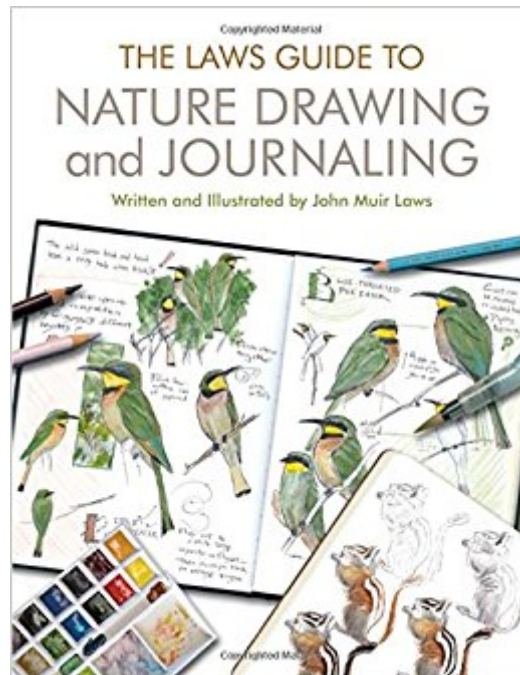


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# Laws Guide To Nature Drawing And Journaling, The



## Synopsis

The ultimate guide to nature drawing and journalingGold Medal, 2016 Foreword INDIES Book Award. A potent combination of art, science, and boundless enthusiasm, the latest art instruction book from John Muir Laws is a how-to guide for becoming a better artist and a more attentive naturalist. In straightforward text complemented by step-by-step illustrations, dozens of exercises lead the hand and mind through creating accurate reproductions of plants and animals as well as landscapes, skies, and more. Laws provides clear, practical advice for every step of the process for artists at every level, from the basics of choosing supplies to advanced techniques. While the book's advice will improve the skills of already accomplished artists, the emphasis on seeing, learning, and feeling will make this book valuable even revelatory to anyone interested in the natural world, no matter how rudimentary their artistic abilities. Also available: The Laws Sketchbook for Nature Journaling, a blank journal constructed to withstand excursions in the field and containing several exercises from The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Holds strong crossover appeal among environmentalism, earth sciences, hiking, and art instruction.” --Heather Halliday, Library Journal  
“This beautiful art book will teach you how to be still, quiet, and attentive to organize your thoughts, piece together answers, and ask richer questions.” The overall goal is to stimulate your curiosity, and you won't find a better guide.” --Foreword Reviews  
“More than anything a thorough instructional guide to thinking like a naturalist Laws is, after all, one of the world's foremost

News&#x2014;&#x2014;Kids' BookBuzz&#x2014;&#x2014;The definitive guide to nature journaling.&#x2014;&#x2014;Nancy H. DeStefanis, *The Blue Heron*&#x2014;&#x2014;An outstanding survey, highly recommended for aspiring nature artists who want details on how to use journaling and art to best advantage.&#x2014;&#x2014;Midwest Book Review

Mr. Laws has hit a home run with his newest publication! The sample journal pages that Laws shares are just stunning. He goes into extensive detail, encouraging readers to observe on a deeper level. He discusses the tools that he finds to be helpful for beginners and experienced journalers. He demonstrates step by step how to document nearly every aspect of Nature, so you can record your own nature observations- covering landscapes, insects, flowers, mammals, rocks, trees and much (much!) more. You will learn how to use watercolor paints, colored pencils, and more. His explanation of color mixing is a game changer for getting bright, clear colors in your journals. If you are interested in documenting the things you observe in nature, even from your window, this is an excellent resource worth investing in.

I originally purchased this book to have easy access to the information on John Muir Laws blog and in the videos. First impressions: This book is stunning. About the size of a phone book, it has a sewn

binding and lays flat. The graphic layout work in the book is the best I've seen, and the authors and publishers went to great lengths to keep the book exceptionally well organized. If you have a fondness for quality and attention to detail, this guide will set off all the happy buzzers in your brain. I normally do "what I liked/what I didn't like" format for my reviews. For this volume, I'll simply list the features that are unique and note the one or two things I wish had been handled differently -- there is nothing to "not like" about this Guide.

**Unique Features:**

1. I believe the strength of John Muir Laws blog, classes, and books lies in the fact that he is dyslexic. He is the "best science teacher I never had" because he always finds a way to show instead of tell information. He then works in tandem with people whose strength lies in words, and produces a home run every. single. time. This book is no exception. Expect every principle to be explained and illustrated thoroughly for both halves of your brain. I was particularly impressed with Emilie's ability as a writer to present a single voice throughout the book. Having read the blog, I recognize Jack's voice, but she lends a harmony and richness that is strikingly beautiful.
2. Each section of the book stands alone. If an illustration was needed to demonstrate "blocking in", the publisher didn't refer you to another page, they simply added another full page illustration. As an educator (B.S., Science Ed; home educator for 20 years) I appreciated that major concepts were presented more than once because of this feature. Many books are edited for redundancy and lose their educational value as a result.
3. Observations from the portion of the book on how/why to keep a nature journal. ~ The writing is passionate and infectious -- Jack and Emilie have you longing to go out and journal after just reading a few paragraphs. ~ He doesn't just provide a checklist of questions, he demonstrates the natural flow of questions that arise during a field investigation by including photos from his own field journal. ~ I particularly enjoyed the section on "How to Think Like A Naturalist and Scientist"
4. Projects that Focus Awareness is probably my favorite chapter in the book. Using large photos from his own journal, John details 13 different types of field investigations, noting their strengths and potential problem spots. For a teacher, this chapter alone is a full year of material (2-3 week units for each project) and the rest of the book could potentially be worked into each of these 13 projects. For an amateur naturalist, this chapter will provide at least a year's worth of projects that will open the door to a lifetime of investigation.
5. Inquiry Tool Kit is aptly named and another unique and valuable resource. Just as the following chapter will provide a list of physical supplies, this is a set of mental supplies that enable an amateur naturalist to unlock the beauty and mysteries of nature. I have never seen a resource like this, and as expected, the list is thorough and contains dozens of illustrations to show as well as tell.
6. Visual Thinking is a chapter on how to arrange the information you are collecting in the physical journal. He begins with a nod to the (insanely tedious) Grinnell

Method, and then moves on to teach techniques for presenting information graphically. Unless you have taken college level science courses, you probably won't understand how unique and valuable this information is. We have all grown accustomed to slick infographics produced on the computer, but learning how to accomplish this in field journaling is an entirely different beast. This principle will also be approached later in the art section of the book under "Post-Hawk Composition" (nice pun, by the way!) One quick note here: the "Elements to Include in Your Journal" intended to be copied isn't photocopyable -- it lies next to the gutter and the background/text don't have enough contrast to photocopy well. I know from having hand copied this list off the blog how valuable it is to have once I'm in the field. Take the time to hand copy the list into your field notebook: you won't regret it!<sup>7</sup> The next 80 pages of the book are dedicated to art supplies and techniques. I have dozens of art books from years of home educating K-12. None of them compare to this section. He demonstrates how to use each technique or supply, but then goes on to show how to do full drawings using them in tandem. From color theory to edges to values, he succinctly shows how to capture your subject in a way that is scientifically accurate and artistically compelling. I especially appreciated that he gives specific brands and colors and then goes on to show how he uses that particular tool to best effect. If one tool performs substantially better than another, he call out the potential problem and shows an alternate technique. (Orange clouds on a blue sky aren't easily accomplished in watercolor, but work well with gouache, for example.)<sup>8</sup> The last half the book (the reason I originally purchased the book) is "how to draw" various plants, animals, weather, and landscape elements with step-by-step instructions. This half of the book alone is worth the price. John Muir Laws employs a method of teaching drawing/painting that allows students to catch scientifically unique features with a minimum of fuss. He is the master of simplifying the complex without losing important detail. His drawing style represents the perfect tension point between sketch and scientific illustration. When drawing snakes, he presents a scientific illustration of a snake done in a studio over the course of several days and then shows how to capture the same information in a field sketch. Fans of his blog and video classes will notice some of the details missing from these pages -- the clock trick for placing a bird head and tail, for instance. That change is balanced by the addition of clearer text instructions. John and Emilie clearly demonstrate their love, passion, and experience with nature journaling throughout all three hundred pages of this book. Whether you've been following his blog for a couple of years or are new to the nature journaling world, this comprehensive guide is worth every penny. Teachers working with middle school and up will be able to create lesson plans centered around this resource with very little effort. (The blog contains an elementary level curriculum with complete lesson plans) Amateur naturalists will be ecstatic to find a resource that is

entirely devoted to and illustrated with field work.

I ordered this book pre-publication and just received it last week. This is the best nature drawing book that I have. I was a scientific illustrator for 19 years and have quite a few nature drawing and illustration books. I love learning from other practicing artists and found Mr. Laws' YouTube videos online. I loved the way he taught and bought the book to support his work. This book is a very comprehensive and beautiful set of lessons that will enrich your life as well as improve your observational and drawing skills. In addition, your journaling will make a quantum leap in quality. This should be a text in every freshman high school science class. The students will be enriched, engaged, and become better students overall. As a former middle school and high school science and math teacher, I highly recommend this book to teachers and students. I only wish that I had had a book like this 40 years ago to use in my own classroom. A masterful work, Mr. Laws and Ms. Emilie Lygren, I congratulate you both.

If you are only going to buy one book about Nature Journaling, this is the one! He covers animals, plants, the sky, landscapes. Learn what to take with you, what questions to ask, how to fill a page with pictures and observations. In short, a beautifully illustrated guide to everything you need to learn how to journal your observations from nature. Of course, if you have lots of sketch books/nature journal books, this is still worthwhile. His illustrations are beautiful, and his writing is inspiring.

This is a substantial book. It has some heft to it, and I like the format and layout. It isn't just a list of stuff to buy, or how to draw, and paint wildlife, Laws also include sections on asking questions about what you see. I like his line about identifying birds with a field guide: "If the book and bird do not agree [habits, location...], then believe the bird."

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