

# Humane Living



Field mouse by the lake  
Sept. 15, 2012 5pm. Cloudy, 70°



Toad in puddle  
Aug. 31, 2012 5pm 80°



Deer in backyard  
Aug. 23, 2012 8:30 pm. 75°

## TAKING NOTE

Nature journaling opens windows to the extraordinary and sublime

by RUTHANNE JOHNSON

**It was the height of summer** 2012, a cool, partly cloudy morning in Northern California's Sierra Valley. There to teach a field sketching workshop, John Muir Laws carried in his shoulder bag the tools of a seasoned naturalist: sketchbook, mechanical pencils, kneaded eraser, binoculars, and field guide.

On daily hikes, Laws and his students would stop often to write and sketch observations in their journals. Once everyone was settled and quietly observing, wildlife invariably made an appearance and the group's pencils would fly. Sometimes, they would draw an unusual wildflower. Other times, they would scribble notes of a bird-song or describe a sun-dappled moment.

On this day, passing over a creek, the class spotted several birds darting back and forth through reeds along the water's edge. Busy hunting for insects, the Virginia and sora rails and their young seemed oblivious

to their audience. "All the field guides say they are so secretive, yet these birds were just so accommodating," says Laws, who filled his journal with quick-posture sketches and beak details for comparison between the species. "It was amazing to observe their behavior ... dancing around just yards away."

While the average person may have walked unknowingly past the scene, Laws—whose first and middle names reflect his parents' respect for the famed naturalist—knew the moment was special. Years of nature journaling nearly every day have



Small red ant Base Pato  
August 21, 2012

sharpened his knowledge of the natural world and its inhabitants. "I don't know of any activity that makes me more in tune with that," he says.

For Laws and other nature lovers, moments of quiet observation provide a window to nature's mysteries and the drama of seemingly commonplace events. Writing and sketching about the outdoors also helps them slow down and focus on a bird's coloring, a caterpillar's structure, or a leaf's edge. "The process of keeping a nature journal will make you notice details you would not have otherwise seen," says Laws, "and it's going to help you remember those details later on."

Nature journaling has long played a critical role in developing natural histories, says nature artist and writer Clare Walker Leslie. "Lewis and Clark, Thoreau, and John James Audubon made unforgettable observations and reproductions of nature in the New World." These days, the naturalist's contributions are no less important, she says.

When Leslie began journaling in 1978, she didn't know the difference between a robin and a blue jay. Today, she's completed 46 journals and written 11 books on the topic, including the award-winning *Keeping a Nature Journal*. She revisits her old journals often to study yearly patterns and seasonal changes and to trace the impacts of climate change on her region—an effort she hopes will be useful to future scientists.

Apart from its practical applications, natural journaling affects people on a deeper level, says Leslie, who travels the country teaching the craft. "What all people discover when they are outside is a wash-over of calm, curiosity, and connection that are just not the same as when you go to a sports game or the theater. It's the comfort of things wild."

Journaling helped Leslie cope with the grief of her mother's illness and death. "I would find one image every day from nature to carry me through the day, whether it was drops of rain on a rose, a robin flying through the green, or a monarch butterfly across the street. ... It became like a prayer. It was finding the moon."



Various insects, Sept. 15, 2012 8:30 am, Sunny high 60's



# NATURE JOURNALING 101

**CASING THE NEIGHBORHOOD:** Even in the city, nature journaling opportunities abound. Nature artist Clare Walker Leslie remembers leading a workshop at an inner-city school in Boston where one fourth-grade teacher doubted they could find anything to journal about. "We hadn't been out there for five minutes when not one but two red-tailed hawks flew right over his head," she says with a laugh.

Some nature journalists focus on their own yards, using wildlife-friendly landscaping to attract subjects. Others like to find a nearby natural area to record seasonal changes and yearly patterns. For Leslie, that place is Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge and Watertown, Mass.—a 175-acre arboretum just minutes from her home. For nature journalist Kristin Meuser, it's a wetland with a 2-mile walking path near her Petaluma, Calif., home. "The more I journal there, the more I am starting to see some patterns emerge," she says, "like certain times when there are hundreds and hundreds of coots."

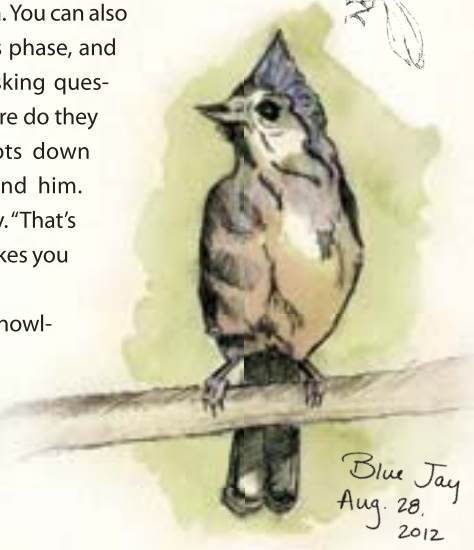
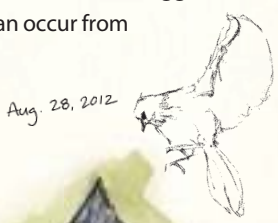
**FINDING THE TIME:** Mornings and evenings are typically best for wildlife viewing, and all seasons are ripe with opportunities. In the winter's quiet, listen for animal sounds and look for tracks in the snow. If you spot an animal, sketch the imprint when she's left, making note of track measurements, the distance between them, and details about the animal. If you see a bird taking off from snow, look for wing imprints she may have left behind.

Journaling doesn't require a huge time commitment. With a busy schedule, Leslie journals whenever she can. "Sometimes it's only for 10 minutes," she says. She'll often see things for later entry in her journal.

**TOOLS OF THE TRADE:** "Pencil and paper. That's it," Leslie says. "The other stuff eventually comes along the way. But first it's getting outside and just writing stuff down." Beyond these basics, wildlife biologist John Muir Laws recommends a backpack filled with a journal, mechanical and colored pencils, field guides, binoculars, and perhaps a small watercolor set. When sketching, he uses a non-photo blue pencil to lay down basic shapes before filling them in with darker lines. Meuser suggests a bound journal rather than spiral to avoid the smudging that can occur from movement between pages.

**FILLING THE PAGE:** Each entry should start with the date, location, weather, and season. You can also note sunrise and sunset times, the moon's phase, and tide times. Then broaden the entry by asking questions. Which animals live in the place? Where do they live? Laws writes questions and then jots down observations of what's happening around him. Sometimes, the list takes on a poetic quality. "That's a good place to insert ... how the place makes you feel, what kind of mood it brings forth."

Sketching can lead to a more intimate knowledge of your subject, "but so much of this is not about making pretty pictures," says Laws. "It's about being present and recording what you see and getting to know what you are looking at."



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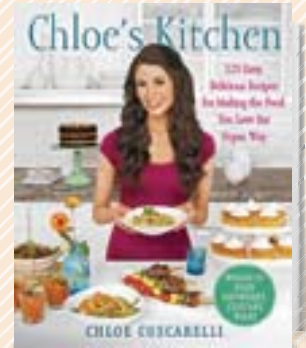
**RECIPE  
BOX**

## Cooking with Chloe

**Classically trained** chef and *Cupcake Wars* winner Chloe Coscarelli had several goals for her first cookbook. First, every recipe had to be one of her favorite foods: "If I didn't like it, it didn't go in the book!" She also wanted to help readers incorporate more meatless meals into their diets. "Even if it is just ... once a week ... it is a step in the right direction." And she was determined to showcase vegan food as a "really fun, flavorful cuisine."

Published in March, *Chloe's Kitchen* features an appealing mix of dishes, from baked macaroni and cheese to mango masala panini. "It was really important to me to have comfort foods, things that are familiar to people, while also showing ... new and unique foods," she says.

Take a fresh approach to your holiday menu with Coscarelli's recipe for sweet potato gnocchi. — *Gail Berrigan*



### Sweet Potato Gnocchi with Sage Butter

SERVES 4 TO 6

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 large red-skinned sweet potatoes** (about 2 pounds)
- 1 teaspoon sea salt**
- ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**, plus extra for serving
- 2½ to 3½ cups all-purpose flour**, plus extra for rolling
- ½ cup vegan margarine**
- ½ cup fresh sage leaves**

➤ **TO RECEIVE** a free weekly Meatless Monday text with a link to a mobile-friendly recipe, text TASTY to 30644. For more recipes, visit [humanesociety.org/recipes](http://humanesociety.org/recipes).



- 1.** Preheat oven to 425° F. Pierce sweet potatoes with a fork and bake in a baking pan until fully cooked, about 45–60 minutes. Remove from oven and let sit until cool enough to handle.
- 2.** Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise. With a large spoon, scoop out the flesh of each sweet potato into a medium bowl (discard the skins or save for another use). Thoroughly mash the sweet potatoes while they are still warm. Set aside or refrigerate to cool completely.
- 3.** Add salt, nutmeg, and pepper to the sweet potatoes, then add flour, ½ cup at a time, mixing well with a spoon.
- 4.** Once a soft, slightly sticky dough has formed, divide it into six portions. Generously flour the work surface and your hands. Roll each portion of dough into ropes about ½ inch in diameter. Each rope will be approximately 7–9 inches long.
- 5.** Dip a sharp knife in flour and cut each rope into 1-inch long pillows. Use a fork to add decorative ridges if desired.
- 6.** Fill a medium-size saucepan with heavily salted water and bring to a boil. In the meantime, heat the margarine and sage in a large nonstick skillet until the margarine begins to bubble.
- 7.** When water boils, reduce heat to a gentle simmer and gently drop in the gnocchi, about 20 at a time. The gnocchi will float to the surface in about 4 minutes. Continue to cook about 30 seconds longer. Using a slotted spoon, immediately transfer the gnocchi to the skillet of butter sauce. Let cook, turning frequently, for 1 to 2 minutes. Do this in several batches until all the gnocchi are cooked.
- 8.** Serve immediately, topped with freshly ground black pepper.

Note: Uncooked gnocchi can be made in advance and kept frozen for up to 1 month or refrigerated for 3 to 4 days. From *Chloe's Kitchen: 125 Easy, Delicious Recipes for Making the Food You Love the Vegan Way* by Chloe Coscarelli; © 2012; Free Press.



THIS PAGE, GNOCCHI: MIKI DUJSTERHOFF; PEPPERCORNS: STEPHEN CORN; SAGE: FLOORTJE/ISTOCKPHOTO. OPPOSITE PAGE, FROM TOP: KELSEY EDWARDS, J. HIGHTOWER

## IN THE LIMELIGHT



### James Arnold Taylor and Catherine Taber

**Video game enthusiasts**, sci-fi fans, and children of all ages know James Arnold Taylor and Catherine Taber as the voices of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Padmé Amidala in the *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animated series and related video games. Recently, the actors known for their intergalactic peacekeeping tackled some earthly concerns, joining forces with The HSUS and Aardman Animations to make *A Pig's Tail*. Featuring a farmer voiced by Taylor, a pig voiced by Taber, and original music by Steven Delopoulos, the animated short film educates children about factory farming and more humane alternatives. In this edited interview with HSUS *Kind News* editor Cathy Vincenti, Taylor and Taber discuss what inspired them to donate their talents to the project.



#### Why was it important for you to make *A Pig's Tail*?

**TAYLOR:** I feel very much, as someone who is a daily reader of the Bible, that God is very clear that you take care of the animals and you take care of the planet and it will be there for you. We have a responsibility to do things the right way—humanely and not just grabbing every little bit that we can and harming things and not caring about them.

**TABER:** As an animal lover and rescuer, I wanted to help an animal organization that was really doing good work, and of course top of the list is The HSUS.

#### What message would you like kids to take away from the film?

**TAYLOR:** The pigs in *A Pig's Tail* talk, and we're hearing and seeing their emotions. It helps kids see that the animals have feelings. Most people don't want to look at factory farming because they don't want to get emotional about it. But we should get worked up about some of the things that we are doing. We're not thinking about how these animals are treated.

Kids will take a look at this film and say, "Well, that makes sense. That's how it should be." And if it's not that way, they have a right to ask, "Why isn't it?"



**TABER:** *A Pig's Tail* is a wonderful introduction into a subject that would otherwise be difficult to talk about with children. The film shows kids that there are great ways to farm and there are not such great ways to farm. There are great ways to get your food and not such great ways to get your food. Kids might come away asking, "Are we thinking about where we're getting the food that comes into the house?" It could be a conversation starter for the entire family to have an honest talk about it and to understand that our choices matter.



### Shopping cart

**Holiday shopping** for the children in your life? Forget the plastic toys, electronic gizmos, and trendy dolls. The staff of *Kind News*—our sister magazine for kids in grades K–6—compiled this list of recent books that will entertain children while encouraging appreciation for their fellow creatures.

#### CALL THE HORSE

**LUCKY** by Juanita Havill (author) and Nancy Lane (illustrator)

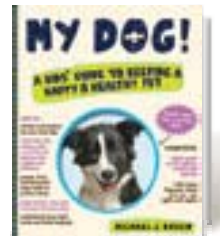
**AGES 5+** A girl discovers a neglected horse and lobbies for his rescue.



#### MY DOG! A KIDS' GUIDE TO KEEPING A HAPPY & HEALTHY PET

by Michael J. Rosen

**AGES 9+** Fun doggie facts and kid-friendly tips on training, diet, grooming, problem solving, and more make this a great read for young dog lovers.



#### STEP GENTLY OUT

by Helen Frost (author) and Rick Lieder (photographer)

**AGES 2+** Lyrical text and captivating photography will inspire children to revel in the natural world around them.



#### WHEN ANJU LOVED BEING AN ELEPHANT

by Wendy Henrichs (author) and John Butler (illustrator)

**AGES 6–10** This beautifully illustrated book follows a wild elephant who is held in captivity, then eventually sent to a sanctuary where he can once again enjoy life as a wild animal.



➤ **ORDER KIND NEWS** at [humanesociety.org/kindnewsaa](http://humanesociety.org/kindnewsaa).

➤ **VIEW *A Pig's Tail*** and order the DVD at [humanesociety.org/apigstail](http://humanesociety.org/apigstail).