INTRODUCTION TO NATURE SKETCH
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. In 2020 Mr. Bateman turned 90 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/batemanfoundationgalleryofnature for videos about Robert Bateman.
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).
Intro to Nature Sketch

- Blackish Feathers
- Inside Mouth

Soft and a bit loose

Drake Passage 1978
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 too: the texture of the bark, the edges of a leaf, the pattern of markings on an animal, the sound that a particular bird makes.


**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
Part 3
Values

Discussion: 5 min

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: 20min

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.

By the River - Elephants 1999, acrylic on canavs
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.