

Nature Journal Grading Rubrics

1) Describe the nature place you have selected. Indicate its physical location relative to streets and/or landmarks. Estimate its size. Characterize its boundaries. Describe its vegetation and trees, any physical structures or surfaces, and any fauna you observe. (You do not have to know the scientific names of the plant species or provide technical details; you can describe these components in layman's terms.) What are the place's most distinctive attributes? How do you think humans use this place? How do you think animals use it? Provide at least two digital photos of the location. (25 points).

Journal Entry 1: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
Physical location of site is estimated relative to landmarks.	0-1	
Size of site is estimated.	0-1	
Boundaries of site are indicated.	0-1	
Vegetation is described.	0-1	
Trees are described if present; if not present, absence is noted.	0-1	
Physical structures are described if present; if not present, absence is noted.	0-1	
Fauna are described if present; if not present, absence is noted.	0-1	
Distinctive attributes of the place are described.	0-2	
Potential human use of the place is described.	0-2	
Potential wildlife use of the place is described.	0-2	
Two digital photos are provided.	0-2	
The photos are correctly captioned.	0-1	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The information in the entry is scientifically accurate.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-2	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-2	
Total	25	

2) Sketch the place you have selected. Draw each of the key features you identified in your first journal entry. Label the features so that the TA/instructor can tell what they are. Scan your sketch as a PDF, JPEG, or TIFF, and post it. (15 points)

Journal Entry 2: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
Site is sketched.	0–2	
Each feature identified in first entry is drawn in the sketch.	0–4	
Each feature is legibly labeled.	0–4	
The sketch is easy to view, not smudged or messy.	0–3	
Sketch is scanned as a PDF, JPEG, or TIFF and posted.	0–2	
Total	15	

3) Edward Abbey (1968, 267), commenting on the wilderness of Utah, said “How difficult to imagine this place without a human presence; how necessary. I am almost prepared to believe that this sweet virginal primitive land will be grateful for my departure and [its flora and fauna]. . . will breathe metaphorically a collective sigh of relief—like a whisper of the wind—when we are all and finally gone and the place and its creations can return to their ancient procedures unobserved and undisturbed by the busy, anxious, brooding consciousness of man.” What would your nature place have looked like had humans never touched it? (20 points)

Journal Entry 3: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
Journal entry is at least three paragraphs in length.	0–3	
The description of pre-human conditions is scientifically plausible.	0–3	
The description of pre-human conditions is plausible for this region of Indiana.	0–3	
The entry is well written.	0–3	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0–2	
References are provided if necessary.	0–3	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0–3	
Total	20	

4) Close your eyes. If you cannot rely on your eyesight, what would each of your other four senses tell you about your nature place? (15 points)

Journal Entry 4: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
Journal entry is at least three paragraphs in length.	0-1	
Scent-focused description of site is provided.	0-2	
Touch-focused description of the site is provided.	0-2	
Aural description of the site is provided.	0-2	
Taste-focused description of the site is provided.*	0-2	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-2	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-1	
Total	15	

*Don't actually lick the dirt! Use your imagination.

5) Pretend that you have seen the entire history of your nature place pass in front of you in five minutes. What would you have seen? This entry is different from the third one because now you are now being asked to imagine a timeline and to describe how the place might have looked at different points in history. (15 points)

Journal Entry 5: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
Journal entry is at least three paragraphs in length.	0-1	
The description of historical conditions is scientifically plausible.	0-3	
The description of historical conditions is plausible for this region of Indiana.	0-3	
The entry describes how the place would have looked during at least three different time periods.	0-3	
The entry is well written.	0-2	

The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-1	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-1	
Total	15	

6) Investigate the human history of your nature place. This may mean looking up information about the location in Indiana University historical documents, City of Bloomington resources, or histories of the state of Indiana; cite as appropriate. If there is a lack of official information about the place, speculate. Does it look like it was once used for agriculture? For waste disposal? Flood control, irrigation, recreation, construction, gardening, storage, or other purposes? Explain the evidence that forms the basis for your inference. Provide at least two digital photos or PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketches of the signs or evidence you use to infer past human uses. (25 points)

Journal Entry 6: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The journal entry is at least three paragraphs in length.	0-2	
The entry demonstrates an attempt at research; the student indicates which official resources he or she examined (e.g., materials from the Indiana University or City of Bloomington archives or state historical records) and what information they contained or failed to contain.	0-4	
The entry describes actual past human use of the site OR speculates about past use if actual information was unavailable.	0-3	
The past human use described in the entry is historically plausible.	0-2	
The entry explains how the past use was inferred, citing at least two forms of evidence.	0-3	
Two digital photos or sketches of signs/evidence are provided.	0-2	
The photos are correctly captioned.	0-2	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-2	

The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0–2	
Total	25	

7) How is your nature place changing with the shift in seasons? Digitally photograph or sketch at least two of the new seasonal developments you identify. (This entry is different than the eighth—your next journal assignment—because the next prompt will ask you about signs or evidence of animal and human use, whereas this prompt asks you to describe changes at your nature place generally.) (15 points)

Journal Entry 7: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The journal entry is at least two paragraphs in length.	0–2	
At least two seasonal changes are identified.	0–2	
At least two seasonal changes are photographed or sketched.	0–2	
Two digital photos or sketches are provided.	0–2	
The photos are correctly captioned.	0–1	
The entry is well written.	0–2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0–2	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0–2	
Total	15	

8) Mary Austin (1903, 52) tells us “There is always more life abroad in the winter hills than one looks to find, and much more in evidence than in summer weather.” What signs of animal, plant, and human life do you see now that the weather is turning warmer? (Keep in mind that seeing signs of wildlife or human activity is different than actually seeing wildlife or humans. Signs could include animal tracks or droppings, nests, holes, caches of food, or human footprints.) How are these signs different from those that you saw when the weather was colder? Take at least two digital photos or create at least two PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketches of the signs you can identify now in warmer weather. Do you agree with Austin that there were more signs in the winter than now? Explain why you agree or disagree. (20 points)

Journal Entry 8: Elements	Available Points	Your Points

E162 Sec.10119 Spring 2010 Journal Rubrics 6

At least one sign of animal life at the site is documented, or if no signs were observed, absence is noted and explained.	0-2	
At least one sign of plant life at the site is documented, or if no signs were observed, absence is noted and explained.	0-2	
At least one sign of human life at the site is documented, or if no signs were observed, absence is noted and explained.	0-2	
The entry compares observed signs to signs when weather was colder.	0-2	
The entry states whether the student agrees or disagrees with Austin.	0-2	
The entry explains why the student agrees or disagrees with Austin.	0-2	
Two digital photos or sketches are provided.	0-2	
The photos are correctly captioned.	0-1	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-2	
Total	20	

9) Spend at least 15 minutes at your location sitting quietly. What animals do you observe? (Remember that insects are part of the Animal Kingdom.) Provide a digital photo or a PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketch of four animals. Look up the scientific (Latin) name of each and provide it. Choose one animal and briefly research its characteristics, behaviors, and habitat. Provide a write-up of your research with appropriate citations. If you did not see at least four animals, photograph/sketch, identify, and research those you did encounter. Then answer the following questions as well: What other animals might you have expected to find in this environment? Why would you expect this to be their habitat? Why do you think you did not observe them? (25 points)

Journal Entry 9: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
<i>If four animals were observed:</i>		
Four digital photos or sketches are provided.	0-2	

E162 Sec.10119 Spring 2010 Journal Rubrics 7

The scientific (Latin) name of each of the four animals is provided.	0-2	
The entry describes typical characteristics of one of the observed animals.	0-1	
The entry describes typical behavior of the animal.	0-1	
The entry describes the habitat of the animal.	0-1	
The description of the characteristics, behavior, and habitat is at least two paragraphs in length.	0-3	
The description of the animal's characteristics, behavior, and habitat is scientifically accurate.	0-4	
<i>If fewer than four animals were observed:</i>		
Digital photos or sketches are provided of animals the student encountered.	0-2	
The entry explains what other animals might use this natural place, describing at least two additional animals.	0-2	
The scientific (Latin) names of all of the animals, observed and hypothesized, are provided.	0-2	
The entry explains why the student thinks this area might provide habitat for the animals identified but not observed.	0-3	
The entry explains why the animals likely were not observed.	0-3	
The habitat description, and the explanation for failure to observe the animals, are scientifically accurate.	0-2	
<i>Applicable to all:</i>		
The photos are correctly captioned.	0-2	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided.	0-4	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-2	
Total	25	

10) Spend at least 15 minutes at your location sitting quietly. What are the dominant forms of vegetation at this place? Provide a digital photo or a PDF/JPEG/TIFF sketch of four plants, trees, shrubs, and/or flowers. Look up the scientific (Latin) name of each and provide it. Choose one plant and briefly research its characteristics and habitat. Provide a write-up of your research with appropriate citations. If you did not find four different forms of vegetation, photograph/sketch, identify, and research those you did encounter. Then answer the following questions as well: What other plants might you have expected to find in this environment? Why would you expect this to be their habitat? Why do you think you did not observe them? (25 points)

Journal Entry 10: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
<i>If four plants, trees, and shrubs were observed:</i>		
Four digital photos or sketches are provided.	0–2	
The scientific (Latin) name of each of the four plants is provided.	0–2	
The entry describes typical characteristics of one of the observed plants.	0–1	
The entry describes typical behavior of the plant (e.g., whether it loses its leaves in the winter, how it distributes its seeds, or when its flowers bloom).	0–1	
The entry describes the habitat of the plant.	0–1	
The description of the characteristics, behavior, and habitat is at least two paragraphs in length.	0–3	
The description of the plant's characteristics, behavior, and habitat is scientifically accurate.	0–4	
<i>If fewer than four plants were observed:</i>		
Digital photos or sketches are provided of plants the student encountered.	0–2	
The entry explains what other plants might be found in this natural place, describing at least two additional plants.	0–2	
The scientific (Latin) names of all of the plants, observed and hypothesized, are provided.	0–2	
The entry explains why the student thinks this area might provide habitat for the plants identified but not observed.	0–3	
The entry explains why the plants likely were not observed.	0–3	

The habitat description, and the explanation for failure to observe the plants, are scientifically accurate.	0–2	
<i>Applicable to all:</i>		
The photos are correctly captioned.	0–2	
The entry is well written.	0–2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0–1	
References are provided.	0–4	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0–2	
Total	25	

11) How would you improve this nature place? Keep in mind that “improve” can mean anything. You could say that you would pave it and put up a Wal-Mart if you like. You could suggest removing invasive species and planting natives, creating a community garden, building trails, fencing the area to keep out pests or people, etc. But whatever you propose, explain how and why your suggestion would be an improvement. Be explicit about your definition of “improve.” (25 points)

Journal Entry 11: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The entry provides a clear explanation of what it means to “improve” this natural place.	0–3	
The student describes the improvement he/or she would make to the natural place.	0–2	
The student explains who would complete the improvement.	0–3	
The student explains when the improvement would be completed, and/or over what timeframe.	0–3	
The student explains how the improvement would be completed.	0–3	
The improvement proposal is at least three paragraphs in length.	0–2	
The entry explains why the student’s proposal fits his/her definition of “improvement.”	0–2	
The entry is well written.	0–2	

The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-2	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-2	
Total	25	

12) What challenges does the environment in your nature place face? What are the sources of the challenges? Based on that challenges you identify, what do you think the place will look like in 5 years? In 10? In 20? (25 points)

Journal Entry 12: Elements	Available Points	Your Points
The description of challenges and future site descriptions are collectively at least three paragraphs in length.	0-2	
At least two challenges for site's environment are described.	0-2	
The sources of each of the challenges are identified.	0-2	
The identified challenges are realistic and scientifically plausible.	0-2	
The entry describes what the site might look like in 5 years.	0-2	
The entry describes what the site might look like in 10 years.	0-2	
The entry describes what the site might look like in 20 years.	0-2	
The future descriptions are scientifically plausible.	0-2	
The future descriptions are plausibly realistic given social, economic, and political considerations.	0-2	
The entry is well written.	0-2	
The entry follows formatting guidelines.	0-1	
References are provided if necessary.	0-2	
The entry is creative and demonstrates critical thinking.	0-2	
Total	25	