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Note to Parents/Guardians: Feel free to modify the challenges to match your child's age, interests, and needs. Whether you shorten the time spent on each activity or simplify tasks, the most important thing is spending quality time together and exploring our backyard wonders at your own pace.

Choose Your Own Adventure: Start by picking up your challenge stickers at a partnering location then choose one journaling prompt for each season. Then fill out this survey with a short description or a picture of your adventure to be entered into the end-of-year prize drawings! With so many options, you're sure to find something fun to try!



WINTER | NATURE JOURNALING PROMPTS

JOURNALING PROMPTS

Nature journaling is the practice of recording observations of nature in a journal or notebook through sketches and notes. Here are a few suggestions if you're looking for ideas to inspire your winter nature journal. Of course, feel free to come up with your own ideas—we encourage you to be creative!

Birds and Wildlife in Winter – Observe and sketch the birds and other wildlife active in the winter months.



Frosty Fun Challenge: What animals do you see? How are they adapting to the cold weather? Pay close attention to their behavior, tracks, and habitats.

Winter Stars and Night Sky – With the longer nights of winter, take some time to observe the star constellations, planets, and moon cycles.



Frosty Fun & Starry Skies: Which constellations are visible at different times? Sketch the night sky or record the moon's phases throughout the season.



Evergreen Tree Study – Learn to identify the different types of evergreen trees, such as spruce, pine, and fir. Create detailed sketches of each tree and make notes on how to tell them apart.

Winter Seed Heads and Berries – Look for seed heads and berries still present in the winter landscape. Which ones do birds and other animals rely on for food during the colder months?

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CURRENT EVENTS

Monthly events and event details are being finalized, check back for updates!

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES



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JOURNALING PROMPTS

Sketch the seeds and berries you find, noting which are consumed last.

Tree Silhouettes – On a clear winter day, observe the shapes of bare trees against the sky. Sketch the silhouettes of the branches and trunks, noting how different tree types have unique shapes even in winter.

Pine, Fir, and Spruce Cones – Record the various types of cones you find from pine, fir, and spruce trees. How do their shapes, sizes, and textures differ? Collect examples and sketch or describe them in detail.

Frost-Bitten Leaves – Photograph or sketch the delicate patterns and colors found on frost-bitten leaves. How do the frost and cold temperatures affect their appearance? Pay attention to the colors and textures.

Twig Study – Study and sketch twigs from various trees. In the latter part of winter, note the date and outside temperature when you first see a tree's buds begin to swell in anticipation of spring.

Snowflake Study – If it's snowing, try to catch snowflakes on a dark surface or paper before they melt.



Frosty Fun: Observe their unique shapes and patterns. Attempt to sketch these tiny ice crystals before they disappear.

Animal Trails and Tracks – Look for animal tracks, trails, and tunnels left in the snow. Sketch the tracks you find and try to identify the animals that left them.

Bird Nests in Winter – Explore trees, shrubs, and under-house eaves to find old birds' nests. Sketch their structure and describe the materials used in their construction.

Build your own Winter Game – Imagine you are the head of the next Winter Olympics.



Winter Games Challenge: What new sport would you invent? Write out the rules for your new sport.

WINTER ANIMALS TO LOOK FOR

Antelope and Pronghorn – They are often seen searching for food in open plains and grasslands at lower elevations during winter.

Winter Birds, Including Owls and Raptors – Many birds (especially raptors) stay in Utah during the winter, especially if they can find food. Look for Great Horned Owls and Snowy Owls in wooded areas, perched on trees, or power lines.

Bobcats – They are shy and hard to spot but are more active in winter as they hunt small mammals. Their tracks in the snow make them easier to find.

Cougars (Mountain Lions) – These large cats live in the mountains and are mostly active at night. They can sometimes be seen early morning or evening in remote or wooded areas.

Coyotes – Coyotes are very adaptable and are often seen hunting in packs during winter. They can be found in rural and urban areas, especially at dawn or dusk.

Deer, Moose, and Elk – They can be hard to spot but are more active in winter as they hunt small mammals. Their tracks in the snow make them easier to find.

Ermings and Weasels – These small animals stay active in winter and are very quick. Ermings turn white in the winter to blend in with the snow.

Fish – Many fish, like trout and bass, stay active in Utah's rivers, ponds, and lakes during winter, especially in warmer, deeper waters.

Foxes – Red and gray foxes hunt for small mammals in winter. Their fur stands out against the snow, and they are most active at dawn and dusk.

Jackrabbits and Rabbits – Snowshoe hares turn white for camouflage. Look for their tracks in the snow, especially near bushes or trees.

Mice and Shrews – These small rodents are active year-round. You can find them in fields, forests, and cities, where they look for food in the snow.

Mountain Sheep (Bighorn Sheep) – These tough animals live in the mountains and can be seen on cliffs and ridges, where they are well-suited to the cold.

Muskrats, Otters, and Beavers – All live near water and are active in winter. Beavers and otters are playful in the snow, while muskrats dig burrows under the ice.

Skunks, Raccoons, and Porcupines – Skunks and raccoons come out at night to search for food. Porcupines are often found in trees and feed on bark during the winter.

Badgers – Badgers are active in winter and can be found digging for food.





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SPRING | NATURE JOURNALING PROMPTS

JOURNALING PROMPTS

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Look for the First Signs of Spring – What new growth of plants, flowers, or trees are you noticing?

Flower and Leaf Exploration – Find a flower or leaf that has just bloomed or emerged. Sketch it carefully, then write down its name (if you know it) and any interesting facts you learned about it.



Animal Tracks and Signs – Look for animal tracks, nests, or other signs of animal activity. If you find an animal track, sketch it and guess which animal might have left it behind.



Birdwatching – Find a spot to watch birds. What birds do you see or hear? Can you identify them by their color, size, or song? Record the bird species you observe and draw them in your journal. How does the behavior of the birds change in spring (building nests, gathering food)?

Weather Watch – Write down the weather- is it sunny, rainy, windy, or cloudy? Sketch the sky at different times of the day.

Changes in the Landscape – How has the landscape changed from winter to spring? Sketch an area you visit often, such as a

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ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES



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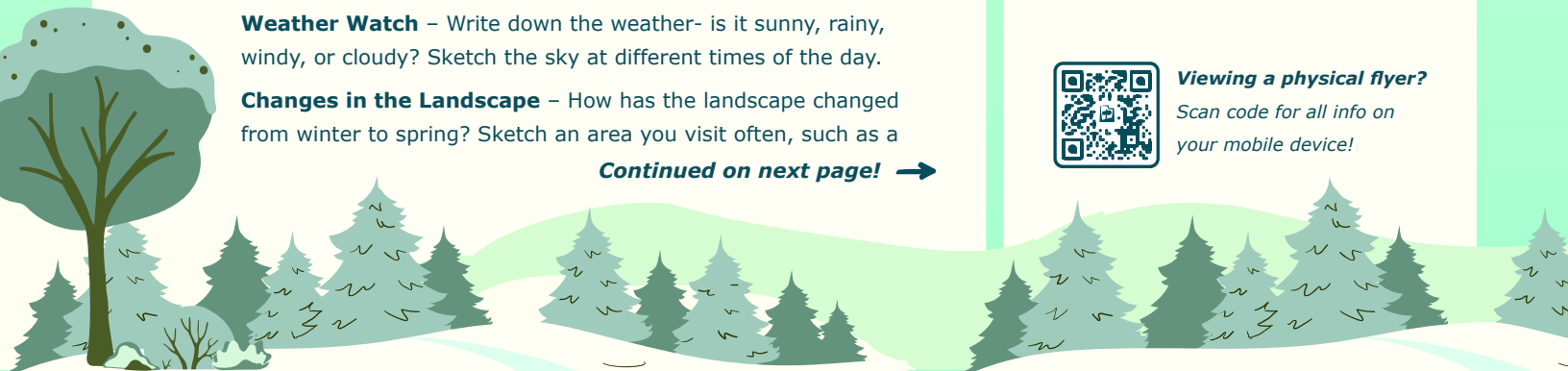
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JOURNALING PROMPTS

backyard, park, or field, and compare it to how it looked in winter. What new plants or animals can you find now that weren't there before?



Insect Investigation – Look for ants, bees, butterflies, or other bugs. Draw one or more insects, and note their colors, shapes, and behaviors. Do you see any signs of pollination or feeding?

Plant Growth Over Time – Choose a plant or tree to observe over a week or two. Draw it every few days and record how it changes. Does it grow taller? Do new leaves or flowers appear? Write about how the plant is responding to spring's warmth and sunlight.

The Sounds of Spring – Sit quietly outside and listen for the sounds of spring: birds chirping, raindrops pattering, the wind rustling through trees, or insects buzzing. Describe these sounds in your journal. Can you describe what's happening in the environment based on the sounds?

Nature Color Palette – Enjoy recording the bright colors of spring. Take a walk and find as many shades of green, pink, purple, yellow, etc., as possible. Sketch different plants or areas and match the colors as best as possible with colored pencils or crayons. How many different shades of that color can you find? What do they tell you about the plants growing in spring?

Changing Seasons – Pick a place (it could a spot be your own backyard) you like visiting and observe it in spring. How does it look compared to fall or winter? What plants or animals are different in each season? Draw and describe the differences.



Water in Spring – Visit a pond, stream, or lake and observe how water behaves in spring. Is it flowing faster with rain? Are there any signs of spring runoff? Look for frogs or tadpoles and sketch them. How do animals use water in the spring?

Spring Nature Hunt – Create a nature scavenger hunt for spring! List things to find, such as a new flower, a bird's nest, a spider web, or a muddy patch. As you find each item, draw it and describe what makes it unique.

Micro-view – Borrow a magnifying glass or take a picture with your phone and enlarge some of the small, overlooked details you can find in nature. Sketch or describe some of the details you see.

Fungi and Moss – Look for mushrooms or moss growing in shady, damp areas. Draw the shapes, textures, and colors of the fungi or moss you find.

The Spring Garden – Visit a garden (or create your own) and observe how the plants and flowers change from winter. What new plants are emerging? What colors do you see? Sketch and describe the garden.

Non-Sketching Options – Instead of sketching, you can make rubbings of bark, leaves, and flowers using paper and crayons or colored pencils. Another great option is to press and dry your plant specimens. To do this, carefully place the plant between two sheets of wax paper or newspaper, then place it inside a heavy book to apply pressure. Leave it for a few days to dry completely. Once dry, you can glue the pressed specimens into your nature journal, along with notes about where and when you found them.

ANIMALS EMERGING FROM HIBERNATION

In Utah, many animals come out of hibernation in the spring. Below is a list of such animals, keep an eye out for these and other critters and record them in your nature journal!

- Black bears
- Ground Squirrels
- Woodchucks (Groundhogs)
- Snakes
- Lizards
- Frogs and Toads
- Bats
- Uinta Chipmunks

BIRDS RETURNING TO UTAH

Much like the above, many birds migrate back to Utah as the weather gets warmer and food like insects, seeds, and flowers become easier to find. Record them in your journal as well!

- Swallows
- Warblers, Meadowlarks, Vireos, and Other Songbirds
- Robins
- Shorebirds
- Waterfowl
- Raptors
- Hummingbirds
- Mourning Doves
- Cuckoos
- Road Runners





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SUMMER | NATURE JOURNALING PROMPTS


JOURNALING PROMPTS

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Describe a Desert Sunset – What colors do you see in the sky? How does the temperature change as the sun sets? What animals or insects do you hear?

Sketch a Wildflower – Find a flower in the wild and draw it. Write down its colors, size, and where you found it. Can you name it? What insects might visit it?

Explore a Local Creek or River – What do you see around the water? Are there any animals or insects near it? How does the water feel and sound? Write or sketch the plants and animals you spot.

 **Birdwatching** – Watch for birds flying or perched around you. Write down what they look like, what they’re doing, and any sounds they make. Do you notice any patterns in their behavior?

Rocks and Trees – Pick a tree, a unique rock formation, or a smaller rock and study it closely. Draw it and describe its texture, shape, and color. What do you think this rock or tree has experienced over time? You can use an app, a book, or ask an adult to help identify the type of rock or tree.

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Observe a Desert Animal – Find an animal (like a lizard, rabbit, or insect) and observe it for a while. Write about how it moves, what it's doing, and how it survives in the heat.

Insect Investigation – Look for ants, bees, butterflies, or other bugs. Draw one or more insects, and note their colors, shapes, and behaviors. Do you see any signs of pollination or feeding?

Cloud Watching – Lie on your back and watch the clouds. What shapes can you see? How do the clouds change over time? What do you imagine they might be? For an extra challenge, try to identify the cloud type and the weather pattern it's usually associated with.



Look for Animal Tracks – If you're in a sandy or muddy area, see if you can find animal tracks. Sketch the tracks and try to identify which animal made them. Where do you think the animal was going?

Temperature Changes – Track how the temperature changes during the day. Write about how it feels in the morning, afternoon, and evening. How do the animals and plants around you react to these changes?

Summer Sounds – Close your eyes and focus on the sounds around you—birds, insects, wind, or water. Write down what you hear and describe how the sounds make you feel.

Create a Nature Collage – Collect leaves, flowers, or small natural objects and glue them into your journal. Write about the different textures, colors, and smells you notice.

Sun and Shadows – Find an object or plant and observe how its shadow changes throughout the day. Draw the shadow at different times and write about how the sun affects the environment.

Finding Green Spaces – If you live in an urban environment, explore local parks or any green space you can find. Draw or write about what types of plants, trees, and animals live there. How do these spaces help make the city feel less crowded?

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or colored pencils. Another great option is to press and dry your plant specimens. To do this, carefully place the plant between two sheets of wax paper or newspaper, then place it inside a heavy book to apply pressure. Leave it for a few days to dry completely. Once dry, you can glue the pressed specimens into your nature journal, along with notes about where and when you found them.

Write a Letter to Future Plants – Pick a spot in nature where you know plants grow. This could be your backyard, a park near your house, school, or a community garden.



Plant a Seed Challenge: Write a pretend letter to future plants that may grow there. What would you tell them to expect? Should they be worried about anything? What are they going to see and feel?

Design your Own Trail – Look at the mountains or hills around your home. Do they already have trails? If not, imagine where you might put a trail. How would you navigate the steep rocky sections? Where would you put switchbacks? Will you need a bridge to cross any rivers?

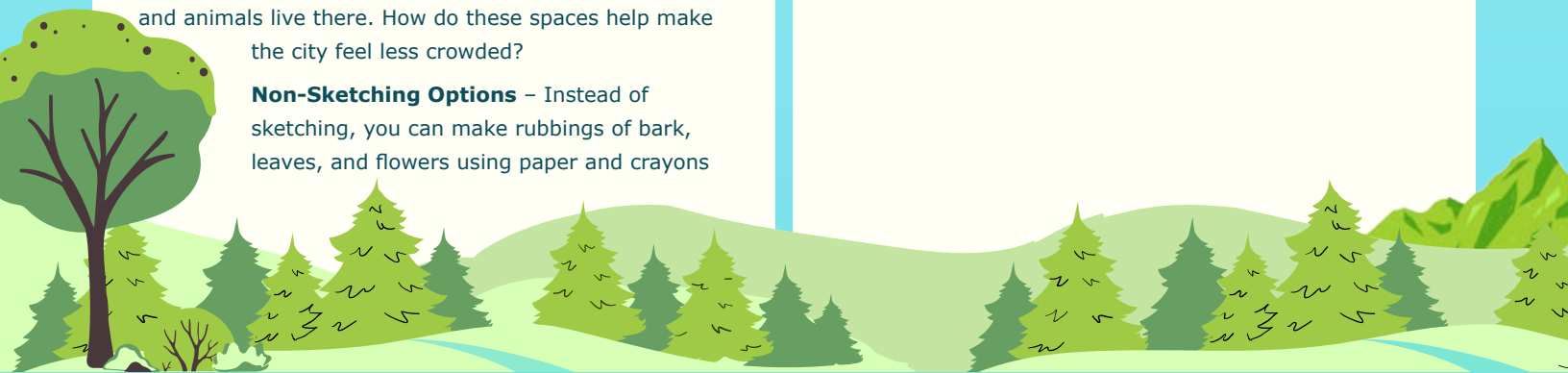


Trails Challenge: Create a sketch of where you plan to build your trail. Draw your trail and include details like bridges, water courses, intersections, and parking lots.

Wildlife Photography – Wildlife photography takes lots of patience and sitting still in quiet places. See if you can capture a picture of an animal in its natural habitat.



Observe Wildlife Challenge: Use the photographs you take as inspiration for sketching an image. Or write a story or poem about the photo(s) you took!





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AUTUMN | NATURE JOURNALING PROMPTS

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Changing Leaves – Take a walk and observe the trees. What colors are the leaves turning? Sketch a tree and describe how the leaves are changing. Why do you think the colors change in autumn? Are there any trees still green? Alternatively, pick a specific spot, like a nearby mountain, and track how it changes over the next few weeks. What colors stand out to you most and why?



Fall Harvest – Visit a local farm, orchard, or garden. What fruits or vegetables are growing in the fall? Sketch or write about how the plants look at this time of year. How does the harvest season affect the plants and animals around you?



Autumn Animal Behavior – Watch how animals are preparing for winter. Are you seeing any animals collecting food, building shelters, or changing their behavior? Describe what you observe. How do you think animals in Utah get ready for the cold months ahead?

Crisp Autumn Air – Take a deep breath outside. How does the air feel on your skin? Does it smell different than in the summer? Write or draw how the air and temperature change

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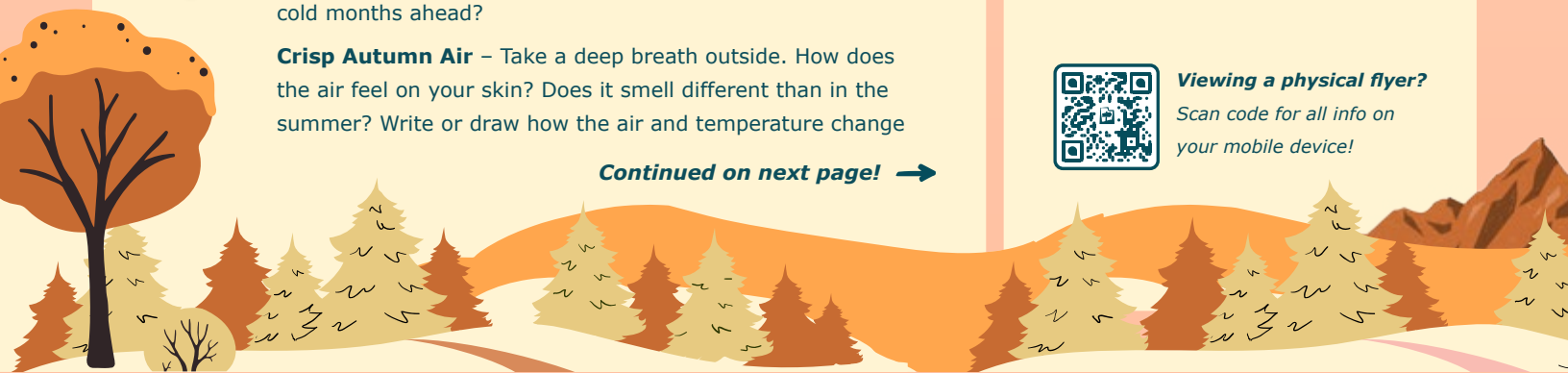
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JOURNALING PROMPTS

as autumn settles in. How do the weather changes affect the environment? Behavior?

First Frost – Write about your first experience with frost in the fall. How does it feel to witness nature’s transition to winter? What happens to plants, flowers, and even animals during a frost? How do they adapt to the colder mornings?

Autumn Sky – Watch the sky at sunset or sunrise. What colors do you see? Does the sky look different in autumn compared to summer? How does the angle of the sun affect the light in the sky?



Fall Migration – Watch for birds that are migrating. What birds can you spot in the sky or in trees? Describe the birds you see. Are they acting differently than in the summer? Research and identify what types of birds migrate through Utah in the fall.

Cloud Watching – Lie on your back and watch the clouds. What shapes can you see? How do the clouds change over time? What do you imagine they might be? For an extra challenge, try to identify the cloud type and the weather pattern it’s usually associated with.



Autumn Insects – Look for insects that are still active in the cooler weather. What types of bugs do you see in the fall? Describe what they’re doing. How might the change in seasons affect their behavior or survival?

Fallen Leaves – Collect some fallen leaves. What do they look like up close? Describe their colors, shapes, and sizes. What do you think happens to leaves after they fall? You could also try pressing and drying some of the leaves to add to your journal.

Leaf and Seed Collection – Collect leaves, nuts, or seed pods from different trees. See if you can find various species of the same tree type, like oak. Note the differences in shape, color, and texture between the leaves and the seeds. You can use an app like [iNaturalist](https://www.inaturalist.org/) to help identify the tree and its species. Sketch the

leaves and nuts or press, dry, and save the leaves in your journal.

Pumpkins and Squash – If you visit a pumpkin patch or garden, take some time to

sketch or describe pumpkins, squash, or other autumn crops. How are they different from summer plants? What happens to these plants as the weather cools?

Animal Tracks in the Fall – If you see animal tracks in the dirt or snow, try to identify which animals made them. Draw the tracks and write about where you think the animal was going and what it might have been doing.



Autumn Wind – Pay attention to the wind. How does it feel in the fall compared to the warmer months? How does the wind affect the trees, plants, and animals? Can you hear any sounds in the wind, like rustling leaves or branches?

Foggy Morning – If you get up early and there’s fog, observe how it looks in the morning light. How does the fog make everything look different? How does it feel to walk through fog? Write or draw your experience.



Autumn Wildlife – Look for animals that are more active in the fall, such as squirrels collecting acorns or deer foraging for food. Write about what these animals are doing to prepare for the cold months.

Autumn Night Sky – Spend an evening stargazing and document any changes you notice in the stars, constellations, or the moon’s position. Do you see any patterns in the sky that seem different from summer?



Weather Patterns – Track how the weather changes during the fall. Write about the first frost, rain, snow or weather events that differ from summer. How do the plants, animals, and even the landscape change with the weather?

Autumn Sounds – Focus on the sounds of fall. What do you hear around you? Is it the crunch of leaves underfoot, the call of migrating birds, or the rustle of animals preparing for winter? Write about the sounds that make autumn feel special to you.

Explore Hue – September is ideal for watching the leaves change from green to yellow, orange, red, and brown. Late blooming flowers add bursts of color. Pick a scenic spot to soak up the colors. Then, transfer your feelings onto a page using colored pencils, markers, crayons, or paints. You can also describe the colors with words, poems, or a story.

