I have been sketching and birding for many years. My visual diaries have become my cherished memories. I wanted to inspire Seattle Audubon Young Birders and their families to take some day trips and explore my favorite areas. So grab your binoculars and pack some sketching tools. I have included a map for each site as well as links to web sites. I hope my sketches inspire you to “stop, look, listen, and draw”.


This park has such a variety of habitats and diversity of bird species!

From the south parking lot off of Emerson Street, explore the woods for woodpeckers, hawks, or owls.

Walk out through the south meadow, scanning the tops of bushes for perched birds. Sometimes you can find an unusual bird during migration.

From the south bluff near the sand dunes, scan below for water birds.
Explore the ponds at Wetlands Central near parking lot E1 off of the south entrance on NE 65th Street. Look for ducks, grebes, and herons. Listen for creepers or kinglets in the woods in Promontory Point. Covered shelters are great for sketching in the rain!
3. Juanita Bay Park

http://www.explorekirkland.com/Do/Parks/Juanita_Bay_Park.htm

Explore the long boardwalk along the east side of Juanita Bay. Look for Wilson’s Snipe along the muddy lake shore below.

The other two boardwalks meander through cattails and woods and take you out along the lake by Nelson Point. Many species of ducks can be seen. Sometimes you can hear a Virginia Rail below. Look for Osprey on the nesting platforms in the spring.

Bald Eagles, Double-crested Cormorants, and Great Blue Herons are plentiful. They also remain still for sketching!
4. Union Bay Natural Area ("Montlake Fill")
https://botanicgardens.uw.edu/center-for-urban-horticulture/visit/union-bay-natural-area/

This area has a variety of habitats. Look for warblers in the woods and listen for woodpeckers.

Follow the Loop Trail along the shore of Union Bay. You can see a variety of waterfowl on the lake.

As the Loop Trail continues across the meadows, look for sparrows, meadowlarks and other grassland birds.

The Carp Pond can have a variety of ducks. Listen for birds from the bushes along Wahkiakum Lane Trail.

The Fishing Pier is an excellent place to view seabirds year round. The marina breakwater is rich with gulls and sometimes shorebirds.

Brackett’s Landing North can be good for loons, grebes, geese and diving ducks.

Edmonds Marsh can be good for dabbling ducks.

Thousands of Snow Geese, Trumpeter Swans and shorebirds winter here. Best viewing is at the Skagit Game Range Headquarters (“Wylie Slough”) and at Hayton Reserve (“goose reserve”).

Raptors like the Peregrine Falcon below are common.

Stop at Snow Goose Produce for waffle cones!
7. Samish Flats and Padilla Bay  [http://wabirdguide.org/samish-flats/]

This is the winter roost for thousands of Snow Geese, shorebirds and numerous species of birds of prey. Look for Short-eared Owls at the West and East 90.

The Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and Breazeale Interpretive Center has exhibits and an aquarium and is open to the public free of charge.

Long-tailed Ducks, Harlequin Ducks and other seabirds can be seen on Samish Bay from the county park on Samish Island.
8. Umtanem Creek Recreation Area

https://www.blm.gov/visit/yakima-river-canyon

This is a wonderful hike during spring migration! Walk across the Yakima River over the suspension bridge. Look and listen for Lazuli Bunting, Yellow-breasted Chat, Lewis’ Woodpecker or Bullock’s Oriole.

Scan the rocky bluff above for Prairie Falcon. Bighorn Sheep can sometimes be seen.
Every Memorial Day weekend since 1963 families from all over Washington come together. Whether Audubon members or not, the event is free and open to the public. There are field trips, family activities, field sketching, photography, wildflower displays and speakers.

White-headed Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch, Western Tanager, American Dipper and several owl species are not uncommon.
Thousands of Sandhill Cranes stop here during their northward spring migration. They can be seen in fields of corn stubble. Often Long-billed Curlews can be found in irrigated fields. It is becoming more rare to find Burrowing Owls but they might be found along irrigation culverts. Check out all holes along the dikes.

The Columbia NWR has shrub-steppe, cliff, and riparian habitats. Canyon and Rock Wrens, waterfowl, egrets and herons are common.
Ocean Shores during spring and fall migration is spectacular! Shorebirds by the thousands stop over from their Arctic breeding grounds. Best bird viewing is from the car on the beach. Plovers, sandpipers, gulls and raptors abound. Lines of Sooty Shearwaters can be seen flying low along the ocean. Loons, scoters, Brown Pelicans and all three species of cormorants can be found. The North Jetty often has Black and Ruddy Turnstone, Wandering Tattler or Surfbird depending on the time of year.
I enjoy watching and listening to the birds in my yard. We keep a list each year for species seen or heard. We also have been keeping a total yard list since 1992. Tracking the appearance of birds throughout the seasons is interesting. Observing their behavior is fascinating. Sketching them quickly as they flit around is always a challenge. Here are some of my yard sketches.