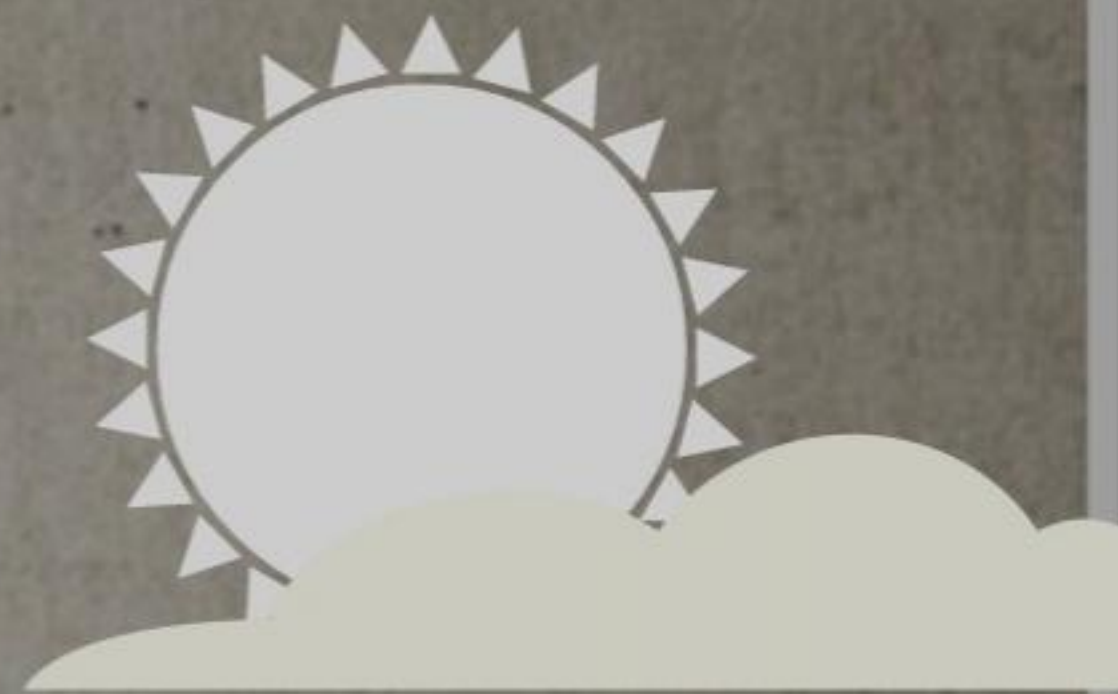


The Wild Observer

How To Make Razor Sharp Observations And Tune Into The Rhythm Of Nature

By Brian Mertins



Hear
Tune in
Touch
See **Watch** **Observe**
Notice **Track** **Understand** **Predict**
Smell **Look**
Listen **Feel**



Greetings and welcome,

This ebook is all about cultivating exceptional observation skills in the natural world. I'm going to share with you some of the insights I've had over the years about how to observe and track patterns in nature.

Everyone who understands nature on a deep level has one thing in common... the ability to make good observations. Observation skills are at the core of every field of nature study.

Anyone who doesn't have good observation skills won't become skilled as a naturalist, tracker, herbalist, etc. If you do however, take the time to develop your observation skills then amazing things will happen.

You'll be able to understand how everything fits together out in nature just by using your mind & sensory systems.

My Observation Story

I wasn't always good at making observations. In fact, before I got into studying this material I wasn't even thinking about the fact that I could be intentional about developing observation skills.

Then in my late teens I came across a series of books written by a tracker named Tom Brown Jr. I read about his experiences as a child learning from an apache scout who taught him how to blend with nature & cultivate deep awareness.

I got so inspired by Tom's Books that I immediately wanted to cultivate my own awareness skills and develop my own relationship to nature.

At first however, it seemed impossible to understand nature at such a deep level...

It took me a lot of time & practice, but I eventually figured out how to read the subtle signs of nature. I became very skilled at locating animals (especially bobcats, housecats & owls) by listening to bird alarms. And I gained real strategies for how to use my awareness in order to get closer to wildlife.

Some of the awareness "tricks" that I learned had to do with certain information I was missing. Some of it had to do with specific ways of using my senses, or strategies for paying attention. A lot of it had to do with how to ask the right questions.

I'm going to share aspects from all of these strategies in this ebook. Some of it you'll get immediately, and some might take a bit of practice. This guide will set you on the right track and hopefully accelerate your whole process.

It's going to be unique, fun & entertaining. Enjoy!

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Introduction

Let's Talk About Patterns...

Every person who ever took their knowledge & awareness to really profound levels had in common the exquisite ability to observe and track abstract yet sensory-based patterns.

These are the patterns that enable us to make real predictions about what's happening out in nature.

- People who can predict the return of a particular bird during spring migration to the exact day of it's arrival
- The old sailor who knows long before anyone else that a storm is rolling in
- The hunter who knows how to circle around a deer upon being detected by listening to the sounds of the squirrels and the jays

The ability to track these sorts of patterns represents a kind of awareness that has been honored and cherished all throughout human history.

The Evolutionary Purpose Of Awareness

All through time it's the people who have had the ability to notice, predict and make informed decisions that have led their people to success.

I strongly believe in the continuing importance of this human awareness as evidenced by the detrimental effects being observed in children who grow up with a lack of connection to nature.

There are many toxic effects being linked to people who spend most of their life in indoor environments where there is less engagement with the many intricate patterns & rhythms of nature.

Even though we may not seem to be as dependant anymore on nature in our modern lives, a profound connection to and ability to understand the inner workings of such a complex organic system is still one of the best way to develop our human intelligence, emotional intelligence and even leadership skills.

Every moment out in nature is an opportunity to know and understand more deeply the intricate web of patterns that cycle and recycle.

If we can tune in and cultivate an understanding of the nature outside of us, we'll also learn to connect with our own internal resources and ourselves more deeply.

The Observer's Challenge

One of the things I've noticed is that even though many people have an invested interest in reconnecting with nature and developing the keen observation skills to do so, many people don't actually know how to pay attention in a way that accumulates deep knowledge over time.

There can be a lot of stumbling blocks on the path to cultivating this awareness.

The best way to learn how to track the subtle (or even not so subtle) patterns of nature is really to learn it directly from an experienced observer, but if you don't have anyone to actually point the patterns out to you then the learning curve can be incredibly steep.

I struggled with this for a really long time because I was alone in my learning journey.

I would gain little tips here & there from books & other resources but though I would spend lots of time at my sit spot out in the yard, and tracking various events in the bird language, I still always felt somewhat observationally disabled and there were certain contexts that I simply could not make sense of no matter how much I watched & listened.

It was frustrating because I felt like I wasn't making any progress. I knew I wanted to develop some deep skills with this but I couldn't quite figure out how to get myself there. I know from talking with other people that I'm not alone in this sentiment.

A Surprising Solution

What I want to share with you in the coming pages is one of the key principles that after many years I stumbled upon to make this whole observational learning process way easier.

When I started working with the process I'm going to share with you it suddenly gave me a whole new tool to work with and I discovered that it could be applied to literally any field of observational study to make the structural patterns of behavior, sound, movement, and activity jump out like a sore thumb.

When you learn to apply this principle in your own observations I know it's going to absolutely skyrocket the quality of your awareness and the quality of your observations.

So let's dive into this and really look at how to make some razor sharp observations.

To start off, I want to share a story with you about how I first learned to tune into the rhythm of nature.

Discovering The Secret To Pattern Observation

One summer day several years ago I had some free time on my hands and decided to spend an afternoon sitting beside a pond near where I was living. I was keen to observe the bird life and maybe even catch the signs of a hidden cooper's hawk or a mink ready to stir up some activity.

As I sat beside the water I noticed a song sparrow singing from a perch out in the cattails. It sang a few times and then flew away.

I leaned back to catch the sunshine and then noticed a sapsucker land on an apple tree near to where I was seated. It dipped into a fresh hole & moved on.

In the distance there were sounds of red winged blackbirds singing & a few robins making some agitated noise.

Then I noticed a hummingbird buzzing through & saw that it was feeding from the same hole that the sapsucker had been on just a few moments earlier.

I wondered to myself if the sapsucker was aware that the hummingbird was profiting from its work.

It was at this time when I noticed the song sparrow was singing again from down in the cattails. He looked out over the pond, turn his beak to the sky and broadcast his song for all to hear.

The Sparrow Sparked My Interest...

I sat up & started to get curious about why the sparrow had left & now returned in such short order. It was intriguing behavior.

Could he have simply gone to feed somewhere?
Was he distracted by another bird or a predator?
How much time do sparrows usually leave between bouts of song?

Little did I know that my questioning process was leading me to realize something incredible about that song sparrow and about the other birds that lived at the pond.

I kept watching & after singing a few more times he moved off, but just as I was about to lay back again I noticed that same sparrow singing from now a new location. He had simply moved not ten feet from where he had been before and continued the song!

It suddenly dawned on me that this bird could have in fact been singing the whole time I was out there but I didn't even notice. My curiosity was peaked again.

How much am I missing here?
How many times does he sing before he moves to a new perch?

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Will he come back to his original spot again?

I listened as he sang another 5 or 6 times, then moved to yet another location and again, continued the song.

A Simple Behavior...

I realized that I was picking up on a pattern that had previously been invisible to me, though I didn't yet realize all the implications of this pattern.

It was at that time when I heard a thud on the apple tree and looked to see that my sapsucker friend had returned. She dipped once into the hole & flew away.

As I continued to listen & soak up the moment I noticed the sparrow still singing down in the cattails, the blackbirds & robins were making noise just as before... and the hummingbird showed up once again.

It was in this moment that the pattern really started to click into place & I suddenly became aware that all the events I had originally perceived as random were in fact occurring with a striking degree of order and consistency.

I started to feel like I was in the middle of a very precise rotary clock and began to sense that everything around me was circulating on very precise & consistent *rhythms*.

It was kind of like looking at one of those embedded 3d images and suddenly seeing the hidden picture.

The Invisible Becomes Visible...

There were all these patterns happening around me that I realized were completely invisible to me before but were now becoming *extremely obvious*.

To top off this whole sequence my sparrow friend then flew back to his initial location and again started a new cycle of his song.

I watched this cycle repeat several more times over the course of my sit by the pond and it was so amazing to me that I hadn't noticed before just how rhythmic everything was.

The birds, the insects, the wind, the clouds, even the people, cars & dogs in the distance were all buzzing with their own rhythm that I could tune into and track by simply watching & listening carefully.

I went away from that day with a totally transformed understanding of how I could approach learning from nature. I discovered that I could then tune into the rhythms of nature any time I wanted by simply focusing my awareness and tracking the repeating patterns occurring around me.

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So in the coming sections we'll look at this more closely and really break down what exactly it is that you can do with your awareness to begin tuning in with this deeper level of presence.

This method of tuning in to the never-ending rhythms of nature is what enabled me to really make the leap in my sensory acuity that was necessary to begin making sense of nature.

- It gave me a consistent way of gaining certainty about the routine patterns of birds & other events in nature.
- It made it really obvious when there were breaks in that pattern.
- It focused my mind and awareness in a whole new way that produced one of the quietest inner states I've ever experienced.

This is what we have in store as we continue to move forward. I'm excited to share this with you so let's keep moving and really start the tune up.

Breaking It Down

We've talked about how tuning into and tracking the overall rhythm of events in nature will help you...

1. Build certainty about the patterns that exist in the natural world.
2. Build awareness of the anomalies in those patterns.
3. Focus & quiet your mind to take in greater amounts of organized information.

All this of course adds up to gaining measurable skill & knowledge about the local patterns that are taking place in the natural world around you.

You may already have certain ideas from the story about how you can actually go outside and begin tracking the rhythms of nature, or you might be a little unsure about how it all works, but once you get the core process and begin to apply it in your nature studies you'll be able to make consistent strides and have a whole lot of fun tracking down natural mysteries.

So let's break this down into really simple terms that you can take outside and apply with your own observation process. This is the gateway to effectively tracking events in animal behavior, weather, seasons, and anything else your heart desires.

Lets begin tuning into 'the rhythm of the earth.'

So What's The First Step?

Well, when you're tuned into a pattern out in nature it's because you have a representation of that pattern in your mind.

If you understand generally what the beginning, middle & end of that pattern looks like then you can recognize each stage of the sequence and make accurate predictions about what comes next.

By relating to the pattern as a single unit it gives us a feeling of simplicity & a sense of certainty about how all the pieces fit together. This is the end result of any art.

A good sketch artist for example is not going to be thinking about all the little mechanical details of their work. They're able to pick up a pencil and seemingly without even thinking, draw an exact replica of someone's face in just a few minutes.

They probably won't be aware of any conscious effort they put into noticing the exact distance between the nose & the mouth, or the relationship between the eyes and the hairline yet everything will be in perfect perspective.

To the casual observer it will seem almost like magic, yet it's really the result of the artist being tuned into a pattern.

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The same principle applies to the art of observation.

A skilled observer easily picks up on fascinating points of interest that reveal a whole lot of unique information about the larger ecological patterns in nature, but a lot of times it isn't apparent what exactly that person is noticing which leads them to such astute conclusions.

We see that their understanding of what is taking place is quite advanced yet we might be left wondering, 'how the heck did they pick up on it?'

When all we see is the end result it can be easy to miss all the little details that make something possible, but we need to remember that those little details are still there and are an essential component of the ability.

The Art and Science of Observation:

There's a whole learning process that an artist has to go through when first learning to draw. The ability to accurately sketch someone's face requires calculated measurements and an awareness of some very quantitative features that most people don't pay attention to.

If the artist didn't practice making measurements in some form, they would not be able to sketch that person accurately. Not only would they be unable to capture the likeness of the person, but the quality and tone of the art would be completely lost as well.

This is pointing us to a very important realization about how to actually learn to make razor sharp observations & gain a deep understanding of nature's many rhythms.

We need to understand that *the process of observation is both an art and a science.*

There's often a tendency when people get started on this path to miss paying attention to the most basic, verifiable and measurable information because they're too busy trying to notice patterns that are way beyond their present ability.

But just as you wouldn't expect a new artist to be able to simply pick up a pencil and draw a perfect replica of someone's face, you wouldn't expect someone practicing nature observation to go out and immediately begin tracking complex bird language, wind patterns or any other event without first learning to work with the basic components.

So the key to taking your nature observation abilities to really deep levels actually lies in working with the science portion of this equation. If you learn to work with the *science of observation* then the *art of observation* will come as a natural result.

And the way to do this is by using one of the most basic mental human faculties that everyone possesses... Counting!

A New Way To Look & Listen...

It may seem strange and spending your time outside counting might seem like a very intellectual exercise but what we're going to see is that making very concrete, numerical and ordinal observations about nature is extremely easy, it opens the doorway to less tangible forms of awareness, and surprisingly in a lot of cases it will actually give you *less* to think about rather than more, so your mind will actually be quieter while you're outside & observing.

In my story about the sparrow, hummingbird & sapsucker above I inadvertently made a whole series of highly quantifiable observations about their activities, and this I believe is largely why I was able to tune so acutely into the pattern that was happening there.

- I counted the number of times the song sparrow would sing before moving on to a new perch
- I counted the number of places the sparrow would sing from before returning to it's original location
- I noted the order and sequence of the sparrow's movement timed with the sapsucker & hummingbird

It was the sum total of these very concrete observations that made it apparent there was a pattern repeating over and over again. The quantifiable nature of counting the various elements of this pattern made it possible for me to be absolutely certain about precisely what was taking place there.

This is the same process used by researchers to make absolute conclusions about natural patterns. If you read academic research done on animal behavior you'll notice that in every case they break their data down into quantifiable & countable components.

The Secret To Cumulative Learning...

It's because of this scientific method that they're able to make consistent and ever greater conclusions about how everything is actually working out there.

Once you know how to do this then of course you're not locked into working exclusively with scientific means. There is something to be said for hunches, impressions and feelings, which form the more artistic side of observation.

But when it comes to developing the razor sharp observation skills of a *wild observer* we can learn a lot from the scientific world. Some of those researchers have amassed an incredible amount of knowledge about their particular area of study and have a very unique ability to observe things in the natural world that developed from doing simple activities like sitting out in the bush counting birds for weeks on end.

So counting is the key to training your mind & awareness to keep track of the most foundational and essential information, which will make it possible for you to really open up your senses and begin tracking the more complex patterns out in nature.

Stretching Your Awareness...

As you practice working with this skill you'll find that there are literally thousands of natural elements that you can keep track of in this way, and the only limitation to your unique awareness is the time & energy you put into observing them.

Every time you apply these principles in the field you'll notice new rhythms, nuances, and events playing into the big picture. And because you're moving towards continual refinement and distillation of your observations, over time you'll find yourself making some very unique discoveries that would have previously been invisible to you.

So in the next section to really bring this down to earth, I'm going to share with you an exercise that you can do to begin immediately integrating these concepts. You've stuck through the conceptual components and now we're ready to start applying this in the field.

It's time to enliven and awaken the wild observer within you.

Integrating Your New Awareness:

In this final section I'm going to further break down everything we've talked about so far into three simple steps that will make it really easy for you to begin applying everything we've talked about in this report.

If you've never spent any time looking for and tracking the rhythms of nature it'll probably be quite a new experience. The core of what's required to do this however, is really very simple and I think you'll get it quickly once you place a bit of focus on it.

In time this can become a routine process that you do over and over again and make new discoveries each time you practice.

It's one of the most reliable methods I've found for myself personally that helps me consistently make new leaps and strides with what I'm observing outside. Every time I do this I find a profound quietness internally and new patterns pop out on the landscape as I'm sure they will for you too.

If you don't already have a routine practice of getting outside to spend intentional quiet time in nature I highly recommend doing so. Just sitting quietly on a park bench or in your backyard regularly will help you begin to anchor yourself in one place, and it gives you regular opportunities to practice *rhythmic awareness*.

Here are the three steps that can be easily worked into your own nature study process as feels good to you.

Step 1 – Go outside and sit somewhere

When you arrive at your spot it's a good idea to take a couple minutes to unwind and just relax into that space.

Then when you feel ready... begin looking, listening for, & counting the repeating patterns of sound, behavior, & movement in the landscape.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help prompt your awareness...

- What rhythms are occurring right now?
- How often do they repeat? (Count the repetitions)
- How long do they go on for? (Track the length of time)
- What anomalies in the patterns can you detect?
- What happens when they stop?
- How long does it take before they start up again?

You can tune into anything from dogs barking to gusts of wind, songbirds or even cars on the street. The only limitation is your own imagination and the more you look for & begin to pay attention to these *rhythms* the more you're going to find them everywhere all around you.

Whatever you decide to focus on, keep it simple for you. If it's too challenging and you're losing track of what you've chosen, maybe pick something easier and keep trying until you get it.

Step 2 - Do some reflecting

When you arrive home after your sit time, there are some other questions you can ask yourself in order to reflect on how the experience went for you and what you can do to improve your experience.

This can be really helpful for orienting yourself to success with this process and rather than judging yourself for what you experienced I would encourage you to use this as another tool for increasing your awareness.

Just notice what comes up for you and maybe have a notebook you can jot your ideas down in, or if you're doing this with a friend you could have a discussion. As you do this more & more times you'll find new insights occurring to you and you might even notice *rhythms* beginning to emerge in your own observations about doing this exercise.

Here are the questions

- How did working with the exercise change the quality of your awareness?
- What was easy about this exercise?
- What was challenging for you?
- What did you notice & observe?
- Were you able to stay focused through the whole sequence of a pattern or were there times when you zoned out and missed parts of it?
- What do you want to focus on or improve next time?

Step 3 – Congratulate yourself

It takes effort and energy to get yourself outside and place intention on increasing your observational capabilities. Whatever came out of the exercise for you will be compounded by the fact that you're interested and willing to engage with the process.

Every time you repeat & make this a routine you'll find yourself noticing more, making better observations and having new insights about nature & yourself, so make sure you honor your growth with this.

By placing energy on increasing your observational skills you're putting yourself in the top tiers of people who are working to discover more of their full potential as human beings, and this deserves recognition.

Stay In Touch For More!

Thanks so much for reading this material and taking part in the community. If you have any questions or comments, always feel free to contact me. You'll get more out of this ebook by writing in to share your experiences. I'd love to hear from you.

My email address is brian@nature-mentor.com

My contact form is <http://www.nature-mentor.com/contact.html>

My Facebook page is: <http://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Nature-Mentor/530758733601915>

Stay tuned to your inbox for more information, exercises and stories to help you connect more deeply with nature.

Much gratitude and say hi to the birds for me,

Brian Mertins