



## NATURE AT HOME

We hope to inspire kids of all ages to learn about the natural world and discover new connections to nature.



### Nature Journal – Soil Islands

View the video at [DishmanHills.org/Nature-At-Home](http://DishmanHills.org/Nature-At-Home)

What is a soil island?

A soil island begins as a rocky ledge or depression that was once solid rock. The island's rock is lower than some of the same kind of rock that surround it. Water flows from the surrounding rock onto the ledge or into the depression. Air moving over the surface of the surrounding rocks slows down. This allows some of what the wind is carrying to fall into the depression. Some of the deposits are the spores of lichens and mosses. The lichens capture more materials from the wind. They also begin to slowly break down the surface of the rock. Mosses capture and hold more water and materials from the wind and other plants outside of the soil island. Over time the materials captured by the lichens and mosses begin to break down and help create soil. New organisms begin to live and die, releasing more nutrients into the soil island. (Remember, it's not an "island" sticking up out of the water, it's called an island because rock surrounds an area which contains water and other materials flowing into it from the air.)

#### **What you need: Journal or piece of paper and pencil**

Find a **sit spot** that has a good view of what you are interested in.

Record the date, time, location, and weather in your journal.

Use all of your senses.

What do you see, hear, feel, and smell?

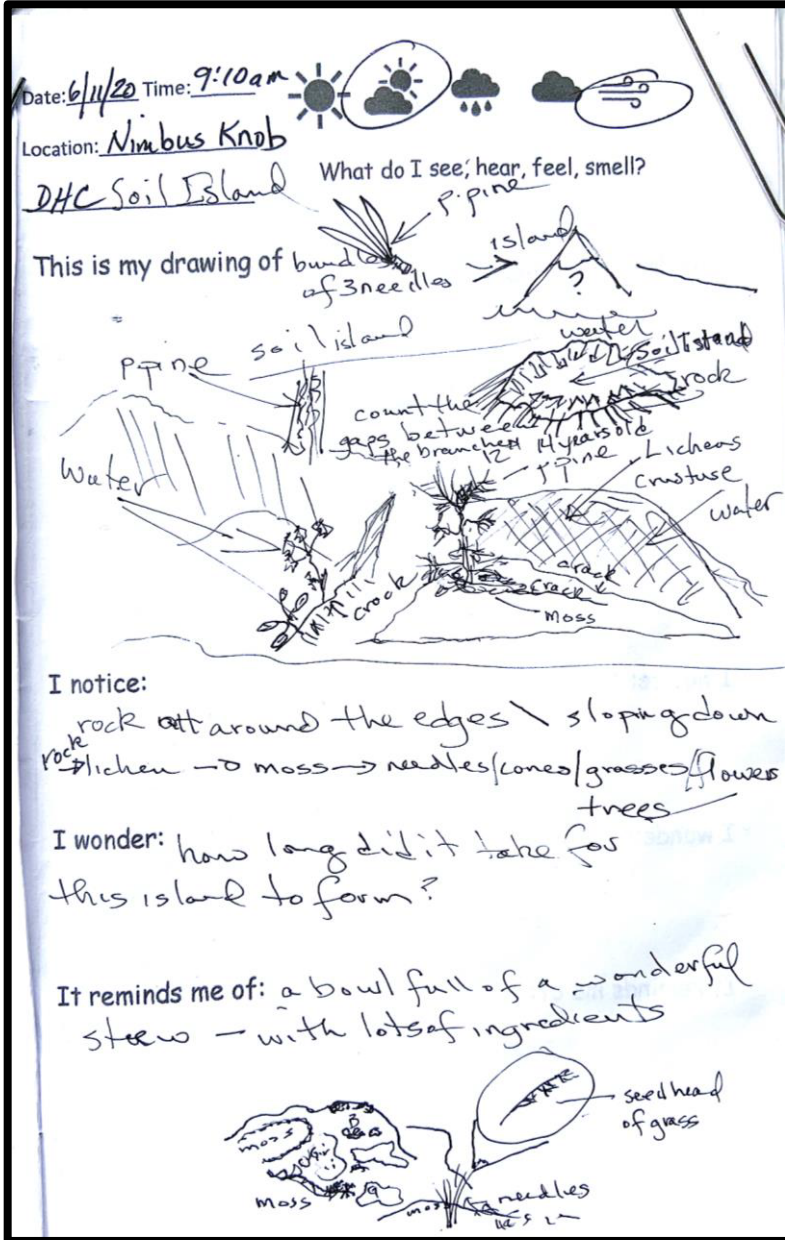
Take the time to look carefully all around you.

Begin to make notes in your journal.

Draw and label what you see.

Use your journal to record **what you notice, what you wonder, and what it reminds you of.**





When you get home, use your journal to help you recall more details. You will be amazed at what you remember. Below is what the creator of this journal page recalled two weeks after their visit.

I'm sitting on a low rock looking down into a **soil island**. The first thing I **notice** is a thick covering of dry pine needles and cones that had been dropped from a tall ponderosa pine growing next to this soil island. As I look more closely, I **observe** some dry stems, leaves and seed pods. I **wonder** if they are from some of this year's early blooming flowers. I **also notice** several new green bunch grasses. I **see** that more rocks continue around the rim of this low area. I **notice** that the surrounding rocks have several different kinds of **lichen** near their tops. I **notice** that there are several different kinds of **moss** covering the lower sides of the rocks. When I look to the other side of this soil island, I **notice** a tiny ponderosa pine seedling emerging from a crack in a rock. I can follow the crack down the face of the rock because I see that mosses are also growing from the crack. I **wonder** what makes that crack such a good place to live. I **wonder** how long it took for this island to become what it is today? This soil island **reminds me of** a shallow stone bowl full of a wonderful stew made with lots of ingredients.