

ESCI 330 NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

John McLaughlin

Field Journal Rubric

A field journal will be one of your most important tools in this course. It should be where you record all of your observations, hypotheses about natural history patterns, and other ideas related to natural history. Your journal should contain entries from each field session in the course, supplemented by natural history observations you make outside of the course. (You might want to carry your journal with you at all times this quarter. Perhaps you will enjoy natural history so much that this will become a life-long habit.) Your journal will provide the basic information you will use to prepare other assignments for the course, including natural history reports and your portfolio.

Several journal formats have been developed by natural historians and field scientists. The course binder contains a description of one of the most popular, created by the pioneering ecologist Joseph Grinnell. Feel free to adopt Grinnell's format or any other that suits you, provided your journal meets the criteria listed below.

We will encourage diligent journal keeping by collecting and reviewing your journal weekly. Journals are due in class each Thursday. We will use the following rubric to evaluate your journal.

1. **Relevant:** observations and inferences pertain to natural history of course field sites or suitable alternatives. Entries seek answers to questions regarding patterns or processes in nature.
2. **Complete:** each entry contains the following information.
 - a) Date
 - b) Time
 - c) Location (give geographic coordinates or use unambiguous landmarks)
 - d) Weather conditions (temperature, wind direction and velocity, cloud cover [% and kind], approximate humidity)
 - e) Habitat(s)
 - f) Vegetation type
 - g) Vegetation status (flowering, fruiting, senescent, percent leaves dropped, etc.)
 - h) Description of species or natural history patterns observed
3. **Clear:** Writing describes observations precisely and vividly. Drawings are labeled and related to written entries.
4. **Descriptions are detailed and unambiguous:** A person returning to the site could find the patterns described in your journal using your journal alone.
5. **Accurate:** Species (or rocks) are identified correctly, using appropriate names (botanical, mycological, zoological, geological or their common analogues) that are found in relevant field guides. Alternative names are acceptable if explained adequately. Identifying characteristics are described clearly and accurately. Patterns or processes observed are described in accurate detail.
6. **Neat:** writing is legible (your observations might be used by someone in the distant future).
7. **Careful:** Descriptions reflect careful and/or patient observation.
8. **Insightful:** Ideas about the origin or maintenance of patterns observed reflect insightful consideration.