

## John Muir's Game

*"My method of study was to drift from rock to rock and grove to grove. I'd sit for hours watching the birds or squirrels, or looking into the faces of flowers. When I discovered a new plant, I sat beside it for a minute or a day, to make its acquaintance and try to hear what it had to tell me."* John Muir

Most people *look* but they don't *see*. This exercise helps you discover and remember the physical characteristics and special quality or "essence" of an animal.

Choose an animal that is easy to observe, like a bird, frog, or insect. To see your animal up-close, use binoculars and/or a magnifying glass if you have them. If you can't find an animal to observe, choose a tree, flower, or even a rock or river.

As you study your special animal (or plant, etc.), look for characteristics you've never noticed before. It could be the color of its eyes, how it moves, or the texture or pattern of its leaves or feathers.

A) List seven things you've discovered about your animal.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

B) Choose a word that describes how your animal moves (or stands if it is a plant).

---

C) Write a word or phrase that expresses the unique spirit of your animal:

---

D) Can you think of a nickname for your animal?

---

E) Create a simple poem or story about your animal. Tell what you admire about it. Before you start, read John Muir's account of Western Junipers. Muir saw everything as alive and with its own special beauty.

### Western Juniper by John Muir

*The Sierra Juniper is one of the hardiest of all mountaineers. Growing mostly on ridges and rocks, these brave highlanders live for over twenty centuries on sunshine and snow. Thick and sturdy, the wind has as much influence over them, as it does over a glacier boulder. A truly wonderful fellow, he seems to last about as long as the granite he stands on. Surely he is the most enduring of all tree mountaineers—never seeming to die a natural death. If protected from accidents, it would perhaps be immortal. I wish I could live like these junipers, on sunshine and snow, and stand beside them for a thousand years. How much I should see, and how delightful it would be!*

Muir Quotations from *John Muir: My Life with Nature* © 2000 by Joseph Cornell

Sharing Nature Foundation

[www.sharingnature.com](http://www.sharingnature.com)

© 2009 Joseph Cornell

All Rights Reserved