

# Songwriting Nature Workshop

A VIRTUAL TOUR OF  
THE SWAMP SESSIONS  
SONGWRITING TRAIL

Hosted by Danielle Howle

[www.daniellehowle.com/nature-workshop](http://www.daniellehowle.com/nature-workshop)



## Welcome to your songwriting nature walk workshop, courtesy of Swamp Sessions.

### Station 1 – Acclimation

Walk straight down to the Eechaw Creek. You'll see a big Holly tree with lots of red berries on it. I call her the "Year-Round Christmas Tree." Sit down in the chair under the tree. Bring your awareness to each of your five senses and write down what comes to mind. For instance, what can you smell, touch, taste, hear, or see?

Anyways, notice how the five senses blend together and separate as you use them all without expecting any outcome. Breath in the air, and exhale the words.

**Directions to Station 2:** Turn around so that the creek is at your back. Walk up the incline towards the Swamp House, with the playground equipment on your left. Then, go up the Swamp House road. When you find a hammock, on the right side of the road, you will receive your next instructions.

### Station 2 – Letting Go–No Expectation

Grab the timer and set it for one minute. Lay down on the hammock, start the timer. Try and keep your eyes closed for a solid minute, acknowledging your thoughts and letting them just float by without concern. Thoughts will be there, but why not just let them be free from you right now. Break all the agreements with time. It no longer exists. Continue letting go of the thoughts. When the timer rings, open your eyes and look around. The rest is up to you. Write down what you see and how you feel.

**Directions to Station 3:** Start heading away again from the house on the road. Just before the road turns, leave the road, and follow the markers on the left into the forest path.

### Station 3 – The Realm of Trees

Enter the circle of trees and have a seat. You are now going into the forest without a road, rather with a path. Take a moment to enjoy the peace. You may hear people in the distance, still playing music, laughing, and being happy. You are not alone and, yet, you are! Let the circle of trees become your home for the next 5-10 minutes. Write, right now, what trees and this forest mean to you. Do not edit yourself, or judge yourself. Just enjoy the moment and the fact that you are a viable, creative force, and that there is no right or wrong way to go about the writing process. It's all about your willingness to be present in the moment and enjoy your surroundings. If there is anything you would like to say regarding trees, or forests, now is the time to write that down.

**Directions to Station 4:** Stand with the water directly in front of you. This means the Swamp House should be on your left. Turn right down the forest path and follow the signs to Station 4. You are officially going out of civilization. You are safe and, I bet, if you yelled or blew a whistle, one of us would come running. Please refrain, unless assistance is needed

### Station 4 – Soggy Holler

“Very swampy, is it not?” says Yoda. This place reminds me of where Yoda lived in the first ‘Star Wars’ movie. I can see him now levitating young Luke Skywalker's crashed ship out of the swamp by using “the force.” What primordial magic do you see in this setting? How does it speak to you? Can you feel that nature does things on her own time? Much is being born out in this bog. Much is being recycled and turning into something else. Allow yourself to enjoy this “no time” process in your own creation– and maybe destruction, too. This is the station to break free of what you think and enjoy non-time, investigating what you feel in this setting.

When you are ready, here are your free-write topics. You'll find them in the envelope. Open the envelope and begin. Pick one, pick two—who knows what you'll do! P.S. Make sure you put free-writes back in the envelope when you're done with the info.

**Directions to Station 5:** Yes, step over that fallen tree. You are okay and safe. Follow the signs to a little deeper place in the forest. You will then be directed up a short incline.

## Station 5 – Mansion on the Hill

Have a seat and a glass of tea or water. Look around from this vantage point. You are still in the low country of South Carolina, but it may not seem like it on this little hill. Survey the land, zooming out and looking through the forest. What three things do you want to tell the world? Write that down.

**Directions to Station 6:** Walk back to the main path and take a left. Go under the tree that leans over the forest path and move carefully, going over the big tree that has fallen there. Take your time getting over this big tree on the forest path. Notice the mushrooms (and other life) that have grown on this fallen tree. Keep walking and enjoy the sounds and breathing as you walk. Hear the leaves moving as you keep walking. Look to your left for another fallen tree. That is the one that you will sit on. Do you see the sign for Station 6? That fallen tree is your seat. No chairs here—no more. No more man-made objects and there you will have your next writing experience.

## Station 6 – The Cycle of Life

Have a seat on this big fallen tree, for she is your only chair. Can you see the young plants and possibly baby trees growing in this area? Are these plants and animals around you, are thriving and in their prime? What bits of nature do you notice in various stages of their lives? In the cycle of life, we find gratitude. Write down what you are grateful for. I know there is a song in there! As you leave this space, turn around now and say “thank you” out loud to whatever you wish, as you move forward.

**Directions to Station 7:** Follow the path and signs going left. With the next five to ten steps, you'll see a place called “Frog Hole Number two.” It's on your right. It is a low place in the swamp with a little bit of water in it—sometimes a lot of water. Okay, keep on walking; you're safe, and you're about to touch down and intersect with the main swamp road.

Cross it and go forward into a new part of the forest and trail. So, keep going down the trail. Stop when you see a tiny line of cypress knees. You have arrived. Look to your left for the Station 7 sign. Note the line of cypress knees sometimes is the bank of a small stream that turns into a creek at different times of year. Enjoy the state it is in while you are there.

## Station 7 – Cypress Cauldron by the Stream of Knees

All you know and understand is revealing itself yet again. In your presence, you have cypress knees, flowing water (or evidence of where water flows on occasion), and you have an old cypress giant tree body, which we call the Cypress Cauldron. This challenge is the greatest one yet. Write about the cypress knees. Okay, no more prompts from me. Enjoy your time at Station 7.

**Directions to Station 8:** Head back down the path and hook up with the main road to the Swamp House. Take a left at the main road. Walk home to your Swamp House. As the sounds of others get louder, know that Station 8 is among them. They are sitting at Station 8. Go to the community fire and picnic table at Swamp House and you'll see Station 8.

## Station 8 – Staying in Self with Community

Sit down near the bonfire to complete the final writing challenge. Understand others are working on their craft. Yes, it's gonna be noisy! It is beautiful. Using eight words, capture the course you just walked. Stayin yourself and do you. Then enjoy your music friends. Welcome back!

**Thank you for being and trusting yourself to do the Swamp Sessions writer's challenge.**

