Getting Started

Perpetual Nature Journaling

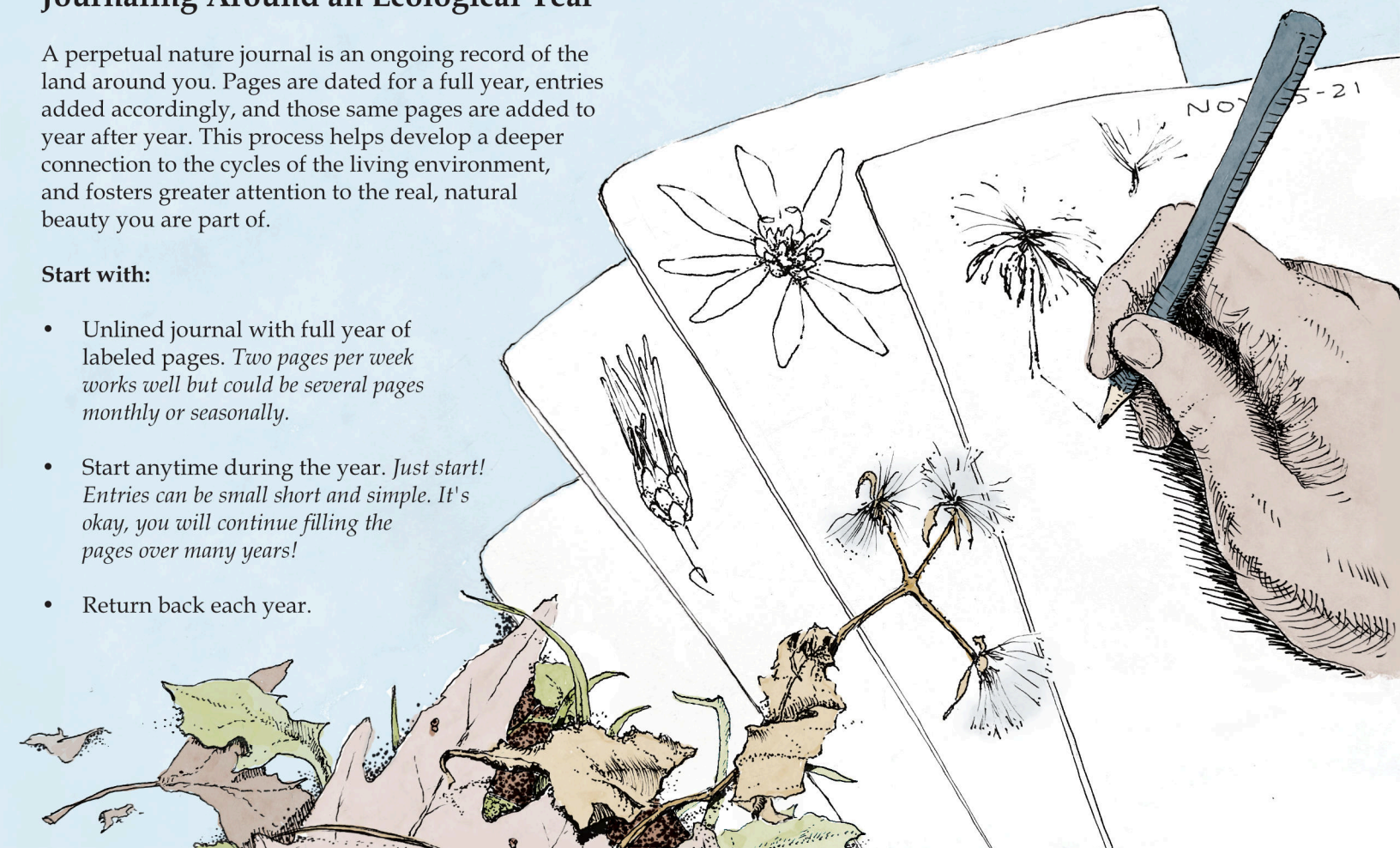
A pocket guide to recording Earth's rhythms

Journaling Around an Ecological Year

A perpetual nature journal is an ongoing record of the land around you. Pages are dated for a full year, entries added accordingly, and those same pages are added to year after year. This process helps develop a deeper connection to the cycles of the living environment, and fosters greater attention to the real, natural beauty you are part of.

Start with:

- Unlined journal with full year of labeled pages. *Two pages per week works well but could be several pages monthly or seasonally.*
- Start anytime during the year. *Just start! Entries can be small short and simple. It's okay, you will continue filling the pages over many years!*
- Return back each year.



Quick Sketches

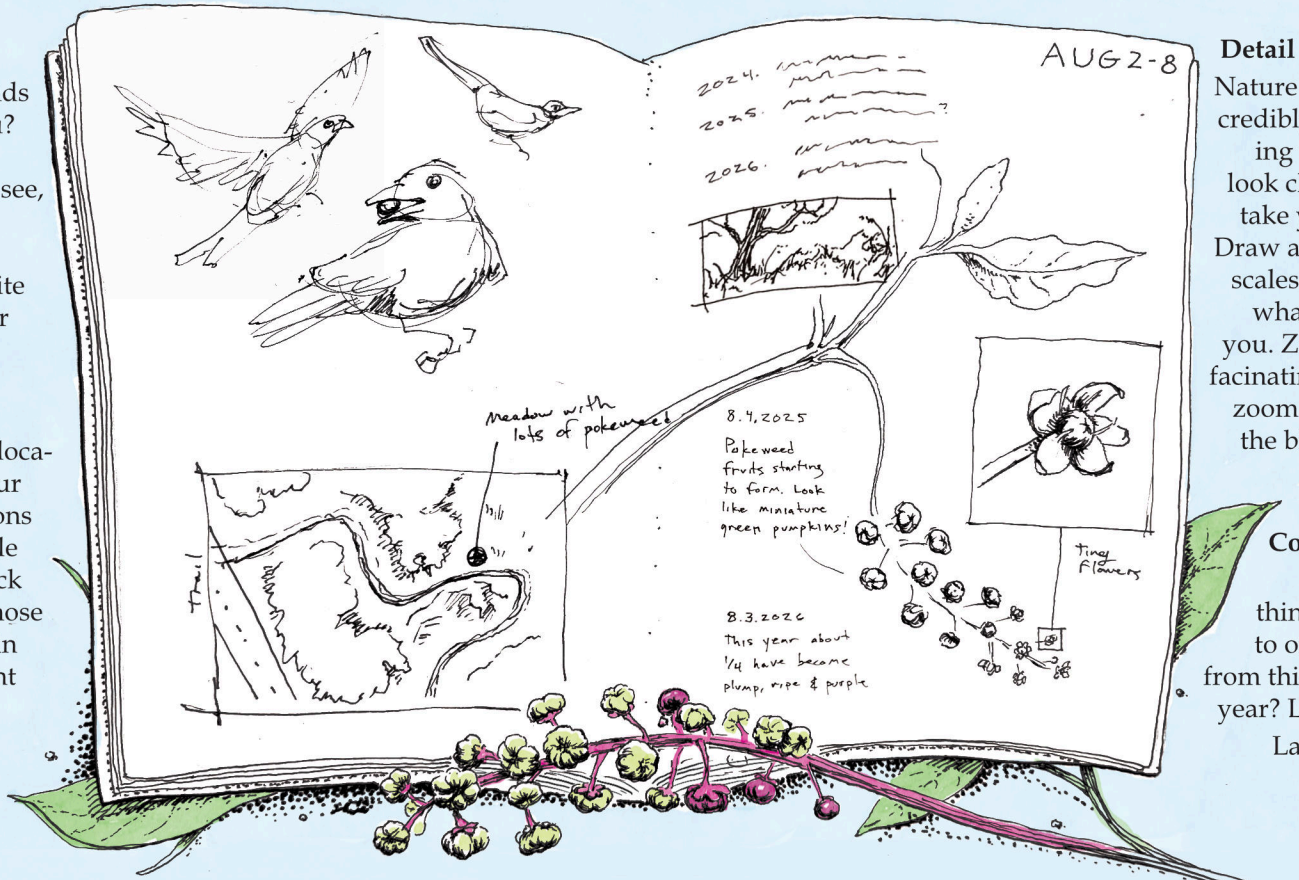
Preserve a memory with a quick sketch. Even if the sketch doesn't fully capture it, the process of sketching helps your brain to retain it.

Writing

What stands out to you? Describe what you see, feel, hear, taste and smell. Write in prose or poetry!

Maps

Mark the location of your observations on a simple map. Check back on those locations in subsequent years.



Yearly Notes

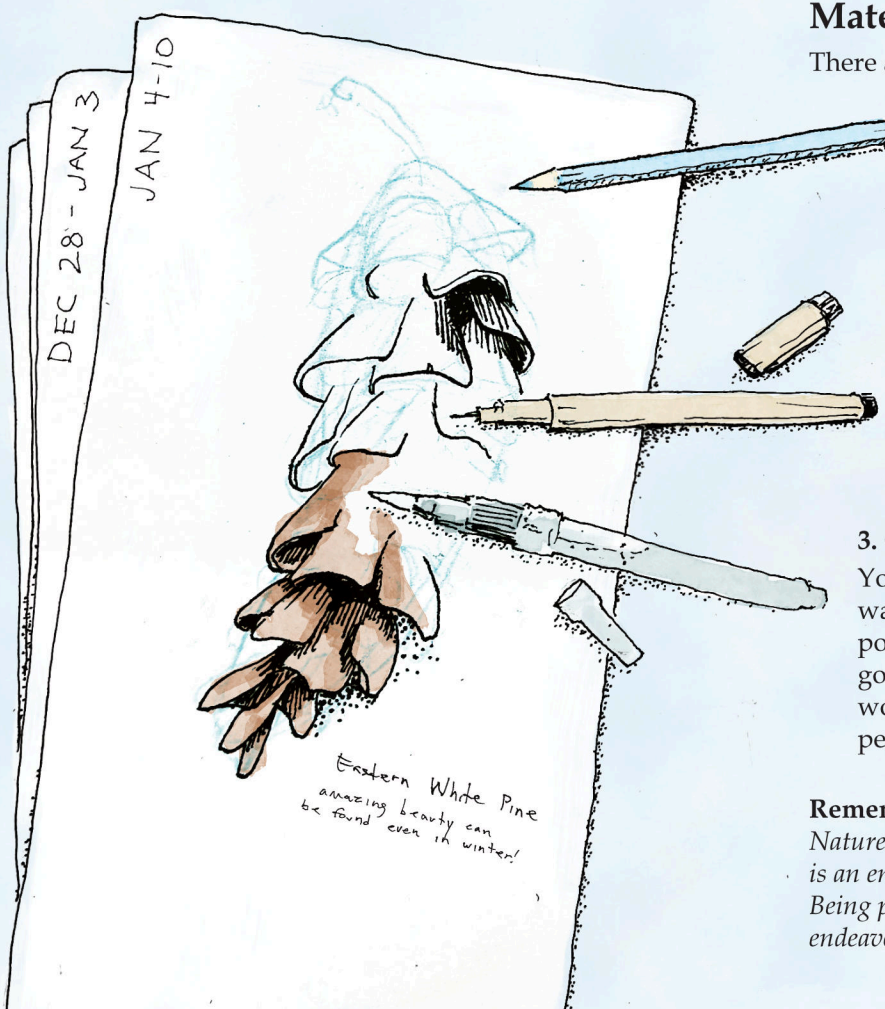
Track how the same seasonal moment changes from year to year. Write questions to yourself to answer the following year.

Detail Sketches

Nature can be incredibly interesting when you look closely and take your time. Draw at different scales. Focus on what interests you. Zoom in on facinating details, zoom out to see the big picture.

Comparison

How are things similar to or different from this time last year? Last week? Last month?



Materials & Techniques

There are many ways to draw. Try this process to start:

1. Pencil Sketch

Sometimes it helps to map out the general shape with light pencil marks that will guide your image and then get erased at the end. Keep it light and simple. Focus on layout and propotions while saving details for later.

2. Cleanup, Detail & Shading

Follow the guidelines from your pencil sketch, or skip the sketch and start here. Use darker more precise lines. Consider the texture and shading.

3. Color

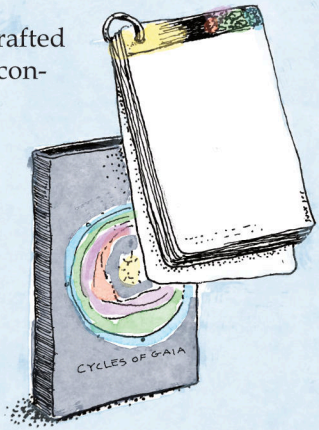
You may want to add color to your drawings. A single waterbrush pen and a small set of watercolors is a nice portable option. (Just make sure to use waterproof ink if going over an ink drawing.) A few colored pencils also works nicely, or use the waterbrush pen with watercolor pencils instead of paints.

Remember

Nature journaling is not about making perfect pictures! Drawing is an enriching process which compels deep attention to a subject. Being present and connected to the living Earth is a powerful endeavor, regardless of the outcome on the page!

Additional Resources

Besides this little booklet, we've crafted lots of resources to help people reconnect to the *Cycles of Gaia:*



Perpetual Nature Journal
A unique book designed specially for perpetual nature journaling, its pages are labeled with a year of dates and ecological data. Physically constructed with no beginning or end, as you continue forward, you seamlessly loop back around to revisit previous pages.

Ecological Calendar
This vibrant wall poster depicts the seasonal flow of twenty native trees and shrubs in the Northeastern US.

Curricula
K-12 standardized educational materials and Posters are free to teachers in the Northeast.

GaianWay.org
Provides information and inspiration for thriving within Earth's limits.

www.cyclesofgaia.com

Copyright 2026 ⊕ GAIAN WAY - Written and Illustrated by Jon Schroth