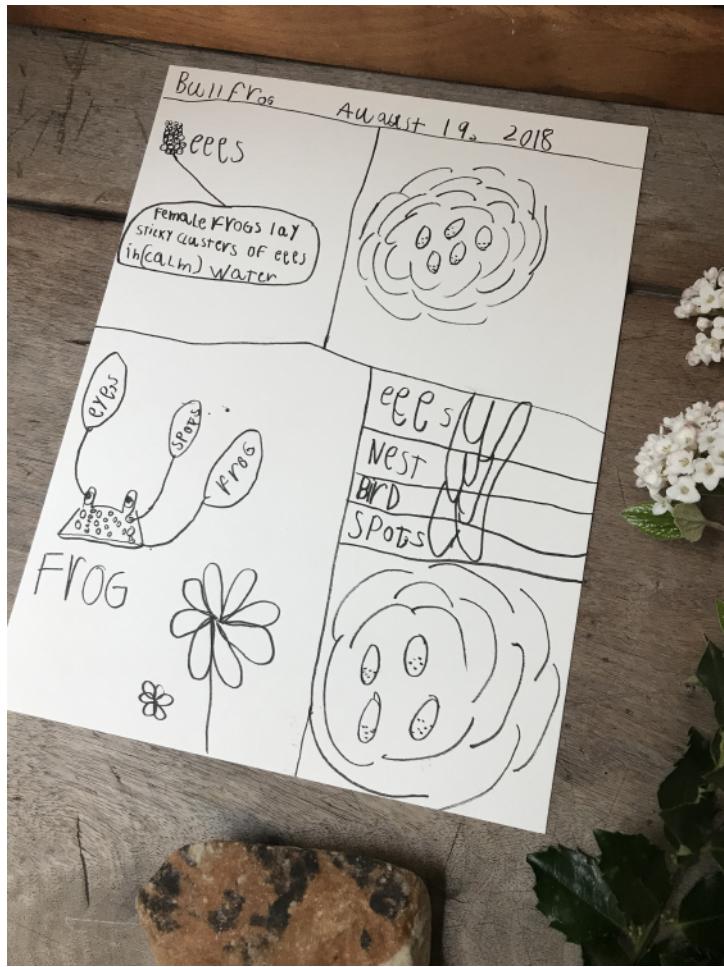
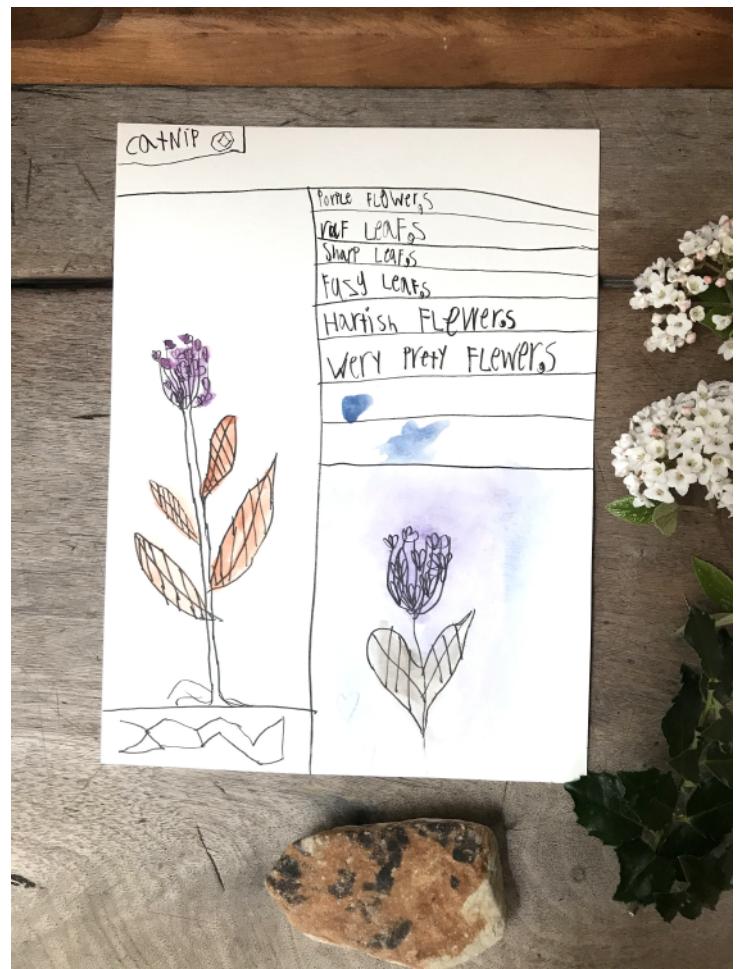




Sanity-Saving Guide to Nature Journaling with Younger Kids



Want to Nature Journal with your kids but find it frustrating and difficult?

The nature studies on the previous pages were done by my 7 and 8 year olds a couple years ago.

We also used to find nature journaling frustrating; as an artist with an education background and mom of 6, I decided to try to simplify the process for my kids so that we could all enjoy it more!

Here are a few tips that you might also find helpful. Because the point after all is to enjoy it!

1. Keep the materials simple:



Are you like me and often out for a hike while pregnant, carrying a recalcitrant toddler, and/or trying to answer the “big” kids needs as well, haha?!

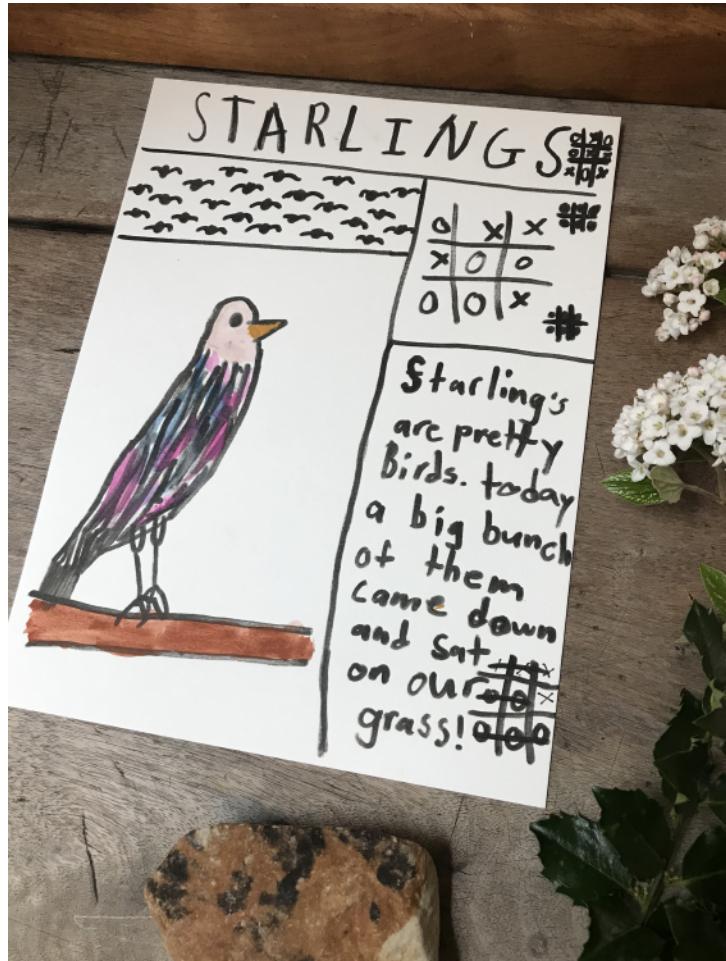
Do yourself a favor and just bring the basic supplies: a pen and paper. One pad of watercolor paper can be used by the whole family, and one fine point Sharpie each. You may also want to have clipboards to press on, but don’t worry about it in a pinch.

When you’re on site, keep to a pen and paper, and save the color and details materials for adding more at home.



2. Divide and Conquer:

It's important to let younger children use larger paper, but this can also make for a daunting task of filling all that space. Teach them to begin by using their pen to divide the page into smaller blocks, like below.



Name of specimen	Latin name too?
Overview drawing	Date Location
Things you observe:	
Up close detail	

These are suggestions for dividing your paper and what you could put in each box. You can see in my children's examples that they often change up how they divide page, which is fine. They have grasped the useful point of breaking it down into smaller chunks to fill the space. It can also help the kids who don't know where to start; it's easy to start with the basics like the name, date, location, etc.

At this point, and for younger ages (I'm thinking about 10 and under), using a pen is the easiest way to get the job done. Skipping the pencil stage helps the work to go quicker, with a better likelihood and finishing!

As they start their drawings, encourage them to try to simplify the shapes that make up the specimen. Look at the silhouette of the specimen and draw that. Add some details in a drawing or in notes. Have them use the pen as an outline, so that at home they can add color to complete the picture.

3. Come home and have fun with color.



Here is my 6 1/2 year old studying a mushroom specimen from one of our books. You can see how she's made notes about the different characteristics on the right, and drawn arrows to them in the picture.

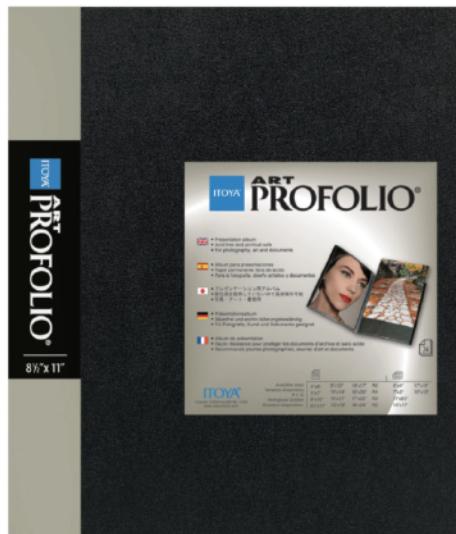
The advantage of using a permanent marker is that you can go over your drawing with watercolor and not blur the lines.

Eleanor is using my paintbox to add color to her final drawing; and the result as you see below is very charming.



More Ideas for Success!

Of course the main point of nature journaling is in the process and the learning that occurs. But everyone likes to make something that looks nice too. By using loose sheets of paper, you can collect the studies from your whole family into one nice portfolio. The Itoya brand shown below are really nice and reasonably priced.



If these ideas are still too complicated for your younger children, you could simplify even further; for example just keeping a color journal, like below:



Via @gardenercook on Instagram

I'd love to hear if you found this helpful!
Please email me: bley@estherbley.com.

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