

Drawing a Rufous Hummingbird Nest

By Vicky Earle

If you can draw a bowl or a teacup, you can draw a hummingbird nest!

When you find a nest, you might see it from different angles depending on if you are looking up, down, or straight at it. As your perspective changes, so does the shape of the nest. Spend some time looking closely to decide on the best angle to draw it. Also see if you can tell what kind of materials the bird used to build the nest. This will help you add texture later. (See p. 4 and 5 of this issue to learn more about materials in birds' nests.)



Examples of a basic cup-shaped nest from different viewpoints

The female Rufous Hummingbird is a master nest builder! First, she weaves a cup out of moss and lines it with soft plant down. The nest is then bound together with strands of spider web. For the perfect camouflage, lichen flakes are layered over the outer surface.

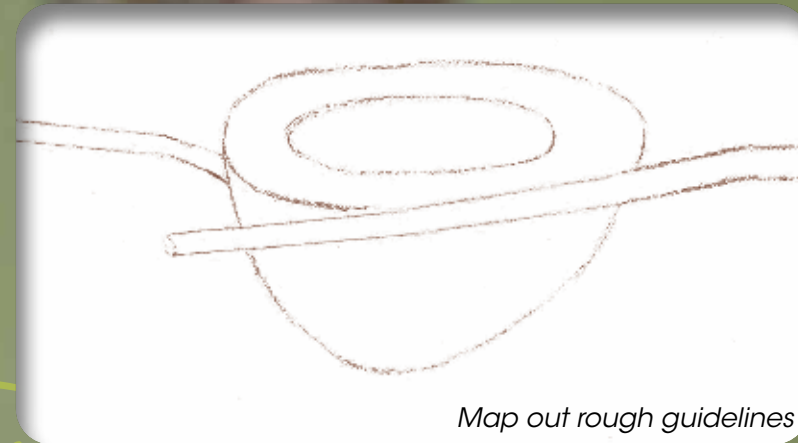
Before you start to draw, notice where the light is coming from. By shading the inside and outside of the cup, you can make your 2D drawing look more three-dimensional! Notice that the light is coming from the left-hand side in both the quick sketch and the reference photograph below.



light source



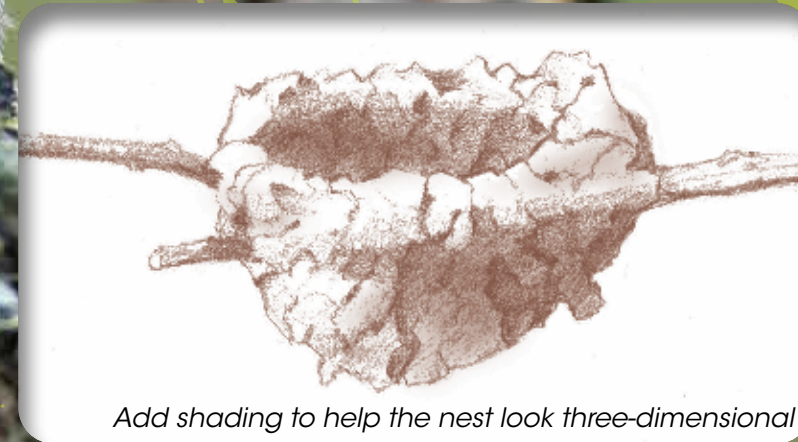
Rufous Hummingbird nest on display at the Richmond Nature Park Nature House.



Map out rough guidelines



Add lichen for camouflage



Add shading to help the nest look three-dimensional

STEPS

1. A favourite nesting site for Rufous Hummingbirds is often the fork of a drooping twig. To draw any nest, first map out rough guidelines to create the basic shape and add any branches that support it. Use the reference photo above to lightly sketch the basic shape of the cup and branches.
2. Following your guidelines, layer lichen shapes over the inside and outside of the nest as well as over the supporting branches. You can erase some of your guidelines where they cross over the lichen pieces.
3. Now look back at the lighting example and using the photo as reference, add shading to the inside and outside of your cup nest. The shading will be darkest where the light does not directly hit the nest.

Have fun and be patient!

Drawing a nest may take a bit of time but likely not as long as it takes a bird to build one. A female hummingbird works on her nest for 6 to 10 days before it's ready!

Natural science, medical and botanical illustrator Vicky Earle delights in connecting people to nature through art. She is a member of Nature Vancouver, the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, and a Signature member of the Artists for Conservation. Her recent award-winning book Exploring Vancouver Naturehoods is available at bookstores throughout Vancouver and BC. Details can be found on her website: drawinnature.com and Instagram: @drawinnature

