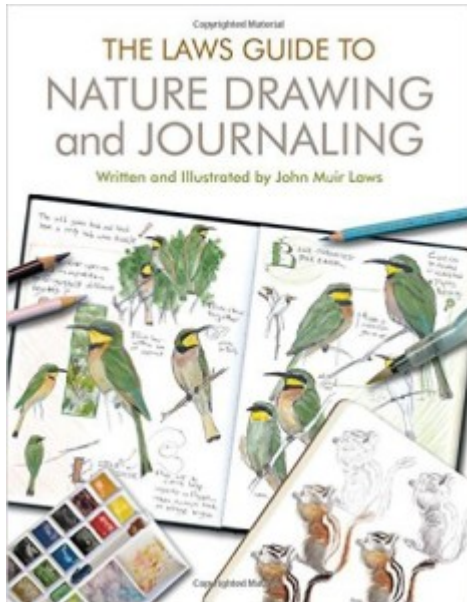


# Book review: Learning to see with latest 'Laws Guide'

By Kim Wyatt



## **"The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling"**

**By John Muir Laws**

**Heyday Books, 312 pages, \$35**

**One-line review:** An excellent art instruction book that could also improve one's life.

Many of us in the Sierra are familiar with the illustrations of John Muir Laws, the naturalist, educator and artist behind the "The Laws Field Guide to the Sierra Nevada." In his latest book, "The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling," just out from Heyday Books, rather than simply teach technique, Laws shows us how to see.

For anyone who has ever looked at an illustrated Laws Guide and thought, I wish I could do that, Laws gives you the tools and the inspiration. "The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling," is essentially a master class in capturing the

Sierra Nevada in pencil, pen and ink, gouache, watercolor, and more. Although the book is ostensibly a guide to drawing, we learn how to deepen our observational skills, the practice (and benefits) of intentional curiosity, and the value of cultivating creativity—all of which expand our understanding of the natural world and our place in it.

The book is broken into useful sections: How to think about what we are seeing, how to capture it in a journal, what to keep in our journaling kit and how to draw our favorite subjects: animals, wildflowers, trees, and landscapes. At 312 pages, it's not the kind of book you'll carry in your backpack, but it is good for car camping, road trips and as an indispensable home reference. (You can always photocopy pages and stick them in your journaling kit.)

Hundreds of colorful illustrations with step-by-step instructions make this book a keeper. From beetles to bears, it's all here. On a recent trip, I took the book and learned a few things new to me: When drawing waterfalls, you draw the rocks around the waterfall, not the water. Conifer branches reach out like a hand near the bottom of the tree—how had I not noticed this before? Now, when I'm in my backyard, I not only greet the lizard, but also note its proportions and where the light falls, which deepens our relationship. The habit of careful attention Laws encourages heightens our appreciation of the environment, which will make us better stewards.

"The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling," would be a great graduation gift for a budding artist or naturalist. Those new to drawing and journaling will find it an amazing resource, while veteran creators will appreciate the depth and specificity of Laws' tips and hacks. All, however, will find inspiration—this book will elevate the wonder that lies in us all, and give us a new way to look at our beloved Sierra.

"The Laws Guide to Nature Drawing and Journaling" also has a great companion website, with a blog featuring video

tutorials, and instructor guides. You may find it **here**.

*Kim Wyatt is the owner of the independent press **Bona Fide Books** in Meyers.*