

A BIRD OF PREY

with a layered wash background !



The Sam Sidders way !

Painting a Bird of Prey

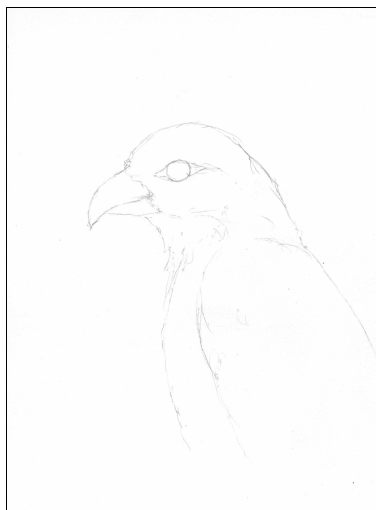
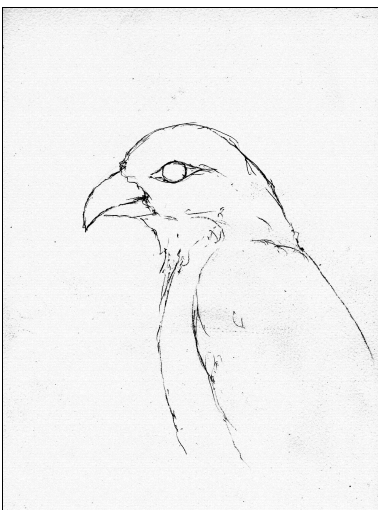
Using a "Layered Wash" background

For this exercise we will be using this Whistling Kite as our subject. The materials needed are:

- 1 sheet of 140 # or 300# coldpress paper 12"x9" (if using 140# paper, it will need to be taped to stiff surface to prevent buckling unless you are using a watercolor block.)
- **Indigo paint** (or other dark blue)
- **Burnt Sienna paint**
- **Yellow Ochre paint**
- **Cadmium Yellow Light paint**
- **Cadmium Orange paint**
- **Cobalt Blue paint**
- 1" flat brush,
- #2 pointed round,
- #8 pointed round,
- #2 liner brush
- Lead pencil
- Vinyl Eraser



STEP 1: Lightly draw the basic shapes of the bird. The idea is not to carefully draw every detail, but to get a rough guideline for the major shapes. Don't worry about accurate details, but concentrate on accurate proportions. Keep the drawing as light as possible. The first illustration at left demonstrates the maximum amount of detail that you need, and the second shows the lightness you should strive for. Once you are satisfied with your drawing move on to step 2.

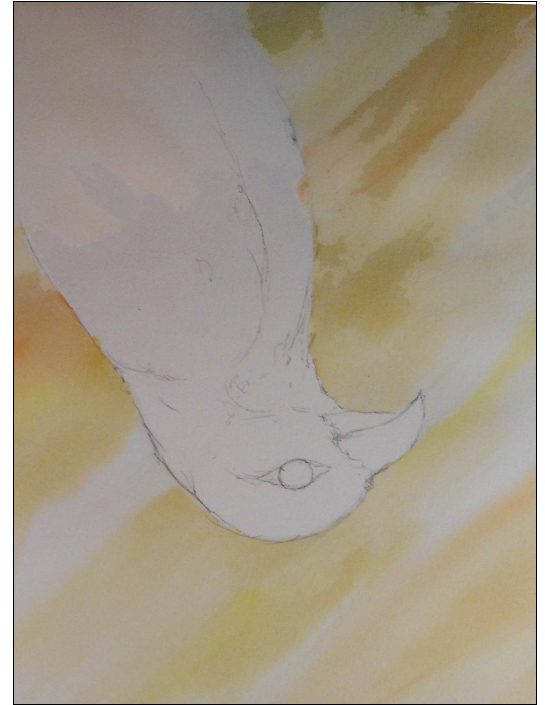


STEP 2: In this project, we will be using layered washes to paint the sky before painting the bird. Proper value separation between the bird and the background will be very important, so it is a good idea to do a quick value sketch of your intended composition on a separate piece of paper to aid you with value placement in the painting.

To aid me keeping the background colors separate from the body of the bird, I find it helpful to turn the painting upside down while laying the washes.



STEP 3: Begin by wetting the entire background area of the composition, being careful to keep the bird dry. Allow the paper to dry until the surface shine is almost gone. Then, using the 1" flat brush, apply a series of THIN "streaky" Yellow Ochre paint strokes in the opposite direction of the angle formed by the body of the bird. Leave lots of areas of white paper where you have planned in your value sketch. Using an absorbent paper towel, lightly wipe the white areas of the background. Be sure to wipe in the SAME direction of the paint strokes. **ALLOW THE WASH TO DRY COMPLETELY.**



STEP 4: When the paper is COMPLETELY DRY, again rewet the background and repeat the "Streaky" wash process outlined in Step 3, using a light Yellow color such as Cadmium Yellow Lt. **HOWEVER**, this time do NOT apply as much color as with the Yellow Ochre. Allow the Light

Yellow color to flow into some, **BUT NOT ALL**, areas of the Yellow Ochre and **SLIGHTLY** into some of the white areas. Again use a clean paper towel to wipe the centers areas of the whites in the same direction as the paint strokes. **ALLOW THE WASH TO DRY COMPLETELY**



STEP 5: Again when the paper is COMPLETELY DRY, repeat the "Streaky" wash process using an even smaller amount of Cadmium Orange. Again, allow the Orange to flow into some, **BUT NOT ALL**, areas of the previously applied colors. And again only **SLIGHTLY** into some areas of the white. Repeat the process of wiping with a clean paper towel, being sure to wipe in the same direction as before. **ALLOW THE WASH TO DRY COMPLETELY.**



STEP 6: Begin this step by turning the paper right side up. Prepare several pieces of facial tissue to be used for blotting purposes by wadding them into a ball and then allowing ball to open itself back up. Refer to the Value Sketch

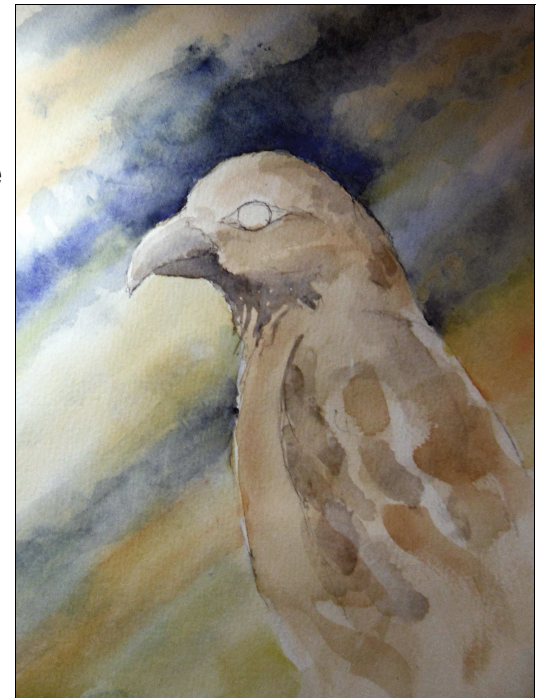
that you did prior to beginning the painting to remind yourself where you want the darkest areas of sky. Prepare a wash of Dark Blue paint by mixing Cobalt Blue with a darker Blue such as Indigo or Ultramarine Blue. You may wish to add a bit of Burnt Sienna to “grey-down” the brightness. Once again wet the entire background area. When the shine on the wet paper has almost disappeared, carefully apply the dark Blue mixture to the sky area around what will be the lightest the head of the birds head. Try not to apply it to the areas that will be adjacent to the dark areas of the bird. Allow some of the blue color to flow SLIGHTLY into the other colors of the background. IMMEDIATELY blot the lightest areas of the sky with the tissue. This will create soft edges and simulate clouds. The harder you press when blotting, the lighter the surface color will be. As long as the paper is still damp, you can add color and blot color as needed. **DO NOT OVER DO THIS STEP !!!** ONCE AGAIN, ALLOW THE PAINTING TO DRY COMPLETELY





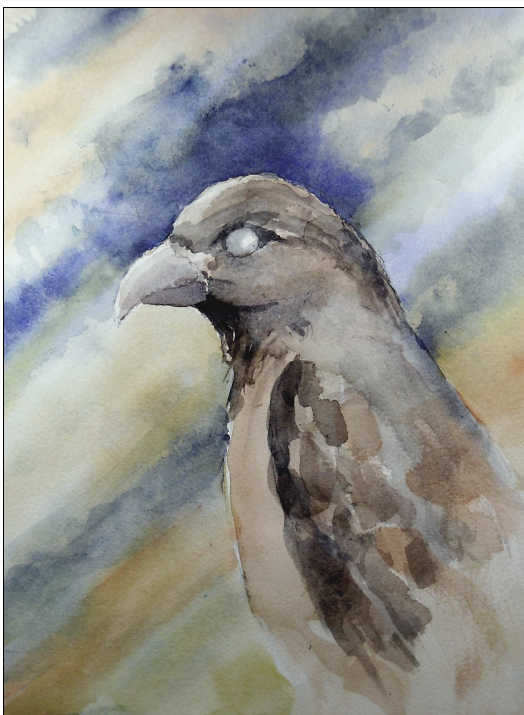
STEP 7: Start painting on the bird by using a very pale wash of Burnt Sienna on the breast and head areas. Then add a bit of Cobalt Blue to the Burnt Sienna to make the mix a bit darker. Use this darker mix to indicate some of the wing feathers. Be sure to leave some white areas. The above steps should all be done using the 1" flat brush.

Finer detailed areas such as the beak may at first seem awkward to paint with the 1" brush but with practice you can do amazing things with the



corner of one of these.

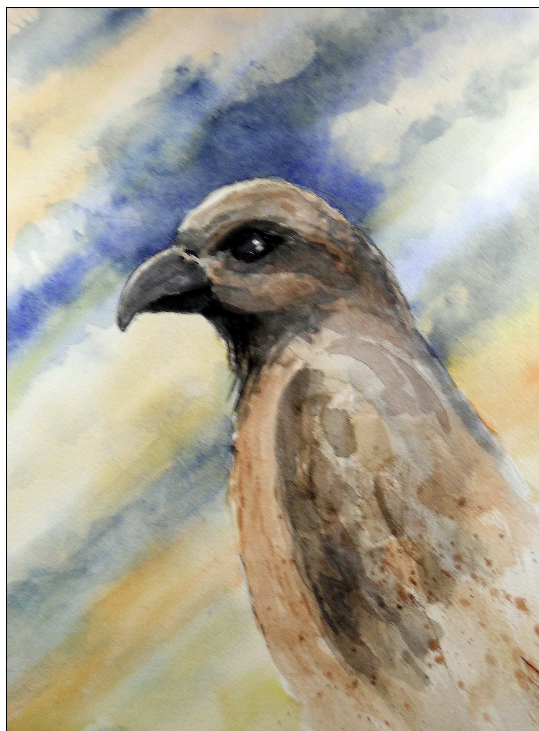
Don't worry about exact details at this point, but instead concentrate on simply suggesting feathers. Continue using these same colors in varying mixtures to model and shape the body of the bird. While the paper is still damp, mix in a bit of Indigo Blue to make a darker gray and begin modeling and shaping the eye, throat and beak areas. The beak should be lighter on top with a white upper edge and dark on the



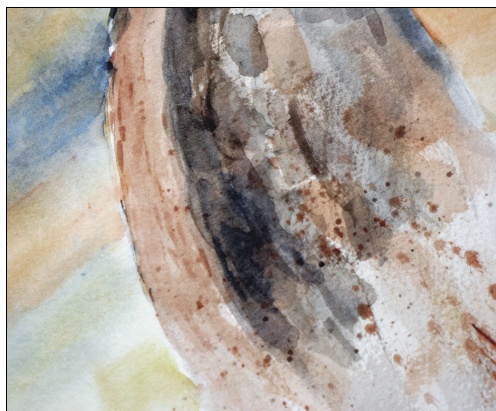
bottom. Be sure to leave a bit of a white highlight in the eye. Use a thinner wash of this mixture to define the front edge of the wing. Try to work fairly rapidly to allow the edges of the feathers to soften a bit while the paper is still damp.



Continue modeling with Burnt Sienna and a warm gray give the bird a nice solid form. Feather textures will add interest to the wing. The liner brush can be used to suggest feathers around the beak eye and head.



STEP 8: The final step is to mask the sky and head of the bird with scrap paper and splash some warm gray specks below the chest area and in the wing to make a nice random transition from



white paper to the body of the bird. This has a softening effect on the feathers.

*Now, put a mat on it
and enjoy your
accomplishments !*





A few reference photos for painting Birds of Prey. These photos were found by doing an image search on the internet. Many more are available online