



**Delaware
Master
Naturalist**



Field Trip Journal Guidelines

Introduction:

This spring, we will begin the field trip portion of Delaware Master Naturalist Training. For each field trip topic, you are required to write a formal journal that clearly describes the experience, details what was observed and done, and incorporates relevant background research to support your findings.

Old-time Naturalists will tell you not to eat, sleep, drink, etc. before you finish capturing the data in your field journal after a field trip. By waiting to write your notes, you risk forgetting important information and your journal may omit important details. Put this into practice when working on your journal for the Delaware Master Naturalist Training. It is strongly recommended that you complete each field journal entry within two weeks of your field trip experience; however, all journals must be submitted no later than four weeks after the field trip.

In order to ensure that you are following the journal guidelines correctly, please submit your first journal within **2 WEEKS** of your first field trip. This will ensure that your journal reviewer has an opportunity to provide feedback to you, before you spend time writing the subsequent 3 journals. If you submit all your journals at once before your reviewer has a chance to provide you with comments on the first journal, you may be required to revise and resubmit all 4 journals before they are accepted.

Please adhere to these guidelines to complete your required field journals. This is the main product we will collect from you for the Delaware Master Naturalist Training, and it is required for completion of the program and your certification as a Delaware Master Naturalist.

History and Purpose:

The field journal has long been the traditional tool of the field naturalist, used to record experiences and observations, spark curiosity about those observations, and encourage further research on topics of interest related to animals and plants, ecology, and ecosystems. It is a permanent record of your field observations. It should be legible, useful, and easily understood by anyone that might read it, now and *even 100 years from now*. Take pride in your journal.

Journaling Process:

Please take brief notes during your field trips. A pencil and a Rite in the Rain field notebook are recommended (optional and provided by you). Alternatively, you may use any small notebook for notetaking. This field notebook is separate from your journal, and you are responsible for providing it.

The formal journal can be written using Google Docs, Microsoft Word, Libra Writer or any other Word Processor as long as it can produce a file in Microsoft DOCX format.

Our field trips tend to be fast-paced, and you will not have much time to take detailed notes or linger to study something at length. Your field notebook should be used for quick sketches and short notes in the field. After the field trip, a formal field journal entry should be written on your computer or in a separate composition notebook, using the notes you made in the field.

We recommend completing each journal entry in the days immediately following the field trip. The first journal should be completed and submitted within 2 WEEKS of your first field trip. This allows the reviewer to provide feedback to ensure you understand the field journal guidelines and have applied them correctly before completing subsequent journals.

All subsequent journal entries should also be submitted within two weeks of their associated field trips, with an extended deadline of no more than four weeks after the trip. If you complete another field trip before receiving feedback on your first journal entry, please wait to submit the next entry until you have received your reviewer's report.

All four field journal entries must be submitted no later than **December 15** of the year in which you are enrolled in the program.

Follow the Format:

- Each entry should be an individual file.
- If submitting electronically, please follow this file naming convention: your first initial, your last name, date of field trip. For example: JDoe-16Mar-2018.
- Enter your name, address, telephone number, and email address on the first page of the journal entry.
- If you are not making an electronic submission, your journal must be mailed to the Delaware Nature Society 3511 Barley Mill Road, Hockessin, DE 19707, Attention: Nancy Steckel.
- Narrative should be written in full sentences and should be directly quotable.
- Sources should be identified. Copying and pasting relevant text from a publication is permitted, but it should be indented to indicate it is content from an external source and properly cited. If you use an electronic source include the link in the citation.
- Include all observational details, even if they might seem obvious at the time.

- Think of your journal as a scientific report intended for use by both you and others who may not be familiar with the subject.
- Number each page at the bottom, center or right.
- The year and your name should appear at the top of **each page** on the left side.
- The date should be written at the beginning of each new journal entry, using the following format: 10 March 2018. Underline this.

Journal Sections:

- For each section of your journal, begin a new paragraph. The sections are:
 - Location
 - Weather
 - Time
 - Habitat
 - Narrative
 - Species List
- Every journal entry must contain the sections above. The sections should begin with the name of the section in **Bold** type followed by a colon.
- **Location:** Be as precise as possible, including GPS coordinates if known and a clear physical location, for example: Ashland Nature Center, Hockessin, Delaware. Underline the location.
- **Weather:** Record weather as precisely as you can. Include air temperature (C or F), wind speed (in Beaufort Scale, mph or km/hr or just give a general sense), cloud cover, precipitation, etc. Include any major weather changes that occur during the field trip.
- **Time:** Record the time you arrive and the time you depart the site.
- **Habitat:** Describe the habitat you are in, including the vegetation type, dominant plant species, topography, surrounding landscape, and whether it is located in the Piedmont or Coastal Plain of Delaware. Also note whether the land is publicly accessible or privately held, along with any other relevant observations. You may use published information for this as long as it is properly indicated and cited.
- **Narrative:** This is where you record your thoughts and observations. What were the main features of the day and your observations.
 - Use both the common name and the scientific name the **FIRST TIME** you mention an organism in the text of your field journal. In all cases, the common name of an animal or plant appears before its scientific name in a sentence. For example, if you see a Northern Cardinal, in the text you would write “During the walk to the trail, I observed a male Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*). In subsequent mentions you can use just the common name, or an abbreviated version of the scientific name i.e. *C. cardinalis*. The scientific name should always be italicized. Give some thought to the scientific name as it might provide insight into the creature itself.
 - Common names of birds are always capitalized, for example Brown-headed Cowbird.

- Common names of plants and other animals should always appear in lower case unless part of the name is a proper noun. For example, red maple, Norfolk Island pine and honeybee.
- Use drawings and/or photographs to illustrate key concepts. When inserting photos, drawings, maps etc., place them adjacent to the relevant text. Indicate within the text that you have included an image. For example, “I observed a Northern Cardinal (**photo left**)”. Use parentheses and boldface to describe the location of the image you inserted.
- Alternatively, you may choose to include captions and descriptions beneath the images. Caption each image as a figure (beginning with Figure 1) and provide a brief description of what the image depicts. For plants and animals include the common name first and then the scientific name in italicized parentheses. For example, if you include a photo of a Northern Cardinal, it would be cited as “Figure 1 – Northern Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis*)”. If possible, the caption should be centered under the photo. You do not need to use both methods, choose one.
- Consider three to four elements of your field experience and research them more deeply on your own. The research component is the most important aspect of your journal and is heavily weighed by your reviewer. Include what you learn from research in your narrative. You may be introduced to a number of plants, animals, insects and concepts on your field trips; therefore, it is important to perform further research based on what you experienced to deepen your understanding and knowledge. Including this research in your journal entries reinforces in-depth learning and helps with information retention. State facts and the source of your information. It is acceptable to add your own thoughts and theories as well, but they should relate to the facts you have found. Formal foot notes are not required. However, as noted above you should properly cite the sources of the information you used. It is OK to cut and paste information directly from a source as long as it is NOT your entire research section. If you cut and paste information, it must be a separate paragraph and be indented. In addition, the source of the information must be cited after the information and if possible a direct link to the information should be included.
- **Species List:** One of the most important steps in conservation is to document your sightings. Record the names of the plants and animals seen/heard during the field trip. For the Species List, use scientific names first, followed by the common name. Use a table to record your species list.

You can take as much space and as many pages as you need to capture your experience, but do it well, with detail. Remember to write in full sentences for the body of your entries.