

Editor's Note: Dr. Corey Lewis at California State University, Humboldt, led an all-day, pre-conference workshop for the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment on teaching field-based English courses. The following document compiles the multiple handouts he prepared for that workshop. Some of these materials apply to any eco-region, while others are specific to the American West. The Western Literature Association would like to thank Professor Lewis for generously sharing these materials here.

Designing Field-Based Curriculum For Environmental Literature and Writing Courses

By Dr. Corey Lee Lewis

(For detailed advice and instruction on designing interdisciplinary, field-based curriculum see
Reading the Trail: Exploring the Literature and Natural History of the California Crest.
University of Nevada Press; Reno, 2005.)

General Advice:

For both your benefit and that of your students, make your first few field experiences short, easy and close to campus, and progress from there toward full-day or multi-day excursions. In general, alternate between having some formal class discussions and lectures, field journaling and observation or activity time, and free time. Bring a variety of field-guides to the region (on flowers, plants, birds, insects, rocks, etc.) for students to use, and a few pieces of pre-selected literary readings that relate to specific features, species or issues you anticipate exploring.

A Basic Plan:

1. Introduction to site: begin with a short lecture (from yourself, a guest, student groups with pre-assigned research topics, a short reading, or reading discussion, etc.) to introduce students to the location and some of its key features, species, processes, history, current status, and aesthetic, ethical, cultural and other values. Guided nature hikes, for example, of a series of short mini-lectures or class sessions at a few key habitats or features, are a good way to begin introducing students to a particular field study location.
2. Literary Examples: read, discuss, and share selected examples of environmental literature that connect to that place, its species, processes, etc. These can be used as models for the students own writing, as in a Nature Writing class, or as works for field-based analysis and response, as in an Environmental Literature class.
3. Field Journaling time: provide students ample opportunity to compose field journal entries both in response to prompts designed by you and free-writing entries where they are able to write about anything they want. In an Environmental Literature course, most of the field-journaling prompts can direct students to make connections between their texts and the field. In a Nature Writing course, most of the field-journaling prompts can ask students to write directly about the field, and/or use the strategies modeled by the authors they are studying. A variety of these questions and field-journaling prompts are described in detail in *Reading the Trail*, and some are listed on the "Field Journaling for Nature Writers" guide.
4. Free time: allow at least some time, especially over lunch, or in between two more

formal class sessions, for students to be completely free to wander, sit, talk, explore, play, sleep, etc. One key feature of field-studies should be to provide opportunity for students to simply “be” outside, to experience “nature” without mediation.

5. Sharing time: provide students with a time to come together as a class to read passages from their field-journals and share stories of their experiences that day. This time is key for sharing and discussing writing, building community, and allowing the natural power of storytelling to solidify the transformative environmental experiences students may have had during the day.

Some General Advice for Instructors on Becoming an Eco-regionally Literate Field Instructor

By Dr. Corey Lee Lewis

(For detailed advice and instruction on designing interdisciplinary, field-based curriculum see
Reading the Trail: Exploring the Literature and Natural History of the California Crest.

University of Nevada Press; Reno, 2005.)

Learn at least 10 Common Native Plants

Regardless of your region, it is not difficult to learn 10 Native plants, that are very common (meaning you will see at least some of them on any nature walk), easy to identify, and that have important and interesting ecological values, edible or medicinal uses, or cultural associations and stories. Learn the latin name or scientific classification, its common name, and if possible local Native names for the plant, as well as how to identify it, where it grows, and some background information on its life cycle and history. The best way to learn these plants is to use the “Species Spotlight” field journal prompt and some field guides to identify your plant and research its background. I recommend learning a few common trees, shrubs, weedy or flowering plants, and riparian and/or aquatic plants. I also especially recommend learning any common dangerous plants, such as poison oak, ivy or sumac, that could pose a threat to students, as well as a couple common toxic plants that could pose a threat to a collector of wild edibles, such as poison water hemlock or corn lily. Local varieties of these very common and useful species probably exist in your local ecoregion:

Trees: Pine, Cedar, Willow, Cottonwood, Oak

Aquatics: watercress, cattails, bulrush, arrowhead, pond lily

Shrubs: a local berry (currant, blackberry, salmon berry, blue berry, etc), rose,

Weedy/flowering plants: dandelion, dock, sorrel, native grasses, wild onion

Learn at least 10 Common Animals

Learn to identify the tracks of local and common mammals, how to identify local birds both by sight and, eventually, by song, and some common amphibians, reptiles, and/or insects. Ponds, stream sides, muddy paths, (or patches of mud you set up before hand) are all great places to find and identify common animal tracks. Likewise, these are great places to observe, insects, frogs, lizards, snakes, tadpoles, fish, etc. Similarly, birds are one of the most common forms of wildlife we encounter, so learn to identify the most common species in your area. Learn where to find each species, how to identify its tracks, song, and so on, its scientific, common and native names, and something of its life cycle, personality, culture and history. Many species have fascinating and complex culturally-related histories like the following: The European Starling, *Sturnidae*, is an invasive species, now common in almost all parts of North America. It out-competes many native cavity-nesting birds, and was originally introduced to central park in an effort to populate the Americas with all of the birds from Shakespeare’s plays. Local varieties of these common species probably exist in your ecoregion:

Mammals: raccoon, possum, rat, deer, rabbit, coyote

Reptiles/amphibians: a couple common snake species, frogs, toads, salamanders
Birds: robins, starlings, finches, waterfowl, raptors

Complete the “Bioregional Quiz”

The first time you teach an Ecoregionally based literature or writing course, work with your class to research and answer the questions on the attached “Where are you at? Bioregional Quiz.” Many of the questions on the quiz, relate just as well to urban areas as they do to natural, suburban or rural ones. After taking and scoring the tests as a class, try having students volunteer to research and answer individual questions, or assign groups to research answers to difficult questions, so that you develop a growing knowledge of your own ecoregion for future instruction.

Collect Short Pieces for Specific Species or Features

For use in the field, it is very beneficial to have a wide variety of short readings, quotes, excerpts, anecdotes, poems, and passages. I suggest collecting these and organizing them by species or terrain feature or process, or location. That way, when out with a class, whenever you come across a particular feature you want to focus on, you can “improvise” a pre-planned lesson. For example, anytime that a discussion finds its way toward exploring trees, and their relationship to human culture, I have the following pieces to draw from: 1-an excerpt from Aldo Leopold’s *A Sand County Almanac* called “The Good Oak”; 2-two poems by David Waggoner, one called “Stump Speech” the other “Lost”; 3-a poem by Gary Snyder about clear-cutting called “Front Lines” as well as longer excerpts like John Muir’s “A Windstorm in Sierra Forests” and a section from Julia Butterfly Hill’s *The Legacy of Luna*.

You may also want to assign individuals or groups to research, collect and compile a series of passages, poems and excerpts about a particular feature, species or process. In addition to being a useful and interdisciplinary assignment, this is a fantastic way for you to develop regionally specific curriculum for future use.

Few Suggested Activities for Use in the Field:

Using the “Basic Plan” offered on your “Designing Field Curriculum” Guide and the tips above, you can successfully run a number of field study trips merely by relying on the following simple activities:

Mini-lecture or literary reading and discussion: connected to the place, or a specific species, process, feature or issue, this activity is performed much like any class reading, lecture and discussion.

Round robin reading and discussion: For greater participation, have students perform a “round robin reading” of your selected pieces of place-based literature (where each student reads a passage and passes the piece on).

Writing, field journaling, and sharing: Whether given time to free-write, write in response

to course readings, lectures or activities, or in response to a specific prompt or field journaling assignment, give students time to write and reflect, and later to share their writing and talk about it, the process, their choices, and how the experience affected them.

Guided nature hike: Whether you lead a guided nature walk, assign students to research specific things and lead sections, or organize community or campus-based volunteers to lead it this is one of the most effective ways to take advantage of the many special benefits the field-based classroom has to offer. Regardless of your setting—on campus, in a city, park or backcountry wilderness—providing students with the opportunity to explore, and with a knowledgeable guide is one of your best bets for a successful trip.

Teaching students how to use a field guide: After having gained some familiarity yourself, use the information in this guide to teach students how to use field guides to identify local species; I recommend using the species spotlight field journaling assignment as well as finding a few examples of passages where authors have written about some species native to your region.

Plant Identification Quiz or activity: Selecting a few (10 or so) common native plants and gathering, or flagging, specimens in the field is a great way to set up a Native Plant Quiz for students to teach, test, or reinforce their studies in ethnobotany.

Free Time: Don't forget to schedule some free time (with clear communication about rules, staying near the group, etc). Many of our students' most significant and transformative experiences will take place during these moments, when the universe in all its wild wonder becomes instructor, instead of us; since we can design no better curriculum, try to make space for these moments to occur.

Solo Time: You may also want to schedule and assign "Solo Time": time for students to spend alone, in silence—not reading or listening to music or talking to friends—but sitting, walking, writing, and reflecting on their place, their world, and themselves. I often like to schedule solo time right before dinner, then after dinner in the comfort of the dark around the campfire we share our Solo Time stories and reveal honest insights about ourselves.

Service project or activity: Whether it is a significant project you have arranged ahead of time—like banding birds, building trails or planting trees—or your own simple service project—like picking up trash or stenciling storm drains—students often enjoy the opportunity to give back to cherished places, and such projects can profitably be tied into course curriculum with Service-Learning methods. These may also take the form of using student writing to advocate on behalf of a place or species, through letters, letters to the editor, journalism, poetry readings and other methods of public advocacy.

Field Journaling for Nature Writers

By Dr. Corey Lee Lewis

(A supplemental guide to *Reading the Trail: Exploring the Literature and Natural History of the California Crest*. 2005)

The Nature Writer's Field Journal

Since much of a nature writer's work is performed in the field, one of the most effective ways to improve your writing in this genre is to engage in a variety of field-based writing activities. Most nature writers rely fairly heavily on some form of field journaling. While there are many ways to go about keeping a field journal, the prompts below will give you some practice with many of the specific strategies used by contemporary nature writers. While most field journaling is done in natural settings, it can also be done profitably in any environment that you are writing about, such as an urban, industrial, or indoor landscape.

When journaling you are encouraged to write freely, in any form or style, recording fragments, complete sentences, full paragraphs, or poetry; you should also try your hand at sketching or collecting specimens to illustrate your journal. In order to ensure your journal is effective for later use, make sure to label each entry clearly with some basic information, such as the following: the location, date, journal prompt number and title and/or weather.

Depending on your goals, you may want to visit a variety of landscapes, or visit the same place repeatedly. Both will generate very different types of writing and ideas. Either way, spend some time (30 minutes or so) quietly observing and absorbing your place before you begin to write, and don't attempt to write the whole entry in one sitting; write and reflect some, hike or sit and watch the world a bit more, then write some more, and so on.

If you want to see wildlife, or the more active and secretive side of the nonhuman world, follow these basic principles to enhance your chances: Go to ecotones, or edges, where two habitats meet; go at the edge of day, in the morning and evening; go alone; stay downwind from the area you are observing; use natural cover to walk and sit behind; sit still and wait.

1. **Species Spotlight:** pick 1 plant, animal, or topographical feature and sketch it. Then describe it objectively in as much detail as you can; then, respond to it subjectively and emotionally, reflect upon how it makes you feel, etc.

2. **Ant-Eye View:** explore and describe a place from ant-eye-view; use intense, close up scrutiny of a small area and explore what is often unseen.
3. **Research or Textual Connection:** use a specific feature of a place or animal or issue to connect to someone else's ideas - a quote, image, metaphor, poem, theory, or philosophy. Or, use research on a species, terrain feature or issue to beef up your description, ground it in fact, and lend authority to your writing.
4. **Psychological Reflection or Emotional Response:** like Yi Fu Taun's theory of topophilia/topophobia (the love or fear of a place) observe how a place makes you feel, affects your psyche, your body, your emotions, etc. (e.g. compare a shadowed alley in an inner city with a dark canyon in an isolated wilderness area).
5. **Sensory Exploration:** close your eyes and just listen quietly for a while. Then record what you hear and what the sounds are like, what you feel on your skin, what you smell etc. Use all your senses but the visual to write about the place.
6. **Action Adventure:** focus on your own, or other's, exploits in the field (e.g. the tough mountaineering ascent, the brave rescue, the raging rapids, the terrible tourists), or dramatize the exploits of nature (e.g. the elemental storm, the militant ants, the sensual spread of lily leaves). Focus on describing actions.
7. **Segue into Reflection:** describe a place and use a particular feature to segue into an autobiographical reflection or insight, a story about the past, a philosophical rumination, etc. Use the concrete details of the description to set up the reflection.
8. **Ethical Reflection:** observe a place, thing, action, or terrain feature and reflect on what it tells us about "shoulds/coulds" and shouldn'ts/couldn'ts." What does that thing tell us about how we should be in the world? (e.g. a stream = we all live downstream = be mindful of the repercussions of your actions on others)
9. **Community Connections:** describe a particular place, feature of the landscape, process, species, person, volunteer group, or event, and free-write on how it connects to the local community. What might locals want to know about this, what should they know, do, etc.?
10. **Process Reflection:** reflect on the process of field journaling and how it worked (or didn't for you). What did you learn, what challenged you, what did you like, did it improve your writing, how can you improve your journaling in the future?

Recommended Anthologies of Western Environmental Literature

Deborah Clow and Donald Snow. *Northern Lights: A Selection of New Writing from the American West*

This anthology contains many well known environmental writers from Louise Erdrich and Doug Peacock to Leslie Ryan and C.L. Rawlins. Divided into six sections, this diverse collection of nonfiction and poetry explores both the natural and cultural history of the west including such features as its vast spaces and its powerful myths.

Ann Ronald. *Words for the Wild; the Sierra Club Trailside Reader*.

This classic anthology collects many of the great names of American environmental writing both past and present. With its focus on short selections and excerpts this is an excellent choice for backpacking courses, or nature writing courses, where short readings and lots of different models are desired.

John Muir. *West of the Rocky Mountains*.

This anthology was reprinted recently by Running Press, and contains a nice selection of significant historical environmental writings. Edited by the famous naturalist and author, John Muir, and with a clear Western focus, this anthology introduces readers well to the early parts of the American environmental literary tradition.

Recommended Works of Western Environmental Literature

My first Summer in the Sierra. By John Muir

Featured in *Reading the Trail*, John Muir is one of the West's most renowned writers. *My First Summer*, his most widely read book, recounts the tale of Muir's adventures running sheep, and studying botany and geology in the high sierra. Written in a field-journal type structure, this nonfiction text is full of detailed information on native flora and fauna, exhilarating mountaineering tales, and passionate responses to wild nature.

No Nature. By Gary Snyder

Featured in *Reading the Trail*, this is probably one of the finest and most comprehensive collections of Snyder's poetry, including many pieces from his Pulitzer Prize winning *Turtle*

Island as well as newer poems. No one explores ecology, Native nations, sustainability, and mythology better than the iconic beat poet of the San Juan Ridge.

The Practice of the Wild. By Gary Snyder

Featured in *Reading the Trail*, this fabulous collection of essays, environmental poet and philosopher Gary Snyder, lays out in prose much of the theory underlying his poetic and personal practice for over the last 50 years. With topics ranging from mythopoetics to reinhabitation and sustainability, and with Snyder's always insightful vision and engaging prose, this is a powerful book for an course.

Traveling Light: Collected and New Poemst. By David Wagonner

Northwest poet, David Wagonner, writes about the natural world and our experiences in it with lyrical language, engaging narratives and a wealth of scientifically informed ecological information. One of my favorite poets for engaging students in nature studies and field journaling.

Ecotopia. By Ernest Callenbach

This utopian novel is set in the very near future, after California, Oregon and Washington have seceded from the U.S. to form their own nation based on the principles of a sustainable state economy. Ecotopia is filled with well-developed characters, an engaging plot-line, and a wonderful array of environmental and social issues for discussion. In many aspects a blend of nonfiction and fiction, this novel is one of the best works written to date for helping Americans to imagine a different culture.

The Klamath Knot. By David Raines Wallace

This is an excellent demonstration of deep, locally-based nature writing. Wallace explores the natural and cultural history, the myths, folklore and feelings, as well as his own experiences in the geologically and biologically diverse "Klamath Knot" of the Pacific Cascades.

The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist Fight in Heaven. By Sherman Alexie

Alexie's 22 short stories are all set around the Spokane Reservation in Washington state, with characters flowing from one tale to the next. With sardonic humor, riotous plotlines and unforgettable character's Alexie's stories are sure to engage any reader in the fierce realities of reservation life. This is a wonderful text for engaging students with contemporary native lifeways, experiences and issues.

Owning it All. By William Kittredge

This wonderful memoir about growing up on his family's ranch in the Great Basin captures many aspects of the west indelibly, from the dry and open stretches of the intermountain west, to the region's unique cultural history of farming and ranching, to the problematic values and perceptions that rule the west. Kittredge reflects powerfully on our desire to own and control the land and all that lives on it and demonstrates how this theme continues to reoccur on many levels of western culture.

Mourning Dove: A Salishan Autobiography. Edited by Jay Miller

Born into the Colville Confederated Tribes around 1886, Mourning Dove became an ethnographer, teacher, novelist and Native American activist, constantly defending her people and their lifeways from imperial white culture. Here Miller completes her unfinished autobiography and gives readers a rare and insightful look into the experiences and issues of First Nations Peoples.

The Legacy of Luna. By Julia Butterfly Hill

This well-written book tells the story of how Hill “accidentally” joined an EarthFirst! tree sit in Northern California and ended up climbing down two years later—the longest single tree sit recorded at that time—after having successfully saved the tree, a small surrounding area, and launched an international direct action movement to protect old growth forests. This inspiring tale will explain for many Americans how and why young people get involved in direct action, and that we all owe them a massive debt of gratitude.

The Meadow. By James Galvin

This is the story of a meadow that sits high up in the Medicine Bow Mountains on the Wyoming-Colorado border, and the lives of those that have lived there over the last 100 years. An extremely lyrical and beautiful book, the evocative descriptions of place and powerful stories of those that struggled and enjoyed life there, will engage any reader.

The Book of Yaak. By Rick Bass

One of the best examples of environmental advocacy writing, that is also of a high literary quality, to date. This fabulous book describes the natural and cultural values of the Yaak valley, Montana’s last unroaded and unprotected wilderness, and its current imperiled status while pleading and arguing convincingly for its protection. For both its wonderful nature writing, persuasive arguments on behalf of activism, and political importance, this is a must read book.

The Grizzly Years. By Doug Peacock

The Grizzly Years, chronicles Peacock’s real life re-entry into American society after having been a tunnel rat and P.O.W. in Viet Nam. Unable to assimilate upon his return, Peacock spends his seasons in Yellowstone living with and studying the great Grizzly. Over the years, Peacock is healed by his growing relationship with the bears, and readers witness both this eco-therapy and the evolution of a non-academically trained bear expert.

The Solace of Open Spaces. By Gretel Ehrlich

An extremely lyrical and poetic writer, Ehrlich captures the rugged beauty and open character of both the people and places that populate the high plains country of Wyoming in vivid and powerful detail. She brings out both the beauty and the harsh realities that lie in both, the frontiers of places and people, and shows how our lives are continually shaped by the natural forces that surround us.

Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs. By Wallace Stegner

At 80 years old, the West's Pulitzer prize winning novelist, reviews his life in the West, the authors who have written about it, and the way that the landscape has affected them all. Arguing that the American west is now coming into its own as a literary entity and tracing much of its literary tradition, this is an excellent cultural, rather than natural, history of the west.

The Island Within. By Richard Nelson

Anthropologist, Richard Nelson, carefully details his self-sufficient existence, living with his family on an island near the Pacific Northwest. Nelson clearly describes the close relationship—the kinship—that evolves between traditional hunters and their prey, and with dense and detailed prose powerfully explains the correspondences between our inner and outer worlds. This is also a fabulous book for understanding traditional hunting and its ethics, and engaging directly with the morality involved with our place on the food chain.

Snow Falling on Cedars. By David Guterson

This award winning novel captures both people and places in vivid portraits that you can almost hear, smell and see on the page. Set in Puget Sound after WWII, the story is about a murder trial and the small fishing community in which it takes place, but Guterson's detailed evocations of place, memorable characters and touching scenes make the novel much more than its plot.

Beyond the Aspen Grove. By Ann Zwinger

In beautiful and descriptive prose, Zwinger takes readers to the Colorado Rockies to explore, study and enjoy the wild spaces and natural species found there. She provides excellent examples of nature writing and a wealth of natural history information about the area, which is as accurate and detailed as science but as beautiful and emotionally powerful as art.

This House of Sky. Ivan Doig

This is an endearing memoir of growing up in Montana during a time in history when life was slower, the landscaper wider, and neighbors more supportive. Doig describes their tightly knit family devoted to each other and surviving on the rugged terrain, until after his mother's death, times get tougher and only he and his Dad are left together. Both personally touching and powerfully evocative of place, *This House of Sky* captures the rural Montana life well.

The Way to Rainy Mountain. By N. Scott Momaday

Pulitzer Prize winner, Momaday tells the story of the Kiowa's journey from their ancient beginnings in Montana to their final war and surrender to the United States Cavalry at Ft. Sill Oklahoma. Momaday records in eloquent detail the ancient and recent history of his people, as well as their more recent history and his own travels re-tracing the ancient journey of his people. Part history, part mythology, and part personal memoir, this book explains the experience of many First Nation's people well for non-Native audiences.

Eco-regional Field Studies Curriculum

Selecting and Using Field Guides

By Dr. Corey Lee Lewis

(For detailed advice and instruction on designing interdisciplinary, field-based curriculum see *Reading the Trail: Exploring the Literature and Natural History of the California Crest*. University of Nevada Press; Reno, 2005.)

General Advice on Using Field Guides

In order to teach students how to identify and study local species, I recommend teaching a class on how to use your field guide books to identify and key out a species, and then assigning the “Species Spotlight” field journaling assignment, and having students use the field guides to identify and write about a local species in their journals. Here are some basic tips on how to use a field guide to identify and research a particular species:

1. **Observation:** most beginners will start by skimming the illustrations to look for similarities. That is one way to begin. In order to be more effective, teach students to recognize a few basic differences in how leaves are attached (alternating, compounded etc.), to note differences in flower shapes, petal numbers, whether stems are square or round, hairy or smooth, and so on. Having the students sketch and describe their plant first, will ensure that they have made such detailed observations.
2. **Family resemblance:** teach the students to recognize family similarities (between conifers and deciduous trees, or asters and lilies, for example) and to look for the specific or general family to which their plant belongs (pine or fir, grass or sedge, etc). Show them how to look in the field guide under a specific family in order to find their particular species.
3. **Habitat and range:** teach the students to recognize basic differences in habitats (riparian, dry forest, grassland, disturbed field and so on) so that they can determine their species based on where it is growing. Also teach them to look at the species’ range to make sure that it really does live in their part of the country.
4. **More than visual:** remind students to use more than their visual sense, to search for distinguishing characteristics of their species that can be smelled, tasted, or felt, rather than seen. Many species can be distinguished by the feel of their cones, needles or bark, or by a notable smell or taste, when they look almost exactly like other species; much of the dangerous parsley family or *umbelliferae* group is like this.

General Advice on Choosing Field Guides

I recommend getting both some beginners field guides or general overview field guides to your region—books that are easy to use and cover a wide range of species or habitats. Then, I also suggest you get a few regionally specific field guides to cover forms of life that you will

most often explore, like trees, birds or wildflowers, for example. Personally, because of my interest in, and experience with, wilderness survival, I also strongly encourage the study, practice, and use of local ethnobotanical field guides.

Regardless of which field guides you choose, I generally bring a number of them on each outing (make sure to put your name and contact information in each one, and I label each with a number and keep a list of how many books and which titles I take on each trip to ensure that I get them all back).

Suggested Field Guides: General

There are several types of field guides that you can use, depending on your purposes.

1. **Beginners guides:** These tend to be general and to focus on a single type of plant or animal (such as trees, birds, or flowers for example), and to range over a very large area (like North America for example). These are good books to start with, to use as introductions, and for students, but eventually you may need more detailed guides. For example, the Peterson “First Guide” Series works well with specific “First Guides” to “Birds” “Trees” and so on; also, the general Peterson’s guides to “Trees and Shrubs” or “Birds” of “North America” work well. One of my favorite general field guides for nature writers is:

A Field Guide to the Familiar by Gale Lawrence

I strongly recommend this book for all nature writers as it was designed both to encourage beginning naturalists and to challenge more experienced observers to look at the familiar in new ways, offering an introduction to common plants, animals, and natural phenomena. Beautiful drawings add to the book's refreshing approach to nature study. Organized by the seasons of the year, each chapter focuses on one subject and one learning objective. From fall's first frost to the field crickets of high summer, this innovative guide explores in depth such familiar sights as bumblebees, rainbows, acorns, blueberries, and shooting stars, and can be applied to almost any region.

2. **Regionally Specific Guides:** These really are more useful for most purposes, as they will provide greater detail on a smaller selection of species that you are more likely to find than in more geographically general field guides. There are two basic types of regionally specific field guides that you may find useful.

First – General Overviews of the region: Each region will have field guides that are specific to that region, but which are overviews of common native plants, birds, insects, fish, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and local geology and so on. (*Sierra Nevada Natural History* or *Plants and Animals of the Pacific Northwest* are good regional examples)

Second – Focused field guides for the region: Each region will also have a variety of field guides that focus on a particular form of life, such as trees, flowers, birds, or reptiles of that specific region. (*Peterson’s Guide to Birds of Eastern and Central North America* or Laird Blackwell’s *Wildflowers of the Tahoe Basin* are good examples)

Eventually, in addition to beginner’s guides, you will probably find that more regionally focused guides like the types listed above will be necessary for your classes. (For suggestions of regionally specific field guides see below). I also recommend searching for local botanical websites and databases that can be used to identify local species. Many

cooperative extension programs and state agricultural programs maintain searchable databases on native plants of their region or state.

3. **Ethnobotanical Guides:** While the guides above focus primarily on the identification and natural history of native species, you may want some field guides that detail the *cultural uses and history* – or ethnobotany – of local species. Again, you will often find these tend to be split into field guides that cover large areas, like most of north America, and field guides that are more regionally focused. One of my favorites for nature writers, because of its geographic generality and unique approach is:

Tom Brown's Field Guide to Edible and Medicinal Plants by Tom Brown

This ethnobotanical field guide covers many common native and naturalized species found in North America. In addition to good drawings, great descriptions, and detailed information on plant preparation and use, Tom Brown also includes a discussion of each plant's personality, character and significance (an excellent and holistic addition that will be useful to any nature writer).

4. **Place-Based Guidebooks and Resources:** Depending on your area, you may also find a number of place-based "Guidebooks" that contain both, ideas for excursions and a variety of local, place-based information on both natural and cultural history. I suggest doing both internet, and University and public library searches, looking for guidebooks, brochures, walking tours and the like. You should also check with your local chamber of commerce or tourism bureau for similar resources, and you may find some useful information and literary trips at LiteraryTraveler.com or something look up article at office. If you are planning an excursion to a county, state or regional park, check with the managers to see if there are any guide brochures, books or pamphlets; often such places will have a very short and specific guidebook or pamphlet prepared on the species of that place itself. Two other useful resources are: *Literary Trips: Following in the Footsteps of Fame (Volumes one and Two)* by Victoria Brooks; and, if film is of particular interest to you: *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*. By Scott MacDonald

Recommended Field Guides by Region

North-East

A Field Guide to Coastal Wetland Plants of the Northeastern United States. By Ralph W. Tiner.

Wildflowers in the Field and Forest: A Field Guide to the Northeastern United States. By Steven Clemants and Carol Gracie

Eastern/Central Medicinal Plants. By S. Foster and J.A. Duke

People and Plants in Ancient Eastern North America. By P.E. Minnis.

South-East

J. T. Garrett. *The Cherokee Herbal: Native Plant Medicine from the Four Directions*

A Field Guide to Coastal Wetland Plants of the Southeastern United States. By Ralph W. Tiner.

Eastern/Central Medicinal Plants. By S. Foster and J.A. Duke

People and Plants in Ancient Eastern North America. By P.E. Minnis.

Middle-America

Konza Prairie: A Tallgrass Natural History. By O. J. Reichman

Edible wild plants of the prairie: An Ethnobotanical Guide. By Kelly Kindscher

Roadside Wildflowers of the Southern Great Plains. By Craig C. Freeman and Eileen K.

Schofield

South-West

Trees and Shrubs of the Southwestern Desert. By L. Benson and R. Darrow

Shrubs and Trees of the Southwest Uplands. By F.H. Elmore

100 Desert Wildflowers. By J.E. Bowers.

The Tumbleweed Gourmet: Cooking with Wild Southwestern Plants. By C.J. Niethammer.

Canyon Country Prehistoric Indians. By F.A. Barnes and M. Pendleton

The West

Edible and Medicinal Plants of the West By Gregory Tilford

Edible Native Plants of the Rocky Mountains. By H.D. Harrington

Wild Plants of the Sierra Nevada. By Ray S. Vizgirdas and Edna M. Rey-Vizgirdas

Urban Areas

The Urban Tree book: An uncommon field guide for city and town

By Arthur Plotnik

Tom Brown's Field Guide to City and Suburban Survival by Tom Brown

A Field Guide to Sprawl by Dolores Hayden

Infrastructure: A Field Guide to the Industrial Landscape. By Brian Hayes.

Recommended Southwestern Field Study Options

A few ideas are described below for locations or activities in your region that may both be local enough to travel to, and regionally significant enough to be represented in the literature. As I demonstrate in *Reading the Trail*, find a field site that corresponds in some way with the literature you are reading, and/or the types of writing you are doing, and then, engage in a variety of *Place-Based*, *Regional*, and *Practice-Oriented* field studies. The general ideas listed below should all work well for designing activities that correspond well with each of these three methods of field studies, as well as the Recommended works of environmental literature listed above.

Field Journaling

Students can explore their local eco-region through field journaling activities on campus, around town, and in local natural areas and parks. Students can be led on field journaling trips or assigned to visit particular places, or locales of their own choice individually, to complete the field journaling on their own.

University and Local Resources

Some of the best resources for finding local places to take your students exist on your campus itself. Drop by your Biology, Botany, Geography, Geology, Anthropology, Outdoor Recreation and other departments and ask around to see if they have taken their students on field trips in the past, and where they have gone. Contact student hiking, camping, natural resource, and environmentalist clubs to find out where they go on outings, and where they go individually in the nearby area. Contact your local Sierra Club and Audubon Society, not only to find nearby places to visit, but also to find speakers and field trip leaders; ask for their Trip Leaders and develop a good working relationship. Contact other local environmental groups to arrange for speakers, to discover what the local issues of importance are, and to discover new field sites to visit and events in which to participate.

Logging, Mining, Ranching and Recreation and their impacts

Since much of the West is Public Land – owned by us, managed by the federal government, according to our will (theoretically) – and much of the economy has relied upon extracting income from these lands, whether through logging, mining, ranching or more recently ecotourism and recreation, a trip to your public lands that have visible logging impacts, have been grazed and un-grazed, or to a local museum or mine-rehabilitation site, or to almost any local public recreation area with knowledgeable staff should enable you to engage these issues. I recommend inviting speakers from local environmental nonprofit organizations and other groups with a stake in the management of public lands.

Wetlands, Streams, Rivers, Fishing, Dams

Since streams and wetlands are often easy to locate near campus and urban areas, are rich in wildlife, and show us how we are connected to the regional landscape, schedule a trip to a small local stream or to a larger wetland or river park or recreation area. In the West especially the effect of dams on wild rivers, salmon populations and native tribes has been devastating, as has the loss of natural wetland habitat.

Mountains, Forests, or Ocean Trip

Three of the great allures of the American West have historically been its lofty peaks, vast forests, and the wide rolling Pacific. While taking a trip to one of these inspiring areas can surely engage students with a wide variety of environmental issues, from Wilderness preservation and logging to Ocean over-fishing and pollution, these are also wonderful areas to plan engaging activities-peak, transformative experiences. Schedule a hike, and some field journaling, readings, and free time in one of these areas and let the power of the landscape do the rest.

Tribal Elder Visit and/or Reservation/Pueblo Trip

Contact your local First Nations Peoples and inquire about public events and pow wows, about the availability of speakers to visit your classes, or the opportunity to visit a local reservation, pueblo, tribal office, or school.

Community Gardens and Food Banks

Visit, and/or participate in, your local community or campus gardens. If you don't have a community garden, check with University Cooperative Extension to find a master gardner, or local gardner, who would be willing to share his/her garden and expertise with your students. Participate in your local food banks, homeless shelters and soup kitchens as well, and learn about ever-present, but often hidden, part of the urban environment, that place many visit and some live in their whole lives: poverty.

Exploring the Waste Stream

Examining the waste stream in such informal ways as having students track their own or the university's waste stream, or visiting your local garbage dump, transfer station, recycling center, are all excellent ways to begin exploring how our lives are interconnected with the ecosystems surrounding us.

Recommended Anthologies of General Environmental Literature

By Dr. Corey Lee Lewis

(For detailed advice and instruction on designing interdisciplinary, field-based curriculum see
Reading the Trail: Exploring the Literature and Natural History of the California Crest.
University of Nevada Press; Reno, 2005.)

Slovic, Scott and Lorraine Anderson and John P. O'Grady eds. *Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture.*

This classic anthology contains some of America's best pieces of environmental literature, complete with short biographies on each author. While the focus is primarily on contemporary authors some early American literature is also included.

Stephen Trimble. *Words From the Land: Encounters with Natural History Writing.*

This collection is packed full of well-known contemporary nature writers from a wide variety of regions, including such favorites as Annie Dillard, Terry Tempest Williams and Gretel Ehrlich, as well as Edward Abbey, David Quammen, and Wendell Berry. As the title suggests, this collection tends toward the more scientific side of the nature writing genre, what many call "natural history" writing.

Finch, Robert and John Elder eds. *The Norton Book of Nature Writing along with A field Guide to the Norton Book of Nature Writing* by Lilace Mellin Guignard.

A comprehensive anthology of canonical works of environmental literature from early American discovery narratives to contemporary authors, with useful biographies and historical information included on each author.

Anderson, Lorraine ed. *Sisters of the Earth: Women's Prose and Poetry About Nature*

A great collection of women's environmental writing which donates a portion of its proceeds to the Green Belt Movement to pay women in Kenya to plant trees.

Deming, Allison and Savoy ed. *The Colors of Nature.*

An excellent anthology focusing on multi-cultural environmental perspectives and environmental justice, which includes contributions from nature writers of African, Hawaiian, Japanese, Middle Eastern, and Caribbean descent.

Bergon, Frank, ed. *The Wilderness Reader.*

This classic anthology focuses on "Wilderness" oriented nature writing, but has a very nice historical and geographical breadth to it, including classic pieces from many well known authors, ranging from William Bartram, Merriwether Lewis, and John C. Fremont, to Henry David Thoreau, Rachel Carson, Mary Austin and John Muir.

Lindholt, Paul and Derrick Knowles eds. *Holding Common Ground: The Individual and Public Lands in the American West.*

Although primarily focused on the “west” this anthology is spectacular for any region in its powerful emphasis on the stories of activists and their individual and collective struggles to defend our public lands and the human and nonhuman beings who call them home. From stirring stories of Native Americans defending the Yellowstone Buffalo herd from slaughter, to tales of teenagers defending suburban wildlands, these pieces recount the many ways in which ordinary citizens have taken charge of defending their public lands.

Steven Best and Anthony Nocella II eds. *Terrorists or Freedom Fighters? Reflections on the Liberation of Animals.*

This extremely intelligent collection examines the animal liberation movement from a wide variety of perspectives, from visiting Auschwitz and reflecting on animal rights and the holocaust, to stories of, and designs for, direct action, as well as feminist, legalistic, and philosophical perspectives on the animal rights movement and its impact on our culture. This hard hitting collection discusses both tactics and philosophy, and engages scholarly arguments as well as personal stories.

Cronyn, George W., ed. *American Indian Poetry.*

An anthology of songs and chants, first published in 1918, *American Indian Poetry* is a pioneer work of remarkable authenticity. Filled with pieces collected from Native Americans in their own languages and translated by leading scholars and poets of the day, it was the first book to give their oral verse its place as an essential, vibrant part of North American literature.

Lyon, Thomas J. *This Incomparable Land: a book of American Nature.*

Although not an anthology proper, this does provide a very good overview of nature writing, its tradition, genres and classic examples. First published in 1988 as an anthology with Lyon's commentary, this new edition (thoroughly updated but without the anthology) includes a history of the genre, a taxonomy of its forms, a chronology, and an annotated bibliography—a "who's who" and "what you should read"—of the best American nature writing.