

## **General Instructions for Using this Ebook**

This ebook outlines ten nature study challenges for you to use along with the *Handbook of Nature Study* by Anna Botsford Comstock. Please feel free to complete the challenges in any order that makes sense for your family.

In the perfect world you would have every subject right in front of you to personally observe. We know this is not possible for any of us so we will do the next best thing by preparing ourselves. We can do the preparation work now, use whatever resources we have at our disposal, and then hope in the future we will have opportunities for close-up observations of subjects like horses and geese.



### **Nature Study using the *Handbook of Nature Study***

The ten challenges included in this ebook are written in the format of the Outdoor Hour Challenges that I write for my [blog](#). Gathering them all together into an easy to use ebook will make it even simpler and more convenient to include nature study each week following a suggested topic.

Each challenge has three parts: inside preparation work, outdoor time, and then a follow-up activity. You can complete all or part of each challenge as you go along. Each challenge is written so you can adapt it to your own backyard or local area. Use the ideas as a way to get started with simple weekly nature study using the *Handbook of Nature Study*. Children of all ages can participate in the challenges and the challenges can be done more than once, making the Outdoor Hour Challenges ideal for families with more than one child.

Please remember that you will be successful in each challenge if you spend outdoor time with your children, observing your own backyard and neighborhood. This series of challenges includes subjects that you may not have in your local area. I sincerely wish that you would complete each challenge's preparation work to equip you for future nature study. Also, make sure to check each challenge for suggested alternative ways to customize the challenge. Another goal of this ebook is to help your family learn to compare as you do your observations during your nature study time.

A special feature in this series of challenges is the Venn Diagram activity. This activity is meant to enhance your child's powers of comparison and I have included specific instructions on a separate page and there is a blank Venn Diagram to print out as many times as you need to for this series of challenges.

# Autumn Series #1

## Nature Journal-How To Get Started

“A field notebook may be made a joy to the pupil and a help to the teacher.”  
*Handbook of Nature Study*, page 13



### Inside Preparation Work:

1. Read in the *Handbook of Nature Study* pages 13-15 (The Field Notebook). In this section Anna Botsford Comstock helps us with a detailed description of her idea of a field notebook or nature journal. She also states that if done properly “they represent what cannot be bought or sold, personal experience in the happy world of out-of-doors”. Make note of any suggestions you want to implement with your children.
2. Read page 17 in the *Handbook of Nature Study* (The Correlation of Nature Study and Drawing). Highlight the points that will help you with your nature journals. “Too much have we emphasized drawing as an art; it may be an art, if the one who draws is an artist; but if he is not an artist, he still has a right to draw if it pleases him to do so.”
3. Decide what kind of nature journal or nature notebook you will be keeping for this series of challenges. Some families prefer a blank journal to record sketches, words, and images. With this series of challenges there are notebook pages provided for each challenge and these can be inserted into a three ring binder. Some families combine blank pages with notebook pages to give variety to their nature journals and keep it in three ring binder as well. If you would like more ideas about nature journals, examples of pages, and links to more resources, you can visit my Squidoo Lens Webpage for more information: [Nature Journals- Tips for Simple Journals](#).

### Outdoor Hour Time:

For this challenge you are going to spend 15 minutes outdoors with your children in your own yard. Take a walk around your yard or down your own street. Enjoy being outdoors. Look up at the sky, look under rocks, listen carefully for sounds, touch some leaves, sit in the grass, stand under a tree, smell a flower, collect some acorns, and just see what happens. Remember you are building your child’s powers of observation and trying to stir up some interest. Keep your words and attitude positive. If you have younger children you may need start off with just 5 minutes of outdoor time for nature study but you can gradually build up to 15 minutes or more.

“She should say frankly, ‘I do not know; let us see if we cannot together find out this mysterious thing.’ She thus conveys the right impression, that only a little about the intricate life of plants and animals is yet known; and at the same time she makes her pupils feel the thrill and zest of investigation. Nor will she lose their respect if she does it in the right spirit.”

*Handbook of Nature Study*, page 4

### Follow-Up Activity:

After you come inside, take a few minutes to follow up on any interest your child has from his observations outdoors. Listen and take note of any future nature study subjects you can cultivate from their comments. Offer to help them sketch something they observed into their nature journal and help them find a few words to describe their outdoor time. Start small and as time passes your child will have more and more to record in their journals. You can use the general notebook page provided in this ebook or your own blank nature journal to record your outdoor time.

If you would like, pull out your *Handbook of Nature Study* and see if the item your child is interested in is listed in the index. If it is, look up the information for yourself and then relate interesting facts to the children sometime during the next week. You can also look up information at the public library and share some books on their topic of interest. Remember it is okay to say that you don’t know the answer to a question they have but you can model how to find the answer as you gain confidence in your own nature study knowledge.

Subject:

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Date:

Location: