

Take note

Hikers might enjoy keeping a journal

When an animal finds an abundant source of food it develops a "search image." A search image enables an animal to find a source of food quickly and efficiently. Sometimes the animal may by-pass edible food while it is searching for the more abundant food.

One thing is for certain, the animals know how to find their food because they are observant. Hikers and naturalists can enhance their powers of observation by writing and drawing in a notebook.

Walking trails is enjoyable and fun, but knowing what is along the trail makes it even more enjoyable. Carrying field guides for any eventual subject could be overwhelming, but a sketch pad and a notebook to record pertinent information are not heavy at all.

If you take the time to stop and sit and sense the surroundings, it is remarkable what you will observe. Writing down what you are viewing, or hearing, or smelling, or feeling will help to codify the experience. Writing forces one to describe what is there and to put observations into perspective. It also stimulates deeper thoughts.

A written description can be long and flowery, or short and simple. No matter how it is written be sure to put a date and place notation. This will be helpful to know if comparisons are to be made in the future.

Complementing written descriptions with some drawings or illustrations will enhance a journal remarkably. Drawings do not have to be superior, they are just a means to help learn about a particular subject. Many people feel they cannot draw, but a rough sketch with written descriptions in the margins to supplement your drawing, will add a great deal to the observation. Examining a subject closely enough to draw it will only enhance your appreciation and knowledge of the subject. A cursory examination does not define the detail that a more extended observation would.

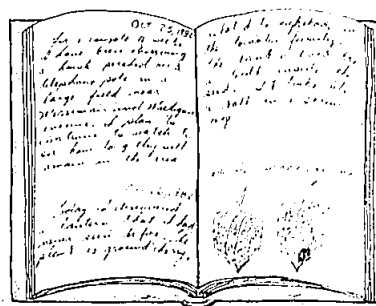
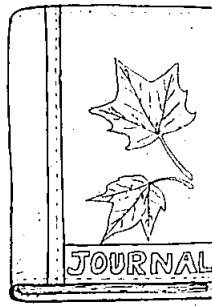
Doing some sketching will also provide one with a greater appreciation for those professionals who create some marvelous paintings and sculptures of wildlife they have experienced.

This weekend, March 21 and 22, the Michigan Wildlife Habitat Foundation is sponsoring a wildlife art show at the Southfield Civic Center. There will be plenty of fine art, along with speakers and a marketplace. It's a great opportunity to talk with artists and to see various styles and techniques.

Creating a journal will improve your observations, provide descriptions for future identifications, and provide nostalgic reading in the future.



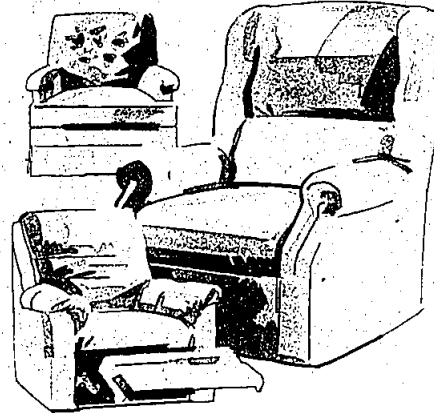
Timothy Nowicki
Tim Nowicki is a naturalist at Independence Oaks County Park in Oakland County. He lives in Livonia.



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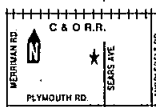
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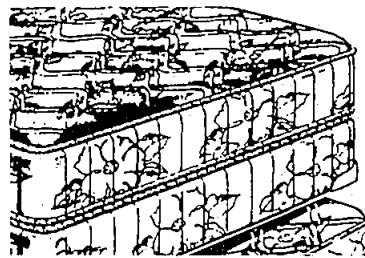


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