, smelled, etc. Your entry should be at least 2-3 paragraphs long and rich in detail. Include any questions that might have sprung up in your head during the observation such as "What bird species was that?" or "Why was that ant solitary when I thought they lived in colonies?" You can look up the information later.

Leave out anything personal like feelings and avoid anthropomorphizing; for example, don't describe the rabbit as "cute" or the squirrel as "curious". Pretend you're a hard-nosed journalist and you're observing Mother Nature at work: just the facts ma'am.

If you see something super cool, like a garter snake devouring a fish, you should definitely share that with your classmates when you get back to the Nature Center!