

Drawing care: the illustrated journal's "path to place"¹

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Abstract

Naturalists argue that the greatest threat to the natural world may be our "*extinction of experience*" with it. We know that place matters, but what can work to restore care between people and place? In this article, I will argue that illustrated journals can reinvigorate our *experience* with the world. By including text and image, science and art, illustrated journals incorporate different ways of knowing. Drawing *draws* us into the world as we pay attention to easily missed details. Writing complements drawing by providing a space for synthesizing or imagining about the observed. Like any skilled practice, journaling transforms our understanding of the world. My illustrated field journals began when I sensed that care for today's world demanded more tools than what my training as an ecologist, alone, could offer. Illustrated journaling can begin with a few simple drawing and writing exercises—several of which I will describe in this article. As an immersive practice in place, the *process* of illustrated journals matters more than the *product*. Page by page, illustrated journals recognize the interpretive encounters so foundational to worldmaking and, in doing so, cultivate the deep attention to, and experience of, the world that is our first step toward care.

Keywords

Extinction of experience, drawing, illustrated journals, worldmaking, "on-the-spot" records

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Introduction

Let's start with two page spreads (Figures 1, 2):

The first made in a rush: more lists and diagrams than coherent thoughts. Plant names sprawl across a quarter of the page spread. Only a few illustrations and no landscape view. A quick map of nearby waterbodies, in anticipation of questions. The intent, understood only later, was to cement my confidence in the *facts* of a place I know well—the grasslands just north of Kamloops, BC—the day before I led nearly 40 educators onsite.

The second made with more time. Still with a focus on plants but now with more questions than answers. Sketches, not names, dominate. A landscape drawing of pastures and hedgerows jostles against a sketch of a common buzzard flying overhead. Words pile in one corner, sorting and synthesizing impression and response. Dated less than a week after the first, this would be one of a series of 10 made within a 250-ha working farm in Trusham, Devon. Rather than cementing facts, this page spread served as part of an extended reflection of what it meant to navigate without known references, unmoored from place.

One page spread investigates home, the other, a landscape foreign to me. Yet nearly a year after their creation, it only takes one glance at either for me to be transported back to their moment of creation and I am reminded that our experience of the world is always mediated by the tools we carry (McLuhan described in Culkin, 1967; Miner, 2011) As an educator and a researcher in support of care, what tools can I teach my students to use, what practices can I engender, to cultivate care between people and place? The word carry comes from the Latin word *carrus* meaning wheeled vehicle whereas care comes from the Old German word *chara* meaning grief or lament. Tool, emotion. Is there a link between the tools we carry and our capacity to care?

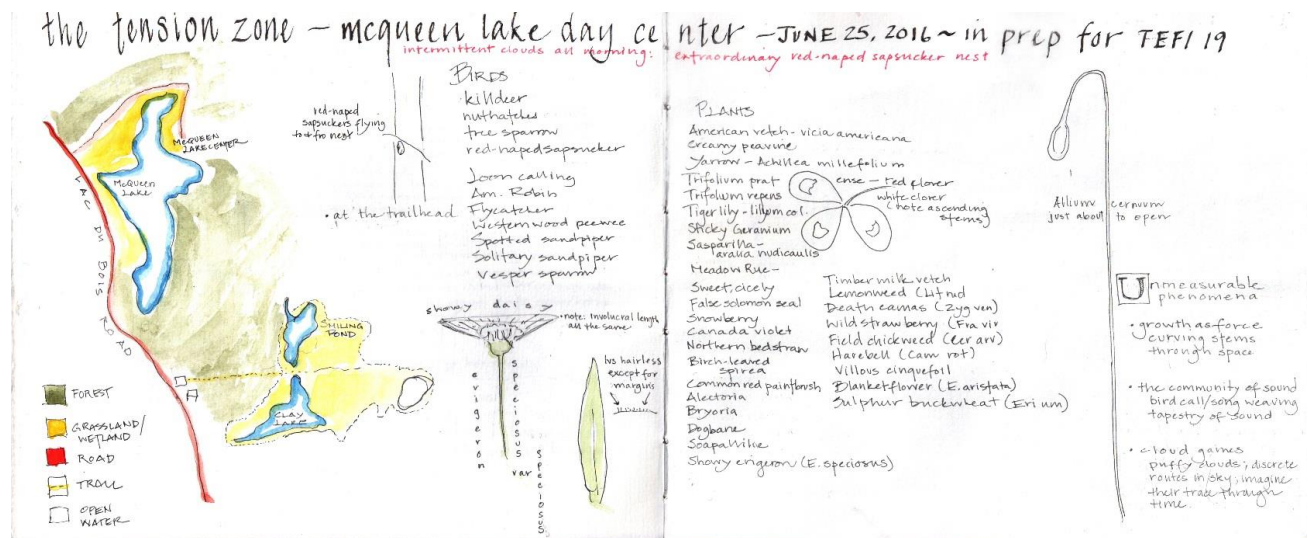


Figure 1. “The Tension Zone”: page spread from Vol. 35, northeast of Kamloops, BC, Canada, near the McQueen Lake Environment Centre Day use area. Pen, watercolor.

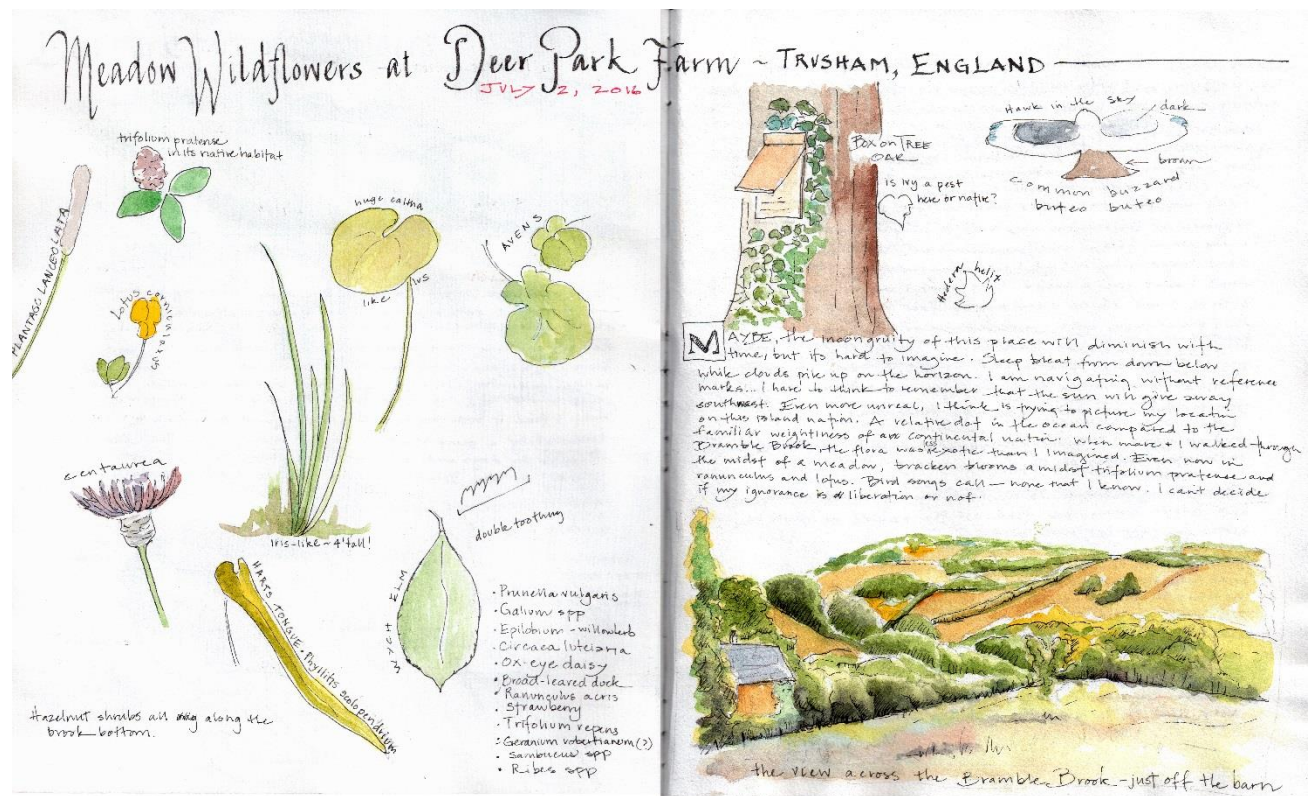


Figure 2. “Meadow Wildflowers”: page spread from Vol 36, Deer Park Farm in Trusham, Devon, England. Pen, watercolor.

In this article, I will argue that illustrated journals—tools long used by traveler and naturalist alike—can reinvigorate our experience of place. Like any skilled or creative practice, illustrated journaling transforms our understanding of who we are through a “mutual entanglement of world and will” (Crawford, 2015, p. 76). In an educational climate increasingly defined by silos of subject matter, tradition, and practice, the multi-modality of illustrated journals provides students with a “contact zone” (*sensu* Pratt, 1992) with which to question easy categories: science versus art; text versus image; nature versus culture. Finally, as an immersive practice in place, illustrated field journaling facilitates experiences rich with inquiry and imagining and in doing so, predisposes our worldmaking so as to cultivate the deep attention to, and experience of, the world that I believe is our first step toward care.

Journaling against extinction

Every field journal, like any expedition, is made in service of something: scientific inquiry, colonization, pursuit of natural resources, national prestige or political strategy (Henry, 1984; Martin, 1981). The two page spreads illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 occupy the middle ground of a ‘scale of journals’ as defined by artist Hannah Hinchman (quoted in Caddy, nd). At one end of this scale, *informational journals*, such as those kept by field scientists, focus on objective information that can be measured or quantified in the external world; at the other end, *reflective journals* like the

diaries of Anais Nin are focused more on human-generated culture or our own inner worlds. In between these two poles are *investigative* and *resonant* journals. Aligned more informational journals, investigative journals (Figure 1) focus on the outer world but may attend to less measurable phenomena such as the slanting of light through leaves or the scudding of clouds across sky. Closer to reflective journals, resonant journals (Figure 2) are an “interweaving between the person and the world” (Hinchman quoted in Caddy, nd), where the journaler’s attention extends both outwards and inwards.

As an ecologist, my field journals initially arose from the same dictates that drove early travelling naturalists who were commanded to document what it is they were seeing (Stafford, 1984). Such informational field journals remain a part of the “on-the-spot” tradition of many who continue to work in the field (Canfield, 2011). In retrospect, my shift from informational to resonant journal entries was an instinctive gesture, made when I sensed that care for today’s world demanded different tools than what my training as an ecologist could offer. More than 70 years ago, ecologist Aldo Leopold wrote, “One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen” (1993, p. 197). If in Leopold’s time, ecological wounds were subtle, they are no longer.

But I do not advocate illustrated journals as form of Kleenex with which we can dry our ecological grief. Instead, in both my teaching and research, I have come to understand illustrated, resonant journals as tools engendering a creative, embodied practice with which to combat the most dangerous extinction of them all: the extinction of experience. Coined by Robert Michael Pyle in 1993, the extinction of experience describes humans’ ever-increasing physical alienation from the natural world (Pyle, 1993). Although an assumed boundary between culture and nature dominates Western thought, this dualism is neither universal to all societies (Moran, 2006) nor is it supported by the reality of Earth’s physical and biological systems (Steffen et al., 2006).

However, the nature-culture dualism is, as Pyle (1993) so accurately observed, increasingly embodied in the daily habits of most humans, especially children (Children and Nature Network, 2012). For many of us, the “more-than-human world” (Abram 1997) is as distant as North America once was to those who made their home in Europe. The consequences of this embodied alienation, layered overtop an alienated worldview threatens public health (Hartig, Mitchell, de Vries, & Frumkin, 2014), and may well be a key obstacle in efforts to conserve species and ecosystems (Miller 2005). Worse yet, the extinction of experience catalyzes a negative feedback loop. Initiated by either diminished access to or affinity for nature, the loss of experience with nature negatively impacts individual health, emotional connection with and behavior toward nature. This, in turn, further reduces the value of nature to individuals (Soga & Gaston, 2016). After all, Pyle (1993, p. 147) asked, “What is the extinction of the condor to a child who has never known a wren?”

Subsequent to Pyle’s (1993) description, there has been an explosion of scholarship investigating the impact (or lack thereof) of human-nature interactions on the development of pro-environmental behavior (reviewed in Restall & Conrad, 2015). Although many questions remain, the

assumed link between the experience of, and care for, the natural world has led to a call for action: we must revitalize the nature-culture connection (Samways, 2007; Seaton, 2013; Soga & Gaston, 2016). The question, of course, is how?

We have *thought* our way out of nature (Cronon, 1996; Plumwood, 2001), but there is no guarantee that *thinking alone*, will lead us back. In Indigenous communities in Canada, projects are reconnecting land and community through revitalizing traditional health-care, plant-collecting and/or hunting practices (Pilgrim, Samson, & Pretty, 2010). However, for someone like me—a non-Indigenous settler living within the undeeded, unceded territory of a First Nations people—adoption of traditional First Nations’ practices risks cultural appropriation. Instead, I have to ask: What in my Euro-Canadian tradition can work to restore care between people and place? What tool or practice is available that can help our students—indigenous or otherwise—to experience place deeply, as a precursor to care?

To shift our disregard for the more-than-human world toward care, I believe we need to cultivate practices capable of intervening in worldmaking processes. In tourism, worldmaking is understood as the “the creative/collaborative, imaginative and materially practiced process in tourism through which features of the world including people, places, and practices are essentialized, naturalized, normalized, celebrated, elided, or overwritten” (Caton, 2013, p. 342). In Hollinshead’s (2009, p. 643) definition of worldmaking in tourism, he explicitly acknowledges the role of “creative and often ‘false’ or ‘faux’ imaginative processes and projective promotional activities that...privilege particular dominant/favored representations of people/places/pasts within a given or assumed region, or ‘world.’” Although this definition draws attention to the external forces that can drive worldmaking, Goodman (1978) originally defined worldmaking as arising from the internal referencing inherent in any human activity whether it be science, art or craft. If worldmaking occurs for us every day, home or away, what is particularly interesting is the space that resonant journals might provide students to reclaim and reflect upon their own worldmaking—as a first step in challenging its underlying assumptions.

Journaling as worldmaking

Today’s resonant journals have deep roots in the field records and travel accounts produced by artists and naturalists during voyages of exploration (Balm, 2000; Stafford, 1984) and the early days of natural science (Canfield, 2011). The worldmaking embodied in such field journals is well-documented in an extensive body of scholarship scrutinizing these works (Pratt, 1992; Stafford, 1984) for their underlying ideologies of imperialism and/or patriarchy (Guelke & Morin, 2001; Khazeni, 2010), as well as historical concerns with the practices of slavery and colonialism (Quilley, 2014). There is little doubt that such travel accounts—bound in field notebooks or published for mass consumption—were important tools in the imperial project to map, order and claim the world as part of Europe’s emerging ‘planetary consciousness’ (Pratt, 1992).

Pratt (1992, p. 7) describes “contact zones” as the “spaces of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations.” Historically, such contact zones disrupted established relations and paradigms and resulted in “conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict” (Pratt, 1992, p.7) between the colonized and colonizers. Yet within contact zones, exchange is never one-sided. Nearly by definition, resonant journals, which deliberately attend to the inner and outer worlds, mix art with science and drawing with text, have the potential to serve as rich contact zones between modes of knowing, which in turn can reshape how we see the world. Certainly, historical analysis of such field entries supports this possibility.

Zoologist and artist Jonathan Kingdon (2011, p. 129) argued that any “field record is always an act of translation as naturalists seek to decipher the complexity of the natural world into a recognizable order.” This translation may be particularly fertile in journals that incorporate multiple ways of knowing. While it was the “duty and vocation of an expedition party to make discoveries about the external world” (Stafford, 1984, p. 29), many expeditionary accounts were written at a time when natural history still encompassed both science and art. Best exemplified by Alexander von Humboldt, who deliberately embraced both art and science, this worldview valued both quantitative measurements and “aesthetic and emotional responses to natural phenomena” (Leask, 2002, pp. 248–249). Moreover, the development of “on-the-spot” drawing as a legitimate mode of inquiry (Martins, 2004; Stafford, 1984), furthered open the door to worldmaking within and through field journals.

Leonard Bell (2014) argues that illustrated travel accounts, like any act of mapping, “are creative, sometimes anxious moments in coming to knowledge of the world” (Cosgrove, 1999, pp. 2). Thus, as artists, travelers and naturalists became entangled in “a series of difficult negotiations between European aesthetic conventions and the experience of traversing the field” (Martins, 2004, p. 74), their understanding of the world became both more complicated and mutable. In describing the work produced by the travelling artist Augustus Earle who sailed with Charles Darwin on the *Beagle*, Bell (2014) writes, “Earle’s travel art and writing reveal a mind and sensibility in the process of becoming, not fixed and certain...His paintings could complicate existing knowledge and preconceptions, including his own, on particular subjects and open up new possibilities of vision and understanding” (p. 69).

In my experience, the activity that pushed journal entries along the scale from informational toward resonant was drawing. Eisner (2002) argues that the very *act of representing* explores what is known or not, what works or doesn’t. Fundamentally, I believe that it is in this exploration of uncertainty that resonant journals gain their footing as a creative practice capable remaking the world. Such interpretive encounters, suggests Caton (2013, p. 345, quoting Schwandt 2000) “always risk our previous ways of seeing the world.”

Journaling as embodied creation

When an artist or naturalist or traveler picks up a pencil to draw, they are embarking on a mode of description that in Tim Ingold's (2011, p. 224) words, "has not yet broken away from observation." The physical act of recreating the world—whether in pen, pencil or paint—necessitates *seeing* rather than mere *looking*. The difference between seeing and looking is one first lessons encountered in any drawing class. "Learning to draw" wrote Kimon Nicolaides (1941, p. 5), "is really a matter of learning to see—to see correctly—and that means a good deal more than merely looking with the eye." In short, learning to *see* short-circuits our learned tendency to ignore "unnecessary" details (Edwards, 1999). In everyday life, once we gain enough information to recognize the frozen black spot in the road as a "cat," we know, from prior experience, that it is an animal with four legs and fur and a tail. However, if we want to draw that cat lying on the road, we would, (if we want our drawing to be representative), need to *see* which of its four legs was visible, the bunching of the muscles beneath its fur and the relative size of leg to body, head to tail.

As a science educator, I know that asking my students to draw will improve their powers of observation (Baldwin & Crawford, 2010). My students always see more when drawing, regardless of their abilities. But as an artist, I have also come to understand that if the close observation required by drawing allows more of the world to impinge on my consciousness, then the embodied mimicry of my hand tracing the world's contours *draws* me into the world (Ingold, 2011). John Berger wrote,

"A line, a tone, is not really important because it records what you have seen, but because of what it will lead you on to see. Following up its logic in order to check its accuracy, you find confirmation or denial in the object itself... Each confirmation or denial brings you closer to the object, until finally you are as it were, inside it: the contours you have drawn no longer marking the edge of what you have seen but the edge of what you have become (Berger, 1953).

The recognition of drawing as an important way of exploring the world should in no way undermine the value of accompanying text in resonant journals. Ingold (2007) argues that writing *is* drawing—albeit, a linear, notation-based form of drawing. Although written entries in my field journals typically (and perhaps should, according to author John Tallmadge (1999)) begin with direct observation, these entries often include reflection: synthesis of, or imaginings about, what I have observed. Thus, visual journals that include both text and images "explore the push and pull between these two modalities, insisting that the complexity of these relationships is what constitutes meaning making" (Shields, 2016, p. 10). Unlike strictly informational journals, resonant journals welcome creativity and can, over time, result in creative practices that, according to Harriet Hawkins (2016, p. 22), have the potential "to do things in the world," not the least of which is worldmaking.

Certainly, the *products* of a creative practice—visual, musical, or otherwise—are well known for their ability to persuade its consumers to consider new worldviews, resist dominant stereotypes

or consolidate new behaviors (see references within Curtis, Reid, & Reeve, 2014). Similarly, the *process* of a creative practice shapes its practitioners. Master woodworker Peter Korn (2013, p. 123) explains that

“creative practice is a way to proactively challenge and refine one’s beliefs on an ongoing basis....A craftsperson, painter, composer, poet or choreographer sets out to bring something new and meaningful into the world. He manipulates his medium—be it wood, paint, sound, language, or the human body—in previously untried ways to tease that meaning into being. The result is novel, first person experience that, inevitably, extends the boundary of his mental map.”

Journaling against the divide

In my illustrated field journals, I know my medium to be paper and pencil, pen and paint; I believe that the mental map most often under (re)construction is the one that validates an artificial boundary between me and the world. Several arguments underlie this assertion. First, Val Plumwood (2001, p. 28) has argued that countering the human/nature dualism requires thinking of nature as “a positive presence...and not as a failure to be or to involve the human.” One way this can occur is if we “demassify” the “more-than-human” world from a homogenous concept into all of its peculiarities, eccentricities, and particularities (Plumwood, 2001). I know of no better way to enliven a meadow from scenery into a living ecosystem than to open my field journal. John Muir Laws describes a similar experience when taking a field journaling workshop with Clare Walker Leslie and Hannah Hinchman:

“These masters of nature journaling gave each of us a piece of string and instructed us to go outside, put the string on the ground in a circle, and record everything within the circle. In the vastness of Grand Teton National Park, that small frame gave me the focus to make discoveries. Within a huge and spectacular landscape, I found an equally beautiful and rich world inside the confines of that one piece of string” (Laws, 2016, p. 20).

If, as Seaton (2013) suggests, the human/nature dualism is the mental map that most inhibits our connection with the natural world, then I believe illustrated journals can help carve a path to care simply through their ability to repopulate nature.

The boundary of the nature/culture dualism also rests, in part, in our denial of nature’s agency (Plumwood, 2001). Regardless of their length or detail, lists of things—species, cloud-shapes, or rock colours—do not enliven the world. If the phenomenology of Monty-Perleau which describes things as both alive and agential helps us *think* our way past the human/nature dualism (Abram, 1997), then why not use writing and drawing to *make* our way through the inanimacy

implied by this dualism (Taussig, 2009). For example, the expectation of an animate world alive is ingrained in the field journaling exercise that Hannah Hinchman (1997) calls “Event Maps.” Hinchman explains “things simply ‘being themselves’ can constitute an event, if we are awake to them. They are among the everyday miracles we have nearly ceased to see” (1997, p. 149). Under Hinchman’s coaching, event maps (Figure 3) take on the form of a wandering line, recording not a route, but the *experience* of place. This simple exercise is one with consequences. Hinchman again:

“Choosing to live in a world of events, cultivating it as a way of seeing, means that I am likely to laugh at odd moments: a willow branch ducking in and out of high water is a clown act...A watcher in a world of events will be by turns startled, jubilant with discovery, but never bored” (Hinchman, 1997, p. 154).

In this way, event maps are part of a creative practice that can “compose world relations (between humans and non-humans, and their environments) differently” (Hawkins, 2015, p. 248).

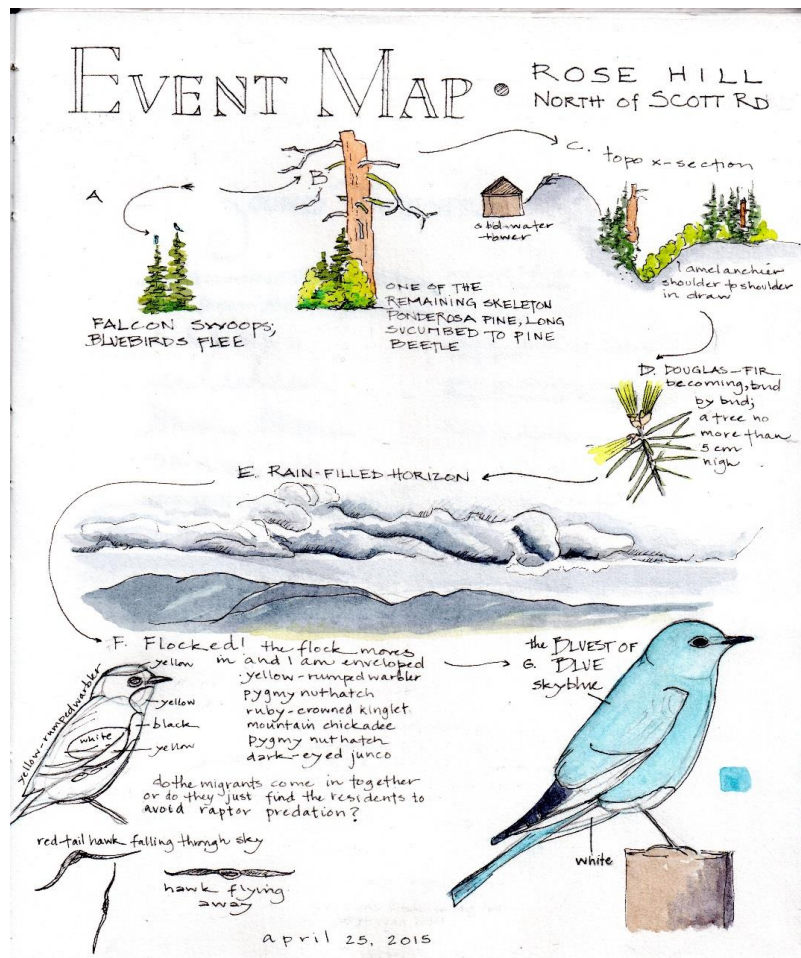


Figure 3. Event map example. Excerpted from Vol. 33, Rose Hill Rd, Kamloops, BC Canada. Pen, watercolor.

Although engaging students with illustrated field journals can occur with little artistic skill, the tradition of illustrated field journals is long and storied. Today field journal artists most often use portable media such as pens, pencils or watercolors (Gregory, 2008; Laws, 2016); yet the making of illustrated, or illuminated, books dates at least back to the Medieval Period (Hamel, 1997). For those who draw and write in a field journal, the completion of any one page will cultivate their skills as observer, writer, artist, calligrapher and page-designer.

In his book, *The World Beyond Your Head*, philosopher and craftsman Michael Crawford argues that such skilled practices provide us with the authority of our own experience (Crawford, 2015, p. 122) and develop our ability to pay attention. The Latin root of attention Crawford reminds us is *tenere*, which means to stretch or make tense. Crawford writes, “External objects provide an attachment point for the mind; they pull us out of ourselves...Encountering the world as real can be a source of pleasure” (Crawford, 2015, p. 27). In educational environments that rely heavily on second-hand knowledge, the use of illustrated field journals cultivates students’ faith in their ability to acquire knowledge firsthand. I have watched field journaling transform a momentary curiosity—such as why a red-breasted nuthatch might be making repeated journeys between ground and the trunk of a Douglas-fir tree—into an independent (and joyful!) discovery. The fact that this seed-caching behavior is well-known to ornithologists did little to dampen the excitement of discovery. Any skill changes our relationship with the world. Crawford (2015, p. 210) writes, “when you go deep into some particular skill or art, it trains your powers of concentration and perception. You become more discerning about the objects you are dealing with and, if all goes well, begin to care viscerally about quality, because you have been initiated into an ethic of caring about what you are doing.”

Journaling in support of place

Can learning the skills of illustrated journals translate into our students caring about the more-than-human world? I know of no study that directly tests this question, although Cooper et al. (2015) recently found that hunters and bird-watchers—two outdoor experiences rooted in skilled practice—were the groups most likely to engage in conservation behavior among rural populations in New York State. Anecdotally, many illustrated journalers attest to the transformative power of their practice. John Muir Laws writes, “Love can be defined as sustained, compassionate attention. Paying sincere attention to another person—a child, partner, student, or stranger—helps us build understanding and kindness. Similarly, I feel understanding, care and compassion when I journal and turn deep attention to nature (2016, p. 3).” In Danny Gregory’s (2008) book depicting the work of 50 artists, many journalers attest to the value of their practice when travelling. Work in these journals, write many artists, allows them to acclimate and connect to new places, alters how they see the world, and creates a “visceral” experience of place that can be immediately recalled when looking back at their sketchbook. These artists’ descriptions of their illustrated journal practice resonate with Harriet Hawkin’s assertion that, from knitting to painting, creative practices can be viewed as

“making place, as forming and transforming the subject who practice and engage with these practices, and shaping forms of knowledge production” (Hawkins, 2016, p. 22).

Clearly, illustrated journals can be a “path to place” (Hinchman, 1997). Place, we increasingly recognize, mediates our care for the world. When nature writers with well-known conservation ethics describe moments of ecological conversion, the ‘nature’ they describe is not a disembodied, free-floating entity, but, is in fact, specific places the authors have known and loved (Schauffler, 2003). More recently, empirical evidence has led to the argument that our connection to *place*, not *nature*, might better predict the caring embodied by pro-environmental behavior (Beery & Wolf-Watz, 2014). Writer David Orr (2004, p. 147) explains, “I do not know whether it is possible to love the planet or not, but I do know it is possible to love the places that we can see, touch, and experience.”

Illustrated journals: A page spread in five exercises

E.B. White once wrote that a blank sheet of paper was “more promising than a silver cloud and prettier than a red wagon” (2006, pp. 263–264). For those new to journaling, however, a blank page may be more terrifying than promising. I field journal for the moments of worldmaking it engenders. *Process* matters most. Emphasizing this—especially in any grading rubrics that we use—can help diminish student anxiety, especially for those who stopped drawing (typically many!) in grade school. But the fear of a blank page can also be diminished through the use of specific exercises combined together to create a single page spread (Figure 4). These exercises can be completed inside or outside, in natural or built environments. Although relatively simple, I’ve watched these writing and drawing exercises alert participants to the nuances their *experience* of place in a few hours. Most importantly, even when participants’ drawing skills are just developing, they are often surprised and delighted by the pages they create. Field journaling as a practice needs reinforcement if it is to become habit and I know of no better reinforcement than producing aesthetically pleasing page. *Product*, in this case, reinforces *process*. In the words of a student enrolled in my Natural History class commenting anonymously (in a preliminary survey, TRU Research Ethics Board Approval File #101492) about the field journal exercises:

“This really eased my anxiety about creating a journal. I came into the class ...feeling as though I would not have the talent needed to do well. In the end, I created something I was really proud of and doing the exercises in the beginning really allowed me to gain the confidence needed to keep growing and learning.”

—EDGEWOOD BLUE—

—UPPER CLEARWATER VALLEY—



Figure 4. “Edgewood Blue”: example page spread layout, completed September 2014, Clearwater Valley, BC, Canada. Pen, watercolor.

Illuminated contour drawings

Taught in nearly every beginning art class, contour drawings (Figure 5) document the experience of *seeing* an object. The key to this exercise is draw without looking at your subject. Position your paper so that you will not be tempted to look at it. Imagine your pencil and eye are inextricably linked together. Now as slowly as possible move your eye over the surface of the object (along and across its contours) and have your pencil trace the same path on paper. The contour drawing can consist of one continuous line or several smaller lines—made without looking at your page. The point of this exercise is not to create a representative drawing but to explore an object visually as carefully as possible, with eye and pencil in tandem.

After completing a contour drawing, students often remark on how much they learned about the object. Ultimately, I hope contour drawings will highlight how much we miss when we *pass through*, rather than *engage with*, place. The deep observation contour drawing facilitates is always worth celebrating. Thus, I ask students to make contour drawings with a waterproof pen so that they can illuminate it by splashing color overtop and surrounding it with a frame and/or descriptive text.

Color swatches or sound tapestry

When leading participants through a page spread, I give them a choice of the following two exercises; both focus our attention on discrete elements (color or sound) that can be missed in the abundance of an animate world. To complete “Color Swatches” (Figure 6) make between six to eight small boxes on the page. Avoiding form or words, observe the pigments that most pull at you and fill each of the boxes with one of these pigments. Later, add a legend to the color swatches, identifying their source and/or why they mattered to you.

The exercise called “Sound Tapestry” (Figure 7) asks you to document place with your ears

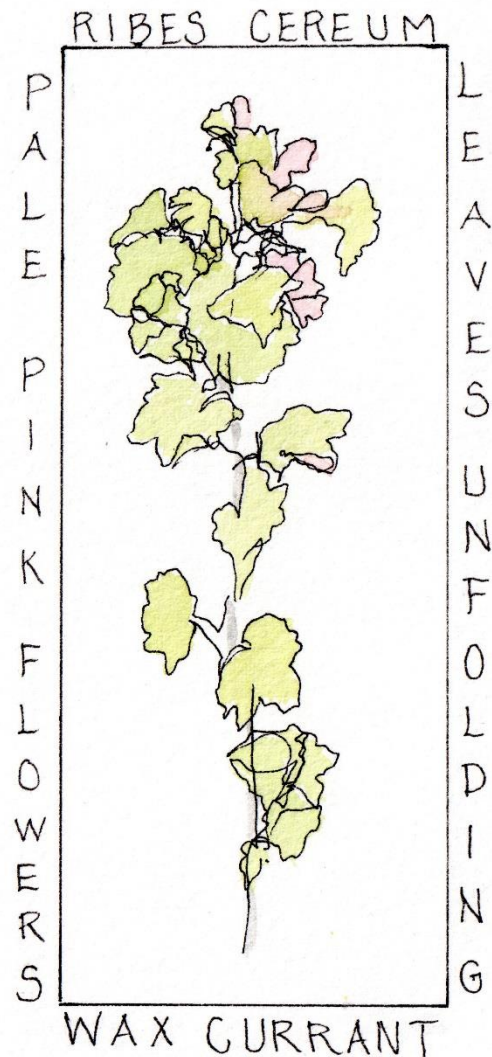


Figure 5. “*Ribes cereum*”: example illuminated contour drawing. Pen, watercolor.

rather than your eyes. Close your eyes, focus on one sound and imagine the shape of the sound. Draw that shape, annotate it, and repeat. Two aspects of this exercise challenge our normal modes of worldmaking. First, we are very good at tuning out what we don't know, and by focusing on one sound and then another, we invite the unknown, the ignored, to gain prominence. Second, this exercise asks us to translate sound into image. The challenging process of translation, I believe, heightens our attention.

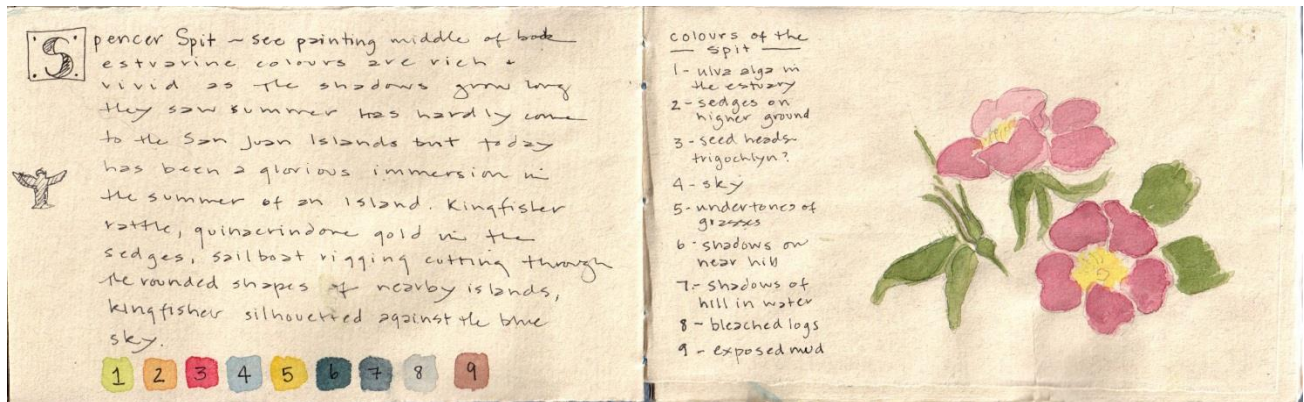


Figure 6. "Spencer Spit": example color swatch; excerpted from Vol. 23a, San Juan Islands, Washington. Pen, watercolor.

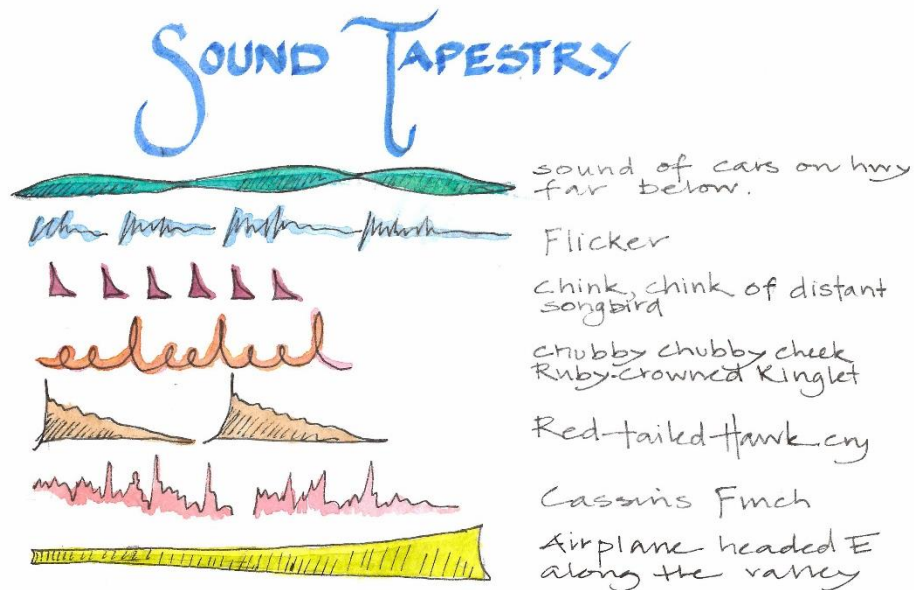


Figure 7. Sound tapestry example. Excerpted from Vol 33, Rose Hill Rd, Kamloops, BC Canada. Pen, watercolor.

Drawing landscapes

We operate in a three-dimensional world and translating any landscape into a two-dimensional image on page challenges our understanding of the world. Artists use the techniques of perspective to draw realistic landscapes, but we can short-circuit learning such techniques with the use of a piece of clear plastic. Recovered from the recycling bin or scavenged from CD cases, any semirigid piece of plastic can help us visualize the rules of perspective. In doing so, students often learn how much of the world they are interpreting at any one moment.

To do this, close one eye and hold the plastic at arm's length away from you.

Looking at the landscape you want to draw, use a

nonpermanent felt pen (such as a Staedtler Lumocolor) to trace the

outline of the landscape's dominant shapes on your plastic piece (Figure 8)². Once the image is on the plastic, it is much easy for students to copy it onto the page. Based on this experience, I ask students to distill the rules of perspective from what they have drawn. Two rules are most often identified. First, the size of all objects is directly related to their distance from the observer. Distant trees will be much smaller than close trees. Second, the position of objects on the screen (high versus low) will also vary by distance. Terrestrial objects—trees or buildings—further from the observer will be higher on the plastic than terrestrial objects found close to you. This pattern, however, is reversed for anything in the sky. Clouds or birds closest to you will be at the top of the plastic; those further away will be located next to the most distant terrestrial object.

Asking students to trace landscapes achieves two goals: (1) it draws attention to how much

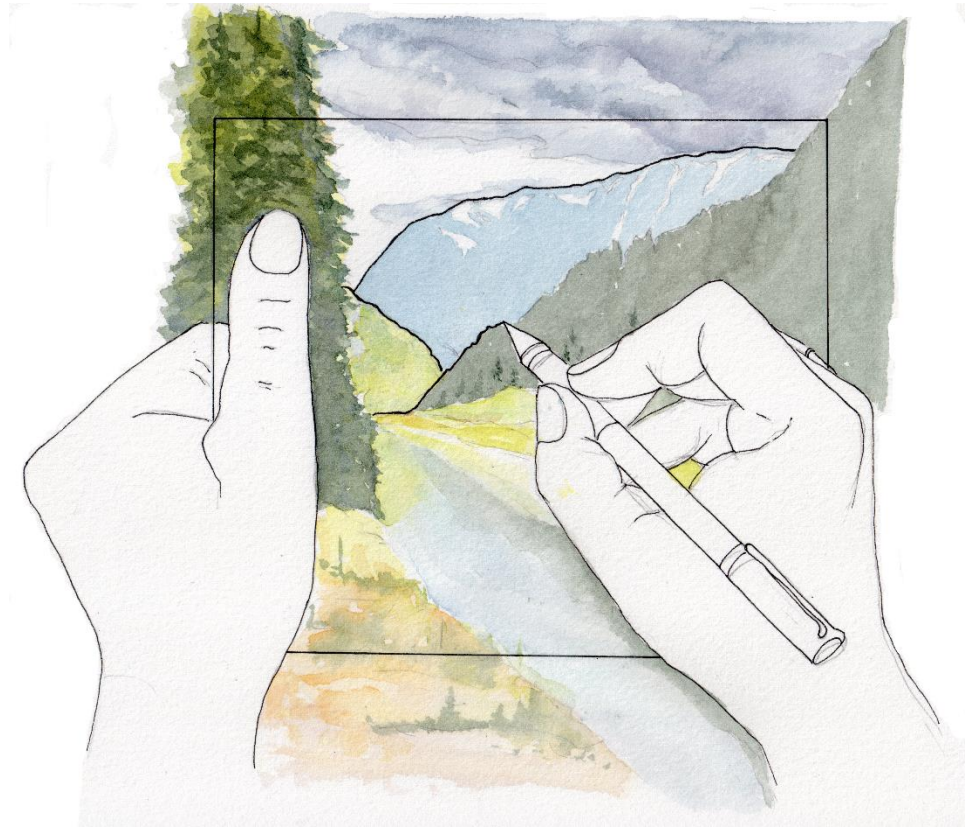


Figure 8. Diagram illustrating the use of rigid plastic and erasable pen for “tracing” a landscape. Pen, watercolor.

² Many thanks to my artist friend and colleague, Ila Crawford, for sharing this technique with me.

interpretation and sense-making we do interacting with the world at any one moment and (2) it gives participants a key to drawing realistic landscapes. By drawing a grid overtop their traced landscape, they are given “landmarks” that they can use to realistically transfer a three-dimensional landscape into a two-dimensional representation on their page spread.

Odd couples

If our goal using resonant journals is to deliberately juxtapose ways of knowing place, we want to encourage my students to describe place through text alongside images. Left to their own devices, it’s easy for students to reach for the security of generalities—especially with adjectives like “interesting” or “beautiful.”

Natalie Goldberg (1986) reminds us that the energy of sentences is often carried by verbs. She provides an exercise that I call “Odd Couples” that I often use to increase awareness of verbs in describing place.

Take a piece of scratch paper and fold it in half. On one side, write a list of nouns that you see around you. Flip the folded paper. Chose an occupation (i.e., seamstress, lawyer, scholar, plumber) and write a list of 10 verbs that a person might do. Now unfold the scrap paper and join any noun with any verb and finish the sentence, adapting subject and tense as required. I ask participants to keep going, describing the place in a paragraph, using their two lists as inspiration (Figure 9).

Some sentences may be

nonsensical: cattails measure, willows chisel and clouds paint; but all, by design, will grant agency to the individual parts of place often perceived as inanimate.

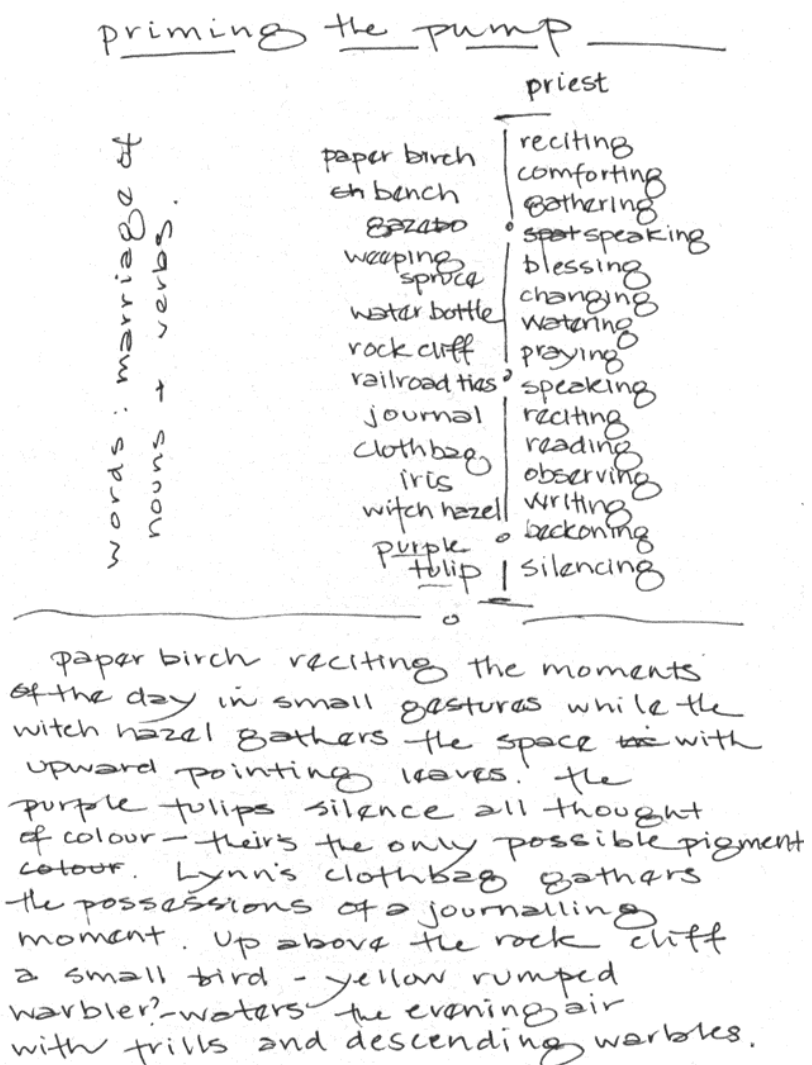


Figure 9. “Priming the Pump”: Odd couple example, excerpted from Vol. 21.

Titles

As a synthetic exercise, I ask students to title their page spread, paying attention to both form and content. Most of us have a foundation hand that is the writing we most often use. Any lettering style, however, can be varied to complement or contrast the subject it is describing. In addition to my foundation hand, I use three lettering styles in my journals: italic lettering, all caps, and what I call “fancy letters.” I provide students with examples of each (Figure 10) and ask student to consider whether they want the letters of their title to resonate with or against the content of their page spread. What aspect of place do they want their title to reference: geography, lived experience, history, conflict, resolution? Which style of lettering—contrast or complement—best suits the learning encompassed within their page spread?



Figure 10. Lettering guide illustrating italic, all-caps, and ‘fancy-letters’

Conclusion

For some, resonant journals may be a path into the ordinary; for others, it may help translate the exotic. Regardless, each time we open our journals we become active creators of our own stories about place, and in doing so, we reclaim our own knowledge about the world. I have given field

journaling workshops for diverse populations: university classes across disciplines (i.e., biology, philosophy, tourism, and literature), high school art classes, educator conferences, naturalist club meetings and museum outreach. In educational situations, it is often helpful to pair the completion of field journal page spread with a writing assignment that asks students to reflect on their own learning. This spring I received a spontaneous email from a student who had participated in a workshop I gave for a tourism class on campus: “I’ve moved around my whole life and this connection to ‘place’ that is always so discussed was a concept far beyond my grasp until we did your assignment. It was really cool to be forced to look at things in a different way (Chelsea Francis, personal communication).

For those of us in Canada of settler descent, an allegiance to place has not always been our first priority (Chamberlin, 2003). Place is potent in the landscape of human imagination (Basso, 1996), but only if we carry the tools, and cultivate the practices, that allow us to experience it deeply. In making my first resonant journal entries, I was not searching for a culturally appropriate practice to revitalize my experience with the “more-than-human” world, but that was, in retrospect, what I found. Today, I see field journaling—both my own and that of my students’—as an immersive practice in place and community.

Page by page, illustrated journals recognize the interpretive encounters that are so foundational to worldmaking and, in doing so, cultivate the deep attention to, and experience of, the world that I believe are necessary precursors to care. More than 20 years after I opened my first resonant journal, I now view each page as one more entry in a diverse book envisioning a world of care. Each time I open my journal, I remember that is the *act* of finding place that extinguishes the “extinction of experience.” If I look, and look hard, field journal open, paying attention to the worldmaking inherent in any interpretative encounter, then the art and science, text and image, of my field journal weaves from mere tool into a creative practice binding me in place as tightly as a hawk clutches a freshly killed vole. And I am both grateful and obliged.

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