

Assateague State Park



Park Quest 2021



Rackliffe Trail Map

Trail Difficulty Level: Easy



Park Quest 2021 at Assateague State Park will take you on a walk down the Rackliffe Trail. Please print this guide and bring it with you to complete the activities, or bring your own journal and follow along with the guide on your cellular device!

What is Nature Journaling?



People have been journaling about nature for hundreds of years, recording the different plants and animals they witness outdoors. Back then it was a great tool for making new discoveries and spreading information. Today, nature journals serve a similar purpose. We have greater access to information in the 21st century, but nature journaling can still spark curiosity in us and teach us new skills.

Nature journaling is a creative and personal experience. No two nature journals look the same, and that's because no one experiences nature in the same way. We all have different ways of perceiving the world around us. In this guide we will give you some pointers and leading questions to help you start your first nature journal! Once you finish this guide, you are welcome to continue your journal, make it your own, and explore different methods that you enjoy!

Nature journals typically include both notes and drawings. This will allow you to look back at your pages and get a fuller understanding of what nature was looking like on that day. Walk the Rackliffe Trail and complete the activities as you explore! Whether you mainly describe or draw things does not matter, but we do encourage you to challenge yourself and improve your skills with this experience.

Activity 1



Start the trail! What is the first thing that catches your eye? A favorite tree or bush? A leaf on the ground? A bird? Once you have found your subject, make some basic observations about it. Then take a closer look. What else do you notice up close? Is there anything living within/on it? Any other signs that life has been there? Was there something you've noticed before? Draw your subject and add details as you investigate it more closely. Write down any questions you have so you can research them further. Write down anything you learn next to your drawing.

Activity 2



Think of your favorite color. Walk down the trail until you see a small path off to the left that leads to a small hidden beach. Watch your step! Once on the beach look for anything that might be your favorite color (or might be this color in a different shade). Investigate and find plants and animals that fall into your color category. Once you have found a few different items/animals, compare and contrast them. Draw them.

Figure out what they are if you don't already know.

Activity 3



Head out of the hidden beach, continue left on the trail, and use your sense of smell. What does the air smell like to you? Has it just rained, or has it been dry? Is it going to rain soon? Can you tell by the way the air smells? See if you can find a plant or flower that is safe to smell, what does it smell like? Close your eyes and notice if the wind brings in any new or familiar smells. Draw or journal about what you are experiencing.

Activity 4



Walk to the Rackliffe House! As you travel, look down at the ground. Draw/describe what you see. Pick things up and make observations about them. If you find a critter that's on the move you can follow it with your eyes and map out its travel, or explore more of the trail and see what else you can find on the ground. If you find anything that peaks your interest and leaves you with questions make note of it and do some research!

Activity 5



Head across the field to where the trail continues. Once back on the trail, find a spot where you can sit or stand comfortably. Stay still and quiet, and close your eyes. Use your sense of hearing and notice all the sounds of the trail. After a few minutes of silence animals like birds might start to move or make sounds. Listen closely and write down how many different sounds you hear. Feel free to take a video so that you can listen back to these sounds later and try to identify them. If you can see one of the animals making this sound, draw/describe it!

Activity 6



Walk to the State Park Aviary! As you do, look up at the sky. Draw/ describe the clouds you see, take note if they're moving. Is it windy or still? Are the trees moving or completely still? Are the trees moving due to the wind or animals? Can you see birds bouncing around the trees? Do you see any birds flying high in the sky, or other animals up in the trees? What kind of trees do you see? Draw and describe what you experience! After, check out the birds you can see in our aviary!

Activity 7



As you head back, finish the trail loop back to the start, and take a couple of minutes to think about all you have seen today. We have used all of our senses to experience the Rackliffe Trail. Take a few minutes and write about your overall experience. Have you walked many trails before? Did you experience something in nature for the first time today? Reflect on the fun you had today and then finish the trail! If you come across something that grabs your attention, use your new nature journaling skills to observe it!