INTRODUCTION TO NATURE SKETCH

naturesketch.org
Welcome to Nature Sketch!

The Nature Sketch Program, a Bateman Foundation initiative, aims to inspire observation and appreciation of the natural world using a pencil and a sketchbook. Nature Sketch participants learn about the wildlife and habitat of local flora and fauna in the world around them! The Bateman Foundation believes in the power of “noticing nature”. We inspire a lasting relationship with nature through the lens of art. The pencil becomes the tool that draws a new generation into the magic of nature, recording all its beauty on paper and demonstrating that each of us are vitally connected to our natural environment.

For more information visit naturesketch.org

Teaching this Lesson

Time Required: 3 hours approx.
(Can be done in one session or broken into multiple sessions.)

If possible, bring along a field guide book to help identify the things you see. You may also want to take notes or photos to research things online when you get home. Each activity has a suggested length of time. This will depend on the age of the participants and their interest level, feel free to adjust as necessary.
Discussion: 15 min

Who is Robert Bateman? What do you know about him?

Robert Bateman is one of Canada’s foremost artists and naturalists. Mr. Bateman is currently 88 years old and still paints or sketches every day! Since a young age, Robert has sketched outdoors using a nature journal. These sessions - with just a sketchbook and pen - has led to a deep understanding and appreciation for nature. His work, featuring wildlife in its natural habitat, encourages the viewer to closely observe the natural world.

Born in Toronto in 1930, Robert Bateman was an avid naturalist and artist from his youth. He observed and painted wildlife at a young age. In his teens he began to interpret nature using contemporary approaches such as post-impressionism and abstract expressionism. Bateman rededicated his work to realism in the early 1960’s and began to develop a signature style that would make him one of the foremost wildlife artists worldwide. In the 1970’s and early 1980’s, his work began to receive critical acclaim and to attract an enormous following.

Robert Bateman’s art reflects his commitment to ecology and preservation. Since the early 1960’s, he has been an active member of naturalist and conservation organizations. He has become a spokesperson for many enviromental and preservation issues and has used his artwork in fundraising efforts that have provided millions of dollars for these worthy causes.

Visit youtube.com/therobertbatemancentre for videos about Robert Bateman.
Intro to Nature Sketch

Self Portrait, 1953, oil on canvas board

Self Portrait, 2015, acrylic on board
Elk, 1942 (age 12), gouache on paper

Evening Snowfall - American Elk, 1978, acrylic on masonite
Part 1
Nature Journaling

Discussion: 5 min

What is a nature journal?
What would you put into it?
Think of the word “journal”, what goes in a journal?

A nature journal helps to record what you see and feel while out in nature. Similar to a personal written journal/diary, it helps to record your experience at that point in time. A nature journal may include sketches, notes and samples of the environment around you. It might include the entire image of your object, or just bits and pieces of it in order to study the details. It may also include symbols that represent things like sounds and smells. You may also want to add elements from your environment such as smearing dirt on the page, doing a leaf rubbing or taping a feather into your nature journal. We are going to use our sketchbooks as “nature journals”.

In this example (next page) from one of Mr. Bateman’s sketchbooks, Wilson’s Storm Petrel, 1978, he included quick sketches of the overall shape of the bird, some detailed sketches of different parts of the bird, notes about where he was and what he was drawing. He also labelled a spot as “krill juice” which may have been dribbled on his sketchbook (Krill is a small ocean crustacean which Petrels like to eat).
Activity: 15 min

Noticing nature:

Find a quiet spot where you can sit and use your senses to discover the environment around you. (The length of time will depend on the age of your group.)

Close your eyes. What can you hear? What can you smell? What can you feel? Now open your eyes, what can you see? (When we are out in nature, we do not taste anything, as some things may not be edible and could even be harmful).

Choose one thing from each of your senses that you experienced to record in your nature journal. Use symbols, sketches, etc. to record what you experienced.

This activity is a helpful way to ensure the participants slow down, get centered and be aware of their surroundings. Our goal is to get the participants to notice details around them which they may normally not pay attention to: the texture of the bark, the edges of a leaf, the pattern of markings on an animal, the sound that a particular bird makes.
Part 2
Lines & Natural Shapes

Discussion: 2 min

Lines:
Artists use shapes and lines to help them draw what they are seeing. We can use thin lines, thick, straight, curved.

Activity: 10 min

Lines in Nature:
Sit near a tree. Look at where the tree grows from the root, where the branches are connected, how they break off into different branches to where the leaves are connected. Now pretend there is a squirrel running along each of those branches, your pencil is going to trace the path of that squirrel.
Discussion: 5 min

Shapes:

Everything that you see around you can be broken down into shapes in order to make drawing it easier. What shapes can you see around you? Can something more complicated be broken down into smaller shapes? Notice how the light is hitting the shapes, notice the shadows, they will follow the form of the shape.

There are 4 basic shapes or forms:

- **Circle**
- **Square**
- **Triangle**
- **Rectangle**
- **Sphere**
- **Cube**
- **Cone**
- **Pyramid**
- **Cylinder**
- **Box**

Three dimensional (height, width, and...)

Activity: 20min

Shapes in Nature:

The scavenger hunt found on the next page needs to be photocopied.
Scavenger Hunt
Find, identify and sketch as many of the following items!

**Touch**
- something SOFT
- something HARD
- something SMOOTH
- something ROUGH

**Shapes**
- something CIRCULAR
- something SQUARE
- something DIAMOND

**Colours**
- something GREEN
- something BROWN
- something YELLOW
Values:

Values reflect the lightness or darkness of an area. Values include the various shades of grey that fall between white and black. Light and dark values give our sketches depth and dimension, creating a more realistic image. Capturing highlights and shadows, and observing subtleties in our subject matter such as the direction of the light source, all help to create depth and dimension in our sketches.

Noticing values in nature and comparing them with a value scale in your sketchbook is great practice for seeing subtle changes.
Activity: 10 - 20 min

Value Scale:

Create a value scale starting with 5 different values. (To challenge older or more experienced participants ask them to create a 10 value bar. To challenge them even further, follow, follow up with another value bar, but with a gradation of values rather than separate sections).

Activity: 20 min

Values in Nature:

Now find an object in nature. Observe how the light is hitting the object, and notice where the shadows are. Now spend some time drawing the object using at least 5 of those values. The more values you can create in your drawing, the more realistic it will look! Use your value bar to compare to your sketch. Have you included all of the values? Can you create even more?
Part 4
Points of View

Discussion: 5 min

Points of View:

Artists, photographers and videographers all consider the point of view of their viewer. The “format” of your picture is the outside shape, like a picture frame around your image. A vertical format is called “portrait”, a horizontal format is called “landscape”. Viewfinders help us to create a border or frame (the format) around what we are seeing around us so that we know what to include and what to leave out.

You can use your fingers to create a frame or use one that is cut out of cardboard. The viewfinder will help you to decide the story you are telling your viewer. The closer you hold it to your face, the more you see, the farther away, the less you see.
Activity: 20 min

Points of View in Nature:

Pick an area that you would like to draw. Use your viewfinder to locate 3 different views of the same scene; these could include full view, zoomed in on one area, vertical format, horizontal format, etc. Create at least 3 small “thumbnail sketches” of each view/story.
Notice how each point of view has a different feel and tells a different story about the subject matter.
Wrap Up: Noticing Details

Activity: 20 min

Noticing Nature:

Now find an item in your environment that you want to know more about. It may be a leaf, a tree, a bug. Look at it closely from all angles. Pay attention to its details. Is it smooth, rough, straight or curved? Does one part overlap another, is one area lighter or darker than what is beside it, how is one part attached to another? Spend some time sketching your object: the whole form, the bits and pieces, and some of the details. Take notes about what you are seeing, feeling and smelling about that object.

Homework:

What is something that you discovered today that you want to learn more about? Make a note of it, take a picture, or make a sketch. When you get home or back to the classroom do some research about your object & see what you can find out about it!
Nature Sketch is expanding!

Are you interested in having Nature Sketch in your area or are you a sketch artist or naturalist?
Email learning@batemanfoundation.org

Do you want to help support Nature Sketch in your community?
To donate today visit batemanfoundation.org

Supporters:

Nature Sketch reaches children through the power of community and generosity of local companies and non-profit groups. We all come together to share the wisdom of nature and the gift of art. Thank you to all our supporters who have helped us reach this common goal. We acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of BC.

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Art ©Robert Bateman
Nature Sketch is a activity designed by the Robert Bateman Foundation that aims to inspire students to appreciate nature through the power of observation and education. Using our downloadable resources, educators can make Nature Sketch their own and support students in connecting to nature. Educators can help students learn about wildlife and local flora and fauna by participating and by “noticing nature” around them.

Who is Robert Bateman?

Robert Bateman is a Canadian artist and naturalist that has inspired Canadians to connect deeply to nature through the form of art! Not only is Mr. Bateman’s one of the foremost wildlife artists worldwide, but he is also a spokesperson for many environmental and preservation issues.
**Who can participate?**

Students in primary school (grades K-8) are invited to participate in this activity that will inspire them to have a lasting relationship with nature through art.

**Where can my class participate in Nature Sketch?**

Anywhere! Even in the most urban areas, nature can be found around you and this activity helps students to sense and appreciate what’s local and connect with it. Whether it’s your schoolyard, a park, or local neighborhood, or asking your students to take the Nature Sketch activity home after school, you can bring to life a Nature Sketch lesson that suits your school’s needs.

**I am an educator. How can my class get involved?**

It’s as simple as selecting a part of (or whole) day to take your students out into nature with a pencil and piece of paper! Encourage your students to record what they see and feel while they are out in nature. This can include sketches, artifacts, symbols and notes, anything that makes your students feel a connection to the natural world around them.

**Where can I find more information on how to do this activity?**

In addition to the downloadable lesson guide, and reflection questions and tip sheet, learn more about how to engage your students with nature and art with:

- An *Introductory video* about appreciating nature
- **Tutorials** on sketching/drawing nature led by Robert Bateman

**Can we identify flora and fauna we observe during our lesson?**

Using an online plant database such as iNaturalist can be a great place to start when identifying species in your school yard.

**How long is this activity?**

This is up to you! This activity may take as little as 15 minutes, or it could a full day outside. Make Nature Sketch your own and even integrate the activity into existing lesson plans or projects.

**What is the best time of year for Nature Sketch?**

Getting your students engaged outdoors with Nature Sketch can be a great way to welcome or say goodbye to any season. You can even conduct Nature Sketch year-round to help your students observe seasonal changes with flora and fauna, such as the changing of the colour of leaves, or the presence or absence of certain wildlife.

**What do we do after the activity?**

Getting your students outdoors to observe and appreciate the nature around them should be celebrated as it helps to inspire students to value it.

Share how you used Nature Sketch in your classroom to support tomorrow’s decision makers in valuing nature today. Log onto your Living Planet @ School account to share your participation and results. And inspire others by submitting a Success Story from your classroom to be published on Living Planet @ School.
Are certificates awarded for this activity?

Certificates of participation are available to classrooms once results have been submitted online through your teacher dashboard.

Who can I contact for more information?

Please contact us at schools@wwfcanada.org.
Nature Sketch
by the Robert Bateman Foundation

TEACHER TIPS

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About Nature Sketch by the Robert Bateman Foundation

The Nature Sketch Program by the Robert Bateman Foundation inspires observation and appreciation of the natural world using a pencil and a sketchbook.

Fostering a love of nature, wherever it is found, is a significant goal of WWF’s Living Planet @ School program. As oceanographer and educator Jacques Cousteau said, “We protect what we love, and we love what we know”. Making art in nature about nature cultivates a simple and direct way of knowing nature – a way that is accessible to all.

Students learn about wildlife and habitat of local flora and fauna through the power of learning to ‘notice nature’. These observational skills lay the foundation for a lifelong engagement with nature as an artist, an ecologist, a citizen scientist, an outdoor enthusiast and more. This school year, we are inviting students to use art as a learning tool to engage and observe the natural world around them!

Through the Nature Sketch program, you can provide your students with a unique way of combining environmental awareness along with art, developing your students power of observation when noticing nature.
Students, use your creativity!

The goal of this activity is to get students thinking and appreciating the natural world around them. A nature journal is a great way to have students put their creative thoughts and ideas down on paper and start noticing details in their environment. A nature journal can include anything that connects you to nature! *Draw, take notes, and create symbols of what you see or feel when looking at nature around you.*

Notice nature through your senses!

Notice textures or colours of plants when completing this activity. What does this plant feel like? How does it smell? What does it remind you of? These are all great questions to keep in mind when creating your journals!

**TIP:** Artists use shapes and lines to help them draw what they are seeing. Notice that everything in nature can be broken down into shapes to make drawing it easier. For example, a tree is made up of various branching lines!
Make it your own!
You can adapt the Nature Journaling activity in many ways to enhance your students’ connection to nature. Here are few suggestions:

**Expand your Personal Journal**
Students can build their experience over time by repeating this exercise as frequently as they wish. They can fill their journal with observations and drawings and expand on the knowledge questions that arise.

**Create a Class Journal**
Each student can contribute a page to a class journal. Don’t forget to include their research questions and answers.

**Create a Travelling Journal**
Each student can take the class journal home to create their page to document their experience of nature around their home. Make sure to include some fun research you found about the nature in your backyard!

**Reflection**

**Knowledge building**
Ask your students:

- What did you learn about what you are drawing?
- What did you notice about the plant?
- What part of the plant is most unique and special to you?
- What do you think a native plant is? What do you think an alien plant is?
- Can you think of any wildlife (animals, insects, etc) that might need this plant to survive?
- What did you notice about the species in your school yard?
- What else would you like to know?

Research at least one question and add it to your nature journal.

**Sharing Experience**
Your students can share in a big group circle or smaller groups:

- Share the story of what you experienced and learned with other students.
- What did you draw and why?
- Did you use symbols to capture the experience of your different senses? Describe what they mean to your classmates.
- What makes your species different and unique?
- Can you think of any wildlife (animals, insects, etc) that might need this plant to survive?
- What did you notice about the plants in your school yard?
Schoolyard Biodiversity Discovery through Art

The skills and practice of ‘noticing nature’ and knowing your subject through drawing are valuable for all students to experience. Applying this practice to a broader citizen science opportunity can play a role in increasing healthy biodiversity on schoolgrounds and beyond. Botanical drawings continue to be a cornerstone for plant identification and categorization, even in the age of photography and the internet.

Discover your Schoolyard Biodiversity through Art engages students in the exploration of plants, shrubs and trees on the school property and their impact on native wildlife. The results of this exploration can be shared with the class and school community, including property managers, to increase the health and resilience of the natural ecosystem that surrounds the school. Students study and draw the variety of plants, shrubs and trees on school property with the aim to identify the plant.

Attention Teachers!

Lead your students in this identification activity by picking a few species, whether it’s plants, shrubs or trees, that are common in your schoolyard. Prepare notes in advance on the type of plants you are studying. You should know if it is a native or alien species.
**TIP:** To get students thinking about local plants, pick some native species that you can find in your school yard. Ask them what they think native plants are? Which plants do they think are native? Why? Remember, native plants are plants that have grown naturally in a place for many years!

If they are focusing on an alien species, you can get them to focus on what might be the problems associated with it. Is this species taking over habitat for a native species? Does it provide food for native wildlife? Is this alien species easy or hard to control?

Have your students try to identify at least 3 species using various online resources or books.

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**Reflection**

Have your students share in a big circle or answer these questions on their own.

What species did you find in your schoolyard?

What was unique about this species?

What did you enjoy most about the activity?

For native species, why do you think this species is important to the ecosystem?

For alien or invasive species, why do you think this species may be trouble for the ecosystem?

What other species (wildlife, insects, etc) do you think need this species to survive?

For native species, what can we do to help this species survive in the ecosystem?

What else do you want to know about the species you found?

What do you think a native plant is?

Why do you think native plants are important?

Would you like to do this activity again?

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“We protect what we love, and we love what we know”.

- Jacques Cousteau
Oceanographer and educator

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