

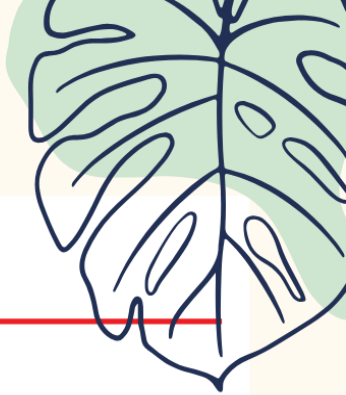


A Nature Journalling Guide

by
Sharon Brookes

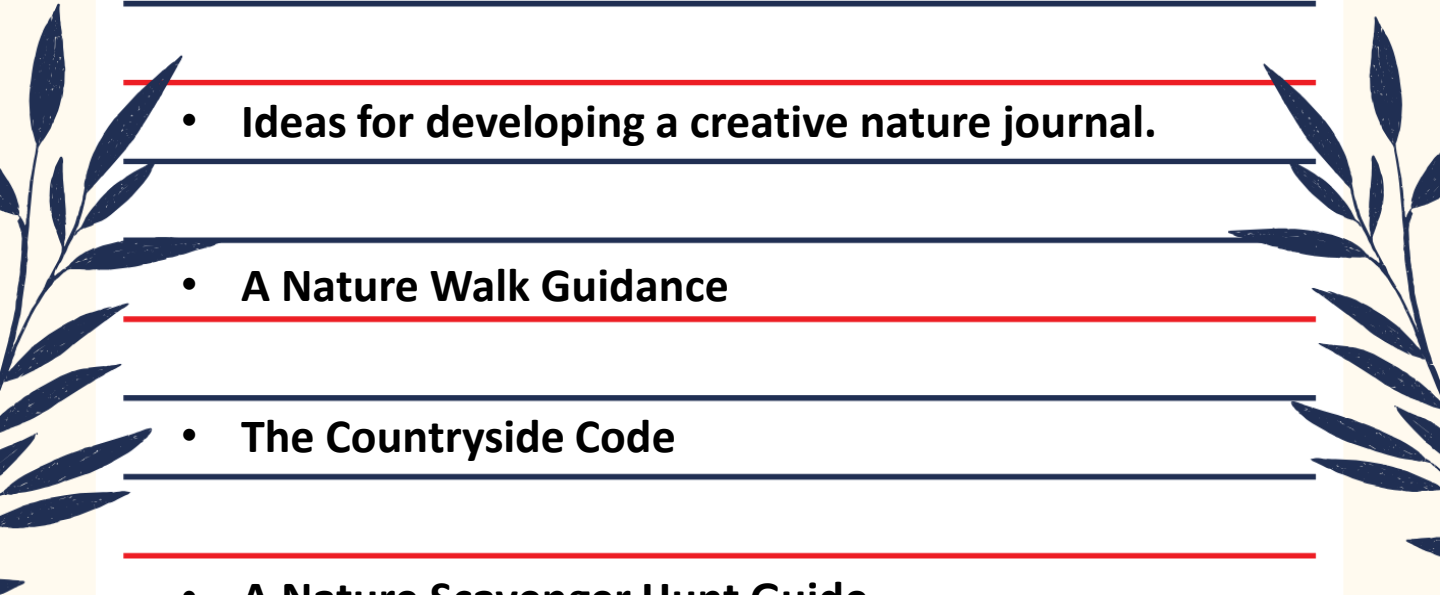
© Backbury House Retreats





Contents

- **An Introduction to Nature Journalling.**
- **How Botanical illustrations have paved the way for modern nature journalling.**
- **Ideas for developing a creative nature journal.**
- **A Nature Walk Guidance**
- **The Countryside Code**
- **A Nature Scavenger Hunt Guide**
- **Recording Observations Sheet**

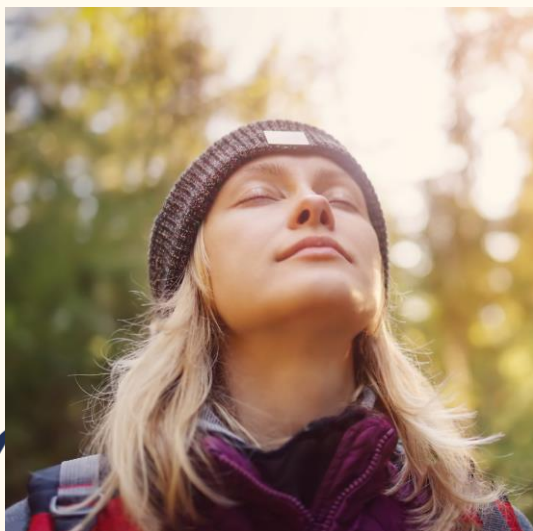




An Introduction to Nature Journalling

Nature journals are documents that usually contain both illustrations and text and are inspired by the natural world. They may contain scientific information on species, or more simply, just personal observations. Fundamentally, they offer a way to understand the world in which we live.

The term journal implies that recordings are completed on a regular basis. However, nature journals do not need to be completed daily, as a diary would be. Nature journals can be added to as frequently as the author wishes.



What are the benefits of completing a nature journal?

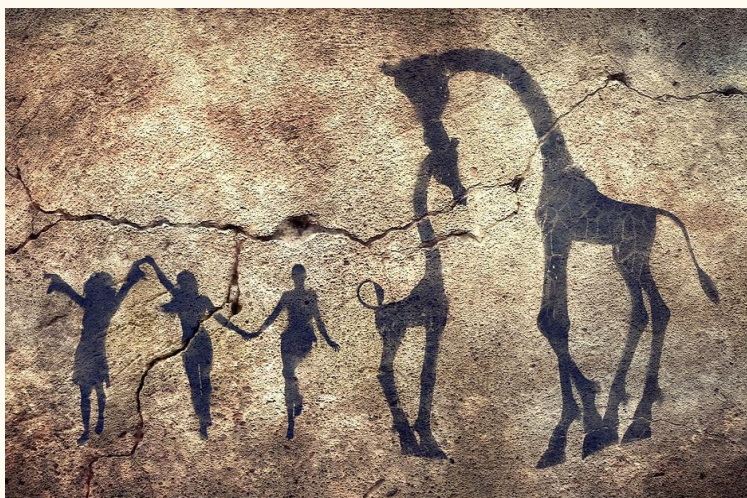
It is widely publicised that spending time in nature has calming and therapeutic effects for the majority. So simply taking time out for yourself and going on a nature walk could be sufficient in order to reduce stress levels. What's more, taking your nature journal with you on your walks will give you the opportunity to stop and appreciate your surroundings further.

These are the core aims of mindfulness practice which promotes improved well-being.

Is nature journalling a new thing?

Nature journals are by no means a new fad. In fact, there has been a long-held human fascination with recording the natural world.

For example, cave paintings featuring images of nature have been found all over the world, the oldest dating back to around 40,000 years ago.



In these ancient paintings, the cave artists have depicted animals that have been observed around them.



How Botanical Illustrations have paved the way for modern nature journalling.



The desire to document and understand the natural world has continued throughout time.

This is evident in ancient manuscripts which date back to the first century BC. In these manuscripts, floral images have been recorded for scientific purposes.

The scientific journals completed by the Greek physician Crateuas (111–64 BC) are thought to be the earliest recordings of botanical journals. Furthermore, Crateuas is often referred to as the father of botanical illustration. Botanical illustrations have proven to be popular within many cultures. Furthermore, nature journalling could be considered to be a modern day alternative.





Ideas for developing a creative nature journal.

There are lots of creative ways in which you can produce a personal nature journal. You do not need to be an accomplished artist or even a botanical illustrator.

Detailed on the next few pages are a few suggestions of creative ways in which to complete a nature journal which are suitable for all ability levels. It should be noted that there is no prescriptive way in which to complete your journal. You may undertake nature journaling in any way which suits you.



1. What can be used for a nature journal?

You may wish to simply purchase a blank journal or sketchbook. If so, please pay attention to the quality of the paper as artwork requires a good quality surface. Look for books which contain paper quality of around 300gsm.

Alternatively, you may wish to make your own journal. This could be achieved by adding hole punched paper to a ring binder.

You could even make your own bound journal by using thick cardboard as a cover.

Whichever option that you choose, please consider the size of the journal. If you wish to take your journal with you on nature walks, then an A5 book would be the most practical.



2. Choose subjects that inspire you.

Beauty can be found in many forms. For example, the jewel-like colours of the ruby-tailed wasp inspired the glittery drawing illustrated here. So, subjects with good colouration can be very inspirational.

Furthermore, nature provides a rich source of subjects to inspire which can be found throughout the year.



Why not explore some of the following subjects: An acorn, a pinecone, a shell, a holly leaf, an autumn leaf, a teasel seed head, a poppy seed head, a wild mushroom, a spring flower, winter berries, a frosted spider web, mistletoe, a tulip, a summer flower.



3. Preserving leaves and flowers.

Adding leaves and flowers to your journal is a great idea. Not only does this create decorative effects, but it also provides inspiration for drawing. So, you could try pressing and drying leaves and flowers. To do this, simply enclose the leaf or flower in absorbent paper and then add a weight on top. This could be a pile of books, for example. In about a week's time, you will have a flat and dry object which can then be added to your journal.

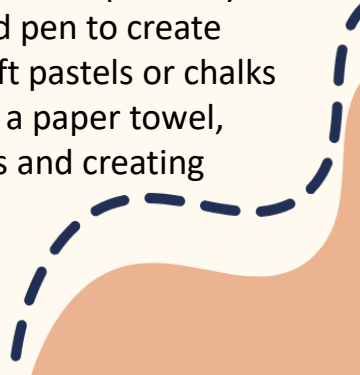
Have you tried laminating an object? If you have a disused laminating machine lurking in a cupboard, this is the ideal time to dust it off and try it out again. Laminating dried leaves and flowers can be fun. You can also add decorative effects with coloured wool and stitch.



4. Experimenting with different drawing techniques.

When completing drawings for your nature journal, consider using different media. In the example illustrated here, coloured pens have been used expressively. Journals do not need to contain accurate and super realistic images. Instead, you can have fun creating loose and expressive effects with lots of different media.

Ideas that you could try include: using water-soluble pencils to create painterly effects, layering coloured pen to create different tones, using soft pastels or chalks and blending tones with a paper towel, ripping up old magazines and creating collage effects





5. Creating different surfaces for your artworks.



Drawing directly on to a page can achieve excellent results. However, have you considered drawing on to different surfaces?

In the example illustrated here, paint has been applied in a drizzled effect directly on to the journal page. To diffuse this, white tissue paper has then been glued over the top. The result is a lively and interesting surface on which to create expressive drawings.

You could also try gluing scrunched tissue paper in to your journal using PVA glue liberally. Once dry, try sanding back the tissue paper using a fine sanding paper. The result is then a lightly textured and interesting surface on which to draw.



6. Inspired by the written word.

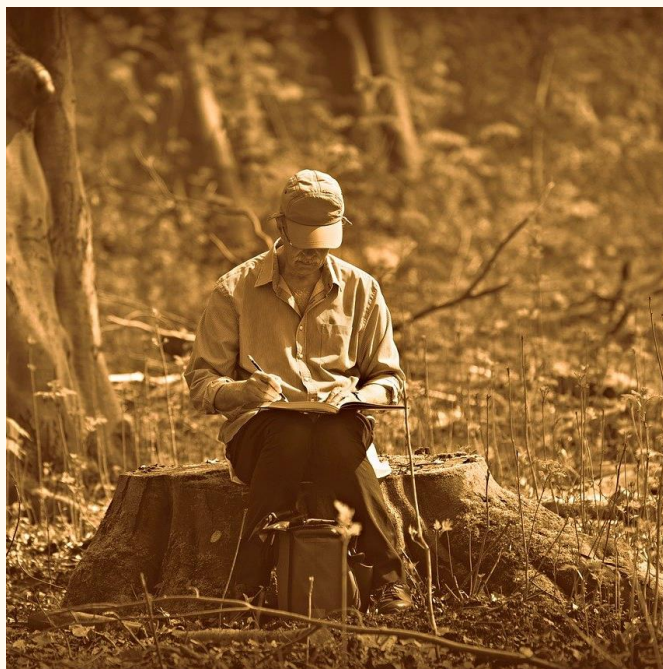
A nature journal does not need to focus purely on its illustrations. Writing your thoughts and ideas about what you are observing are equally as important. You may also wish to add research about different species in order to learn more.

Furthermore, you may feel inspired to research nature-themed poetry or verse. The written word can often conjure up creative imagery in the mind which can then be recorded in your journal. You may also wish to write your own nature-themed poetry.





A Nature Walk Guidance



A nature walk is a great opportunity to take time to enjoy and appreciate your surroundings. What's more, taking a nature journal with you will enable you to connect with, and learn more about nature.

During the walk, consider not only what you can **see**, but also what you can **hear, smell** and **touch**. However, be careful to avoid touching poisonous or toxic plants such as Cow Parsnip, Foxgloves and Giant Hogweed.

On your walk, record your observations in your nature journal. You may wish to try completing the following:

- Throughout your walk, **record notes** about what you can see, hear, smell and touch. You can then complete further research on these to add to your journal later.
- **Take photos** of things that interest you. These will be great reference sources.
- **Take rubbings** of interesting textures like tree bark, leaf veins etc. They can then be used to add interesting borders and illustrations within your journal.
- **Complete sketches** of flowers, trees, insects etc. You can always develop these further after your walk, if you wish to.
- **Collect fallen leaves and pine cones** to complete further drawings after your walk. However, please be respectful to the natural environment. Please do not pick flowers or leaves off living plants and trees. It is illegal to do so on any nature reserve or Site of Specific Scientific Interest.
- Lastly, please **abide by the countryside rules** *see next page.



The Countryside Code



Please follow the countryside code when completing your nature walks.

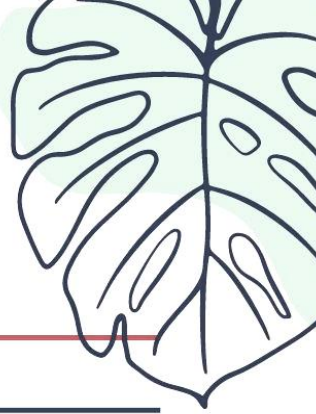
Below is a few summarised points. Please visit www.Gov.UK for the full set of guidelines.

Summary of The Countryside Code:

- **Respect people and animals:** Be kind and considerate to people who live and work in the countryside. Give wild animals, livestock and horses plenty of space.
- **Follow paths:** Stay on marked paths, even if they're muddy. Use the official access points such as the marked gates and stiles. Close all gates after use.
- **Keep dogs under control:** Keep your dog under control at all times and clear up after them. Use a lead when passing livestock.
- **Protect wildlife:** Avoid disturbing wildlife, including birds that nest on the ground.
- **Do not cause damage or disturbance:** Leave rocks, stones, plants, and trees as you find them.
- **Take care on country roads:** Slow down and drive carefully on rural roads. Make sure you do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking.
- **Be careful with fire:** Do not light fires and only have BBQs where signs say that you can
- **Take your litter home:** Leave no trace of your visit.
- **Be aware of signs and symbols.** Before your visit, ensure that you are familiar with countryside signs and symbols. Ensure that you follow them.



A Nature Scavenger Hunt Guide



Fallen Items to collect...

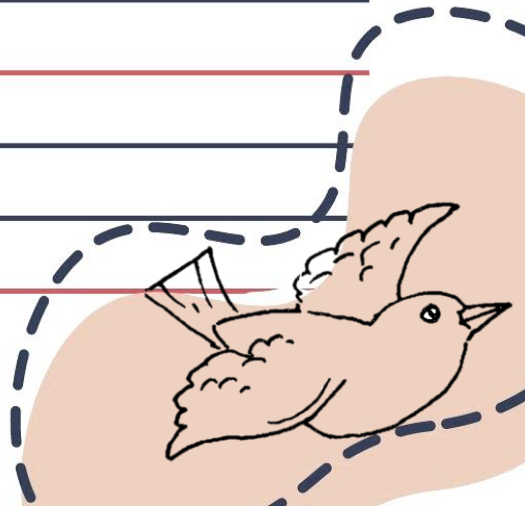
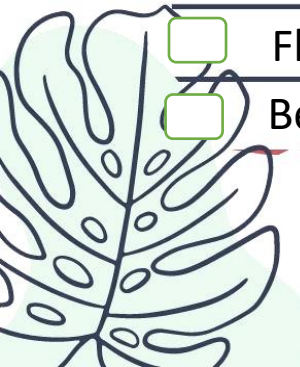
- A leaf with interesting colours
- A leaf with an interesting shape
- An evergreen leaf
- A pinecone
- An acorn
- A feather
- A seed head

Rubbings to collect...

- Tree bark
- Stone
- Leaves

Photos to collect...

- Interesting trees
- Interesting viewpoints
- Cobwebs
- Insects
- Birds
- Fungi
- Flowers
- Berries





Recording Observations Sheet



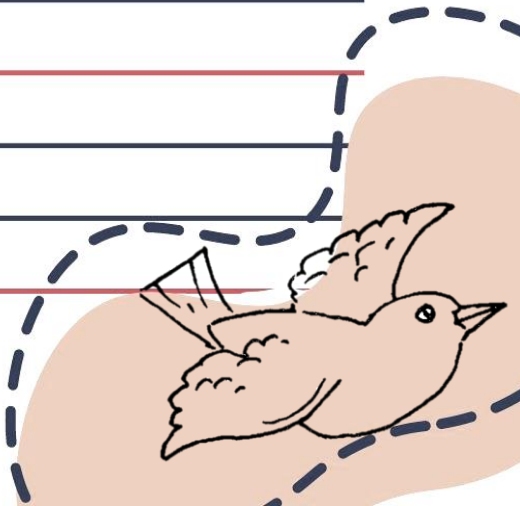
Make notes about what you find, hear, see, smell and touch.




Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple sets of three horizontal lines (top, middle, bottom) with a red line for the top and a black line for the bottom. A paperclip is attached to the top left corner of the first line.





What to make notes about:

- Recording the species that you have found
- Describing what you think/know about it
- Describing where you found it- the habitat





Backbury House Retreats
offers award-winning art
courses delivered from
professional art studios
located in paradisaal
countryside.



To learn more, visit
www.bhretreats.co.uk

Backbury House Retreats
Hereford HR1 4NA

sbrookes@bhretreats.co.uk

