



# Create a Field Journal!

## Overview

Students will create their own personal scientific field journals where they can document observations.

## California Science Standards

Grade 6: 7.b.-I&E  
Grade 7: 7.a.c.-I&E

## Oregon Science Standards

Grade 4: 3S.2,3  
Grade 5: 3S.1

## National Standards

Content Standard A:  
Scientific Inquiry

## Materials Included

\*Student Journal  
\*Bird field guide  
\*“Life of Birds” DVD

## Materials Needed

### Grades 3-5:

\*12 sheets of 8.5”x11” solid white paper  
\*1 sheet of cardstock 8.5”x11”  
\*Heavy duty stapler  
\*Colored pencils  
\*Glue sticks, scissors

### Grades 6-12:

\*1 3-ring binder per student, 10” x 7.5”  
\*1 package lined filler paper per student 9.5” x 6”

## Activity Time

**Preparation:** 20 min.

**Activity Time:** Varies

## Best Season

All Season

## Vocabulary

\*Field Journal

**Grade Level:** 3rd-12th (O.S.S: 4th-5th) (C.S.S: 6th & 7th)

## Learner Objectives

Students will:

- Create a scientific field journal
- Describe why a field journal is a critical tool when conducting scientific field studies
- Use a field journal to collect data in the field

## Background Information

Field journals are essential when conducting field observations and general field research that is conducted in the environment as opposed to a lab. During field studies, biologists use journals to collect and/or document field data including animal observations, vegetation characteristics, weather, location, time, and other interesting facts about the day. Journals can also include more than a record of scientific facts. They can include field sketches, plant presses, as well as feelings and thoughts about nature and science experiences.

Field journaling is a great tool for learning about the environment and can help students develop a connection with nature. By recording observations and feelings in a field journal, students become familiar with their surrounding environment and birds within it. Bird sightings, field marks, and behaviors can be recorded in the journals and help students re-create their day in the field.

Among the many types of field journals, the most widely used by biologists is the Grinnell-type journal. This type was developed by Joseph Grinnell, a well-known naturalist and ecologist. Grinnell was known for his emphasis on careful record keeping through documentation, a habit that led to his style of journaling. There are two parts to his journal: 1) daily accounts of observations at a location and 2) records of individual species of plants and/or animals. Creating a Grinnell-type journal works well for older students.

This activity is flexible and you can use with most of the other activities included in the kit!

# Lesson Plan

## Getting Ready!

1. Read background information.
2. Determine type of journal-style you want students to create.
  - A. Personal Journal (3rd-5th grade students)
  - B. Grinnell-Style Journal (6th-12th grade students).
3. Gather or have students gather journal materials before class.
4. Make copies of *Student Journal: Creating a Field Journal*.
5. If going outside, determine a site where students can write in their journals.

## Discuss!

1. Ask students if they have ever had a journal and if so, why?
2. If so, ask students what they put in their journals.
3. Explain to students that biologists use journals when studying in the field.
4. Ask students why a biologist would need a journal. List answers on the board. If you have your own journal this is a good time to share it with the students.

## Investigate!

1. Let students know they are going to create their own field journal and practice using them outside (or while watching *Life of Birds*).
2. Give each student a Student Journal.
3. Ask students to follow the Student Journal format and to record the time, date, weather, animal and plant observations, thoughts or feelings, and/or sketches while outside or during the movie. Students can also cut and paste the journal layout at the beginning of their journal.
4. Hand-out journal materials and create journals:

### **Grades 3-5:**

Create the journal by folding 12 sheets of the paper in half. Fold the cover sheet (cardstock) and staple it to the pages with 3 well-placed staples in the middle. Have students personalize the cover with pencils & crayons/markers.

### **Grades 6-12:**

- Have students write observations directly into the 3-ring binder in the field using the journal format from the Grinnellian journal.
5. Allow students 20 min. to observe & sketch in their field journal.

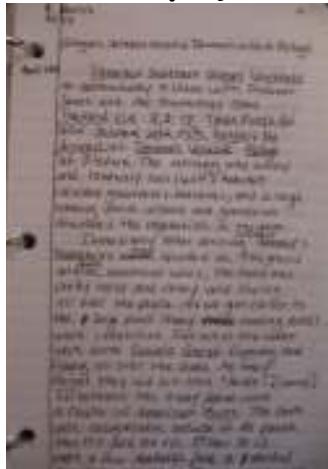
## Follow-up!

1. Have students share their observations and sketches.
2. Ask students 2-3 questions to re-cap lesson (see right panel).

### **Take a Hike!**

Take students on a nature hike along at Lava Beds National Monument & have them record observations in their field journals. Pick a location where students can write or sketch in their journal. Remind students to use their senses while observing.

### **Grinnell-Style Journal**



### **Suggested Questions**

*Why is a field journal important for field biologists?*

*What kind of information would you put in it?*

*What do you think biologists do with their journal information?*