

## **Hello and welcome to January's lessons on nature and the outdoors!**

*"As soon as he is able to keep it himself,  
a nature diary is a source of delight to a child.  
Every day's walk gives him something to enter . . ." — Charlotte Mason*

Hello and welcome to these lessons for the family, and all ages, on exploring the outdoors!

For this first month, we're going to look at Evergreens (if you live in a colder climate) or Sand (if you live somewhere warm). And we will also get our nature journals ready for all the things we'll be putting in them.

A few books you might like to take out of the library for inspiration:

[Keeping a Nature Journal](#) by Clare Walker Leslie

[How to Keep a Naturalist's Notebook](#) by Susan Leigh Tomlinson

[Draw Real Animals!](#) by Lee Hammond

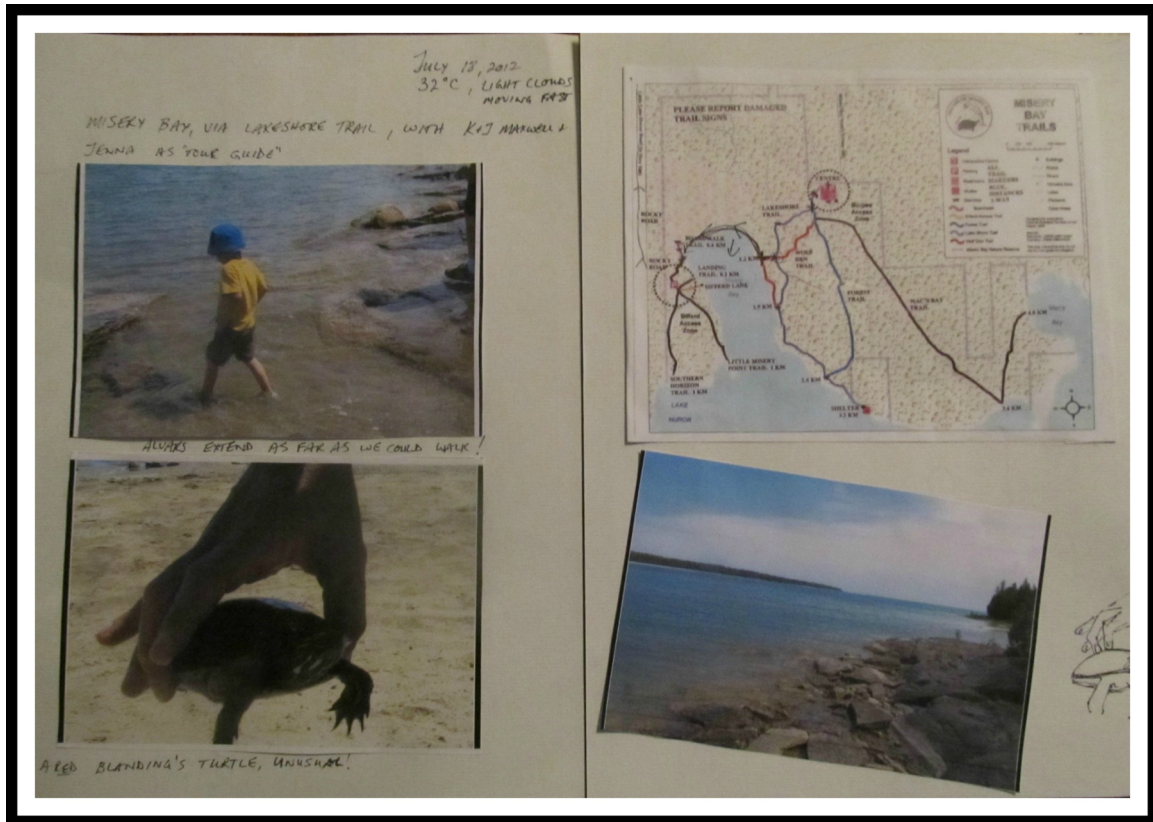
[Drawing From Nature](#) by Jim Arnosky

The first thing you need to do, if you don't already have a nature journal, is to think about what kind of journal you want. It doesn't have to be fancy, and it's a very personal choice.

Some people like to get a sketchbook and draw or write directly into it. Some people like a composition book with a blank space above and lines to write below. I use a three-ring binder. I always have a sketchbook and camera with me, but when I get home I like to punch holes in the sketch page, print the photos, and add them into my binder. You might even (with a parent's permission and supervision) post your photos and observations on a blog instead, and have the whole thing printed at the end of the year.

A nature journal does not have to be full of drawings. I can't draw very well, but I love to take photos. So I always try my hand at a sketch for practice, but I like to add in photos, poems, maps, comments, and information about what I saw.

Here's an example of what one of my pages looks like:



You can do this any way you like, and everyone's journal will be different.

I'm including a general page [here](#) that you can print any time you want to add something. It might help when you're stuck for what to write. Don't worry; soon you'll be putting in all sorts of great information as you observe all the beauty around us!

So talk with your Mom or Dad, figure out how you want to record all the great things we're going to look at outside, and let's get going!

**Notes to parents:** A nature journal should be considered your child's personal space. Please try to stop yourself from checking spelling, grammar, or content. We want to instill a love of, and respect for, nature, and it's hard to muster enthusiasm when you feel that your observations are being judged or criticized. Praise lavishly, and turn a blind eye to the little things.

Parents of younger children, you may want to take dictation for their observations to encourage greater detail. Older children with writing difficulties can type and print.

See you back in this space as we get going during Week 2 (on January 7!). We'll learn much more about Evergreens in winter and the Sand . . . during any time of year.

