



NEWLY HATCHED DUCKLING

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After hours of struggle, a tiny Pekin duckling breaks free of the shell that's been its home for 30 days and staggers into the world. Once the down starts to dry, the duckling turns into a beautiful ball of pale yellow down. This down is shed over time as the ducklings feathers start to grow.

This tutorial will concentrate on drawing a realistic duckling and capturing the shading and texture of soft down.

LEARNING SECTIONS

- Drawing with graphite
- Blending
- 'Drawing' with a kneaded eraser
- Creating texture using light and shade
- Using fixative

Recommended for beginning artists

8 Pages

10 Illustrations

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SUPPLY LIST

- Graphite pencils, HB and 2B
- Kneaded eraser
- Pencil sharpener
- Tortillons, chamois or facial tissues for blending
- Good quality drawing paper
- A piece of copy paper to use as a hand guard
- Spray tin of workable fixative



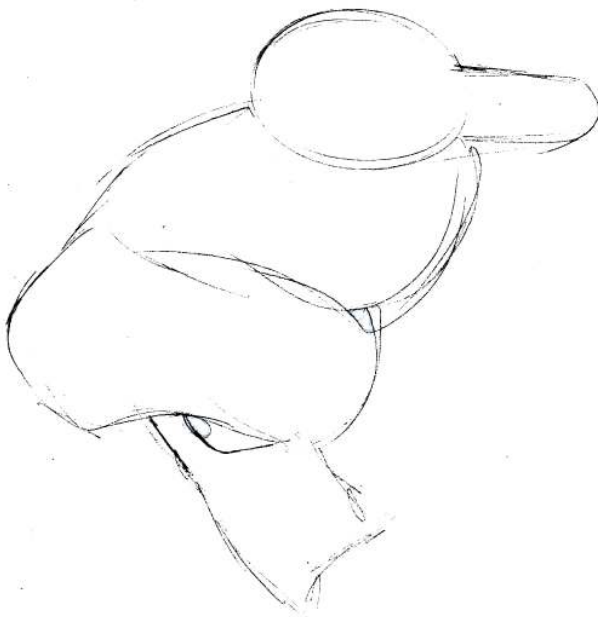
STARTING WITH SHAPES

Everything that you draw can be reduced to basic shapes in the beginning and that is where most artists begin their drawing. I have created the shapes here that make up the head, body and foot of the duckling.

Seeing objects as simple shapes provides you with the basics from which to develop and refine shapes further. It should be a simple drawing without great attention to detail or whether the shapes are perfect or not.

ACTION: Analyze your reference image and using an HB pencil, lightly draw the shapes that you see which make up the duckling.

I have darkened the lines in my drawing here, but in the actual drawing the lines should be very faint and easy to erase.



OBSERVATION AND REFINING SHAPES

Out of the basic shapes that are created, finer detail is now drawn. Here is where careful observation is required. Look at the reference and notice where lines intersect, where a line becomes curved or straight, and where light and shade change value.

ACTION: Study where one feature on the duckling lines up with another and make sure that your drawing reflects that to create accurate shapes.

Careful observation is the key to creating a good drawing. And without a good drawing to start with, your final piece won't be all you want it to be.

The soft down of the duckling's body is a series of short straight lines indicating the form of the muscle underneath. Note the placement and shape of the eye as well as the curve of the beak (with egg tooth still in place at the tip)

ACTION: Use an HB pencil and add detail to the duckling using the illustration and reference to guide you.



SHADING & BLENDING

Because nothing will be the pure white of the paper, except for bright white highlights, so the whole body of the duckling should be given an even 'wash' of graphite. This means stroking on a layer of graphite smoothly, with lines close together so they are virtually invisible and using very light pressure.

ACTION: Use an HB pencil to add a wash of graphite to the outlined duckling

When the body is covered in the initial layer of graphite, use your tortillon or a tissue and gently blend the graphite to give a smooth, even value over the duckling.

ACTION: Use a circular motion with your tortillon or tissue to achieve an even value.

This becomes the 'ugly duckling' stage! All drawings go through this process and often artists get disheartened at this point and abandon the drawing, never letting it realize its potential.

But don't stop. Keep going, it will get better, I promise!!



CREATING TEXTURE AND SHAPE



The down on this duckling follows the lines of the body the same way hair on a person's head or fur on a dog or cat would. To create the illusion of these fine hairs, you use short pencil strokes with little pressure to draw over the base of graphite that you've already created.

ACTION: Use a 2B pencil and start creating the form and texture of the down. Where areas are in shadow, you simply increase the number of lines that you use which will darken the area. You're not actually drawing the hairs, but drawing the shadows between them.

As this duckling literally just broke out of its shell, it hasn't completely dried off and fluffed up, so some of the down is sticking to its head and is still damp. This needs to be carefully drawn to reflect that texture on the head.

ACTION: Observe the down on the head and how it forms strands, with moisture, where it sticks to the head and how it shaded and start applying those shapes to the head of the duckling.

Use a very sharp pencil to define the shapes of the damp strands and lay down light shading in the darker areas where the skin of the head shows between the strands.

Continue to add the texture of the down to the duckling by drawing short lines into the areas that are shaded, using light pressure. These layers will increase the values and give the shape to the body of the duckling and help build the texture of soft, fluffy down.



'DRAWING' WITH A KNEADED ERASER

A kneaded eraser is one of the best drawing tools that you will ever have. It has the ability to be molded to fit into small areas and is soft enough to simply lift graphite off the paper without destroying the paper's surface.

Shape the eraser to fit the area, and then gently press it onto the surface, removing some graphite. Use your kneaded eraser to create lighter values in the body of the duckling and graduate the shading between light and dark areas. Do not rub back and forth. This will only drive graphite deeper into the tooth of the paper and make it more difficult to remove.

Shape the eraser into a thin point and use it to create sharp highlights of the top layer of down that is catching the light. Keep referring to the reference image and carefully observe the changes in values on duckling, as well as subtle changes in values in the beak.



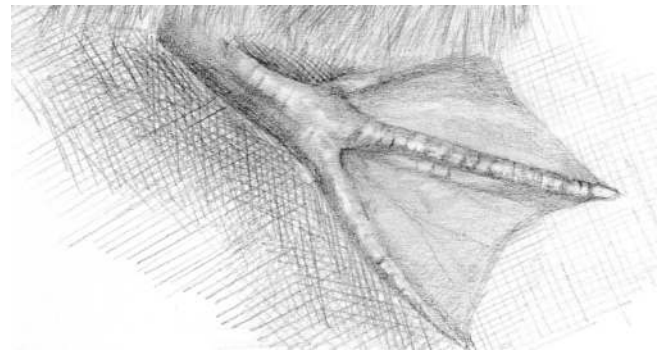
DRAWING THE FOOT AND LEG



There is just one foot and partial leg showing for this duckling. It's important to observe how the skin is pulled over the bones of the foot and stretched between the toes, giving it the classic webbing enabling this duckling to swim well. Skin in most birds tends to look reptilian, looking as if it consists of series of scales or plates and ducks are no different.

ACTION: Notice the light direction on the foot and leg of the bird and begin shading on the darkest side using small circular motions with your pencil tip.

Circulism, or covering small areas of the paper in a circular motion with graphite works best if you have a chisel point on the end of your pencil. This flattened surface at the end of your pencil covers a broader area of the paper and you can use the sharpened edge for defining small areas when needed.



FINAL DETAILS

Continue adding depth to the drawing by increasing the dark values and adding highlights where the light hits the high points. To 'ground' the duckling, I have added some crosshatching around the foot of the bird. These are simply short straight lines going in several directions that provide shading to indicate that the duckling is actually standing on something solid. Shading is darkest closest to the object, so increase the amount of crosshatching nearest the leg and foot of the duckling. These increases in values will bump up the contrasts and bring a sense of realism to the duckling.

'FIXING' YOUR DRAWING



Because graphite can smear easily, you need to 'fix' it. Buy a quality spray workable fixative from your local art supply store. Work outside or in a room with good ventilation. Fumes from fixative are very strong and the product is highly flammable.

Before spraying your drawing, spray away from you or onto a throwaway drawing until you see a very fine mist coming from the can's nozzle. Initial sprays can contain large droplets that will leave spots on your drawing.

ACTION: Apply a light coat, not soaking your paper, at a 30-degree angle about 1 foot away from the drawing. Read the can's label for full instructions and safety precautions. Spray the fixative horizontally across the piece and let it dry. Then apply it vertically and allow that to dry.

CHALLENGE

Practice the technique of drawing down, using hair or the fur of a pet, as they all use the same technique. Always draw in the direction that the hair or fur grows. Take your time and notice where the values change and how one part relates to another in placement.

Most of all, enjoy yourself. Happy drawing!