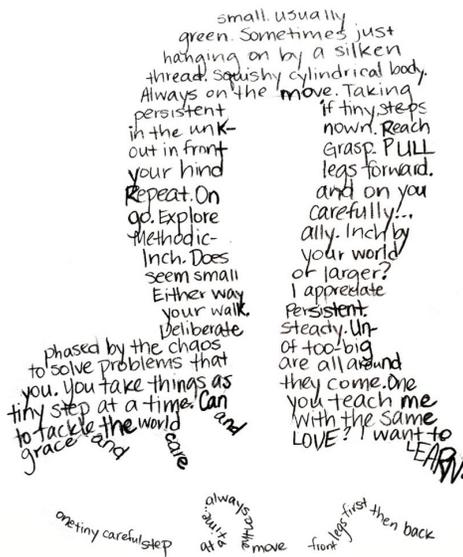


Sitting quietly in nature and observing the life and patterns going on around you can be a relaxing experience. Recording your feelings, thoughts and observations in a Nature Journal will help you reflect on the experience and can set the stage for future observations and reflections.

Vulture Observations and Concrete Poem

Head outside in search of soaring or gliding birds (*ideally vultures if you can find them, but even pigeons can work!*). Once you find birds flying without flapping their wings a lot, spend some time observing them and taking notes. Then turn your observations into a concrete poem!



Did you know?

We have two species of vulture in North Carolina: turkey vultures and black vultures. In flight, turkey vultures usually hold their wings in a slight “V” shape, and they often teeter or wobble while soaring. Turkey vultures have red heads as adults (*and grey heads as juveniles*) and silvery-white feathers on the underside of the trailing edge of their wing. They use their excellent sense of smell to search for carrion. In contrast, black vultures have black heads throughout their lives, “windows” of lighter colored feathers at their wingtips, and short tails. They fly with a few deep, rapid wing beats and then snap their wings out wide like a baseball umpire signaling “safe.” Black vultures do not have a well-developed sense of smell. They often follow turkey vultures to their food, stealing a meal — sneaky!



Materials:

Journal or paper
Pencil and pen

Having fun?

Tag [@naturalsciences](https://www.instagram.com/naturalsciences) on social media, so we can see you and your loved ones enjoying your nature neighborhood.

Instructions:

1. Gather your journal and a pencil and go outside to look for vultures (*if possible*) or other soaring/gliding birds like hawks, or pigeons if you're in an urban area. To find a kettle of soaring birds, consider your timing and location. Thermals tend to form in late morning or afternoon. Try searching for soaring or gliding birds near an open field or large parking lot; a hill, cliff, or mountain; or a body of water.
2. When you find soaring/gliding birds, spend at least 20 minutes watching. Make sketches and take notes describing what you notice about the birds and their behavior. What do you wonder? How do you feel as you watch these birds?
3. Next, turn your bird observations into a concrete poem. Concrete poems are also called “shape poems” because the visual appearance of the words is related to the topic of the poem and helps illustrate the poem’s subject. Your poem doesn’t have to rhyme or use complete sentences. Try one of the following techniques to make your concrete poem:
 - a. Use a pencil to draw an outline of a shape related to your poem. Within your outline, write your poem, filling in the shape with your words. When you feel satisfied with your poem, trace your words with pen, and then erase your pencil outline.
 - b. Use a pencil to write your words in lines as you would to make a drawing. Use your words to illustrate something related to the subject of your poem.
4. Share your new concrete poem with a friend!