



# MJ Bach

Local Artist of  
the Day - Pattern

Nature Journal, Watercolor, and Drawings

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## A little bit about MJ!

- ◆ MJ used to work at Saint John's Outdoor University!
- ◆ MJ works as a middle school science teacher
- ◆ MJ really likes to nature journal.

MJ Bach

MJ looks really closely at patterns in nature so she can draw and write about things in detail.

When you look at MJ's nature journal pages, challenge yourself to see how MJ draws or uses different patterns in her art!

What kinds of patterns do you see on this page?

28 APRIL 2012

Yellow-bellied sap suckers  
*Sphyrapicus varius*

"Most woodpeckers peck only to pull potentially damaging insects from trees. Yellow-bellied Sap Suckers actually serve as agents, allowing diseases & insects to infiltrate... trees. Their preferred food is the sweet running sap that flows in healthy trees.  
(The Folklore of Birds)  
↳ makes up 20% of diet!

The lines are much softer than my pencil makes suggest.

tongues are shorter than other woodpeckers, covered in fine hairs to retrieve sap more easily.

blush of yellow on breast

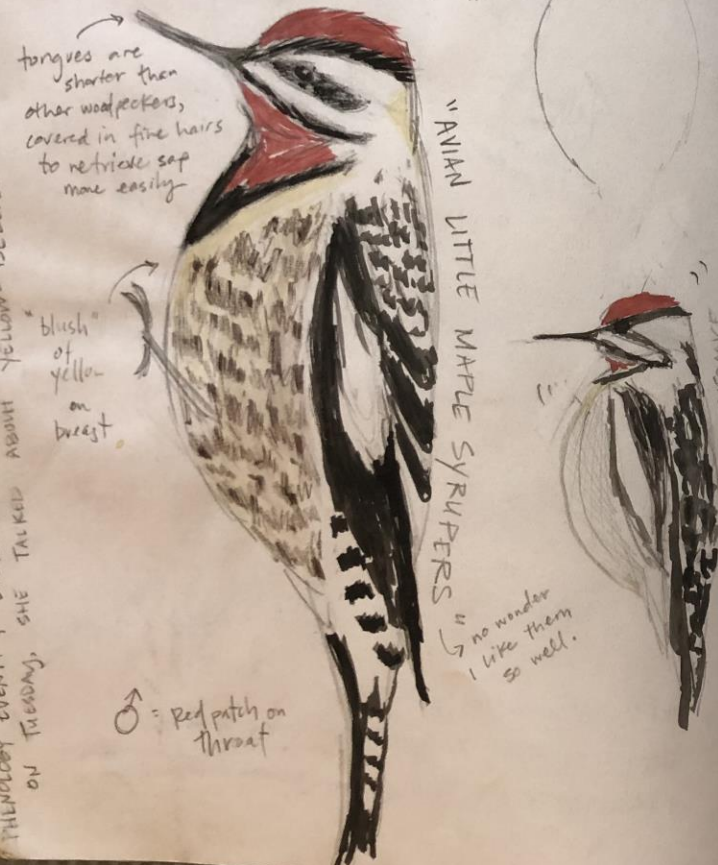
"ANIAN LITTLE MAPLE SYRUPERS"

♂ = red patch on throat

PHENOLOGY EVENT. I LISTENED TO LAURA ERIKSON'S 'FOR THE BIRDS' EVERY DAY THIS WEEK. ABOUT YELLOW-BELLIED SAP-SUCKERS... ON TUESDAY, SHE TALKED

no wonder I like them so well.

IN TREE NEXT TO WD ENTRANCE \* RED glowing in the 5:00 sunlight!



WHO else BENEFITS?

- ruby-throated hummingbirds
- insects feeding on sap
- bacteria
- lichens?
- Kinglets, warblers, phoebe

I noticed that below each fresh sap sucker hole (on a particular birch tree on the trail to the South stairs) there was a great abundance of pink, dusty bacteria—perhaps the same common species required for powdered sunshine? I tried to find out the name without success.

↳ Trentapnia. (according to Joe)

5/31 - Walked past same tree & found a small worm-like insect poking out of a sap sucker hole made fresh this spring. PERFECT. "neeah" -

PREENING!


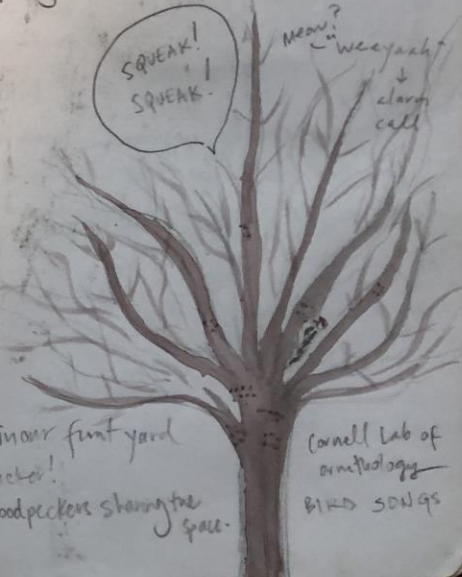
it may have been my eyes playing tricks, but it seems that his feathers were even more brilliant afterward.

29 April - spotted another in our front yard tree: a female sapsucker! & some downy woodpeckers sharing the space.

SQUEAK! SQUEAK!

meow? weeyah! alarm call

Cornell Lab of Ornithology BIRD SONGS

# MORE SPRINGTIME celebrations April 20, 14, 12

I took a sample flower home in a Mason jar & it was perfectly 3 dimensional & colorful 12 hrs later...

next time, I'll get the VIBRANCY of colors right...

(Sketch of a flower with labels: Sketch of Katharine, Emily, Kati & Danny David)

For years and years I struggled just to love my life. And then

the butterfly rose, weightless, in the wind. "Don't love your life too much," it said,

and vanished into the world. "One or Two Things" - Mary Oliver

We went to the lax lake entrance of Tettegouche to EXPLORE today. It was very warm (70!) and windy!

[I needed an afternoon to give my mind a break from thinking too hard after reading too much :...]  
This was the perfect (refreshing) distraction.

At one point in our wanderings, Katharine, Dr & I realized that we were 1/2 way on the trail around Tettegouche Lake, so we made the choice to continue forward. I'm glad we did...

Katharine stumbled into an incredibly beautiful, and architecturally eye-catching *Lobelia pulmonaria*! She remembered that it was one that becomes illuminated when spritzed with water, so we performed the experiment.

This drawing doesn't begin to do justice to the detail or the 3-dimensionality of the lobelia. Someday I'll create a 3D model.



DRY: COLOR CHANGE: WET!



Further down the trail, Andrea stopped us to draw attention to our first Spring Wildflower: *Claytonia caroliniana* nestled in some leaf litter. Wow! Anne noted Bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*) down by the Forest Ecology Building today as well.

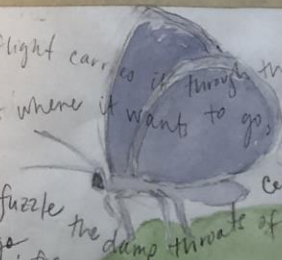


Just before the Tettegouche Cabin site, we took a short detour down a stream & heard the sweet sound of Spring Peepers!

Today again I am hardly myself. It happens over and over. It is heaven-sent. It flows through me like the blue wave. Green leaves--you may believe this or not--have once or twice burst from the tips of my fingers somehow here deep in the woods, in the reckless seizure of spring. Though, of course, I also know that other song, the sweet passion of one-ness. Just yesterday I watched an ant crossing a path, through the tumbled pine needles she toiled. And I thought: she will never live another life but this one. And I thought: if she lives her life with all her strength is she not wonderful and wise? And I continued this up the miraculous pyramid of everything until I came to myself. And still, even in these northern woods, on these hills of sand I have flown from the window of myself to become white heron, grey whale, fox, hedgehog, camel. Oh, sometimes already my body has felt like the body of a flower! Sometimes already my heart is a red parrot, perched among strange, dark trees, flapping and screaming.

"Reckless Poem" by Mary Oliver

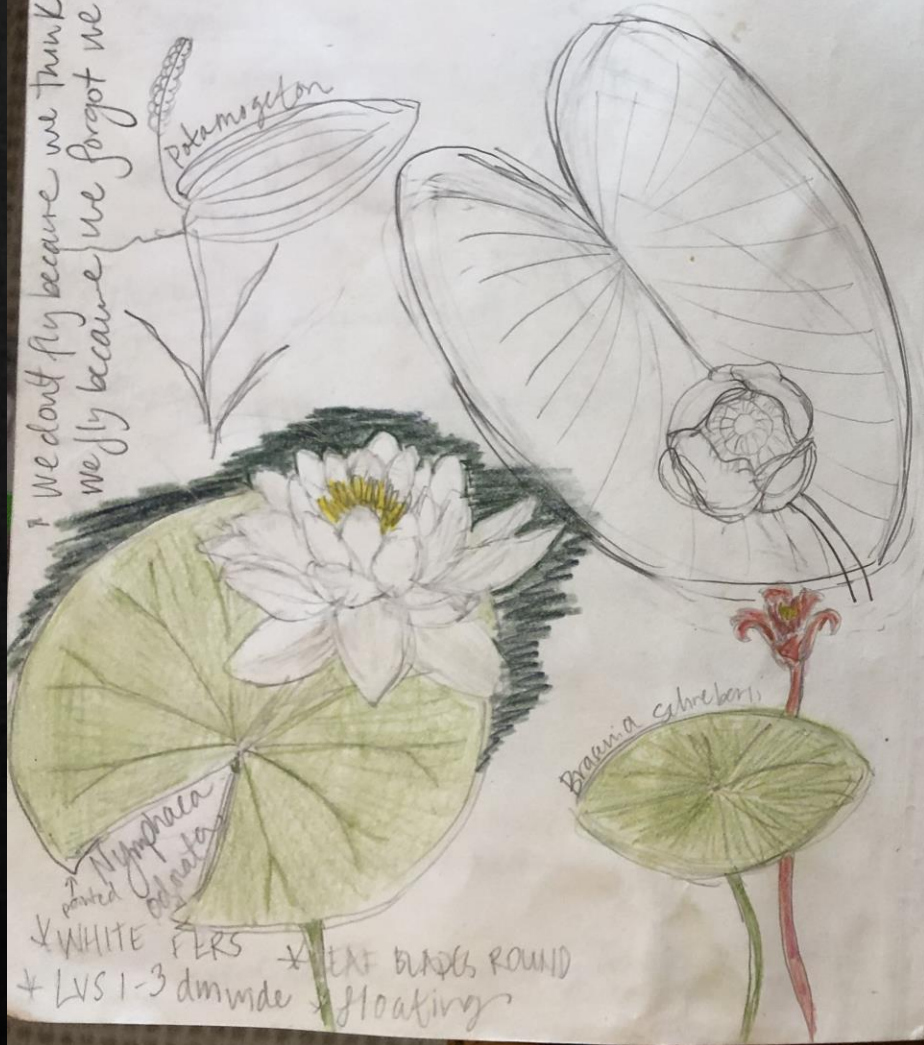
"The butterfly's loping flight carries it through the country of the leaves delicately, and well enough to get it where it wants to go, wherever that is, stopping here and there to fuzzle the damp throats of flowers and the black mud; up and down it swings, frenzied and aimless; and sometimes for long delicious moments it is perfectly lazy, riding motionless in the breeze on the soft stalk of some ordinary flower."



♫ We don't fly because we think we can't  
we fly because we forgot we couldn't ♫

BULLFROG  
GREEN FROG  
SLAPPING?  
LOON

PILEATED WOODPECKER  
SONG SPARROW  
CHICKADEE  
LOON



PAINTED TURTLE  
LOTS OF ODONATA  
- green  
- blue  
- red  
- black

LAKE STEATON  
St. John's University  
Collegeville, Stearns, MN



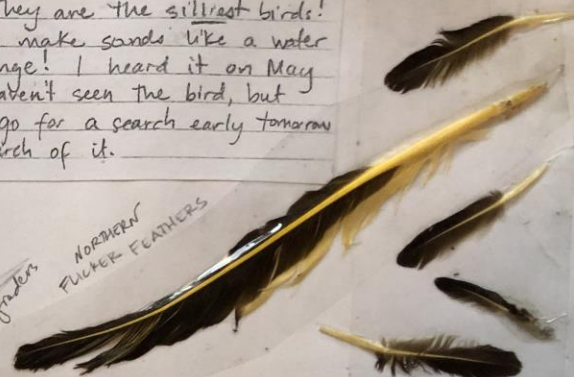
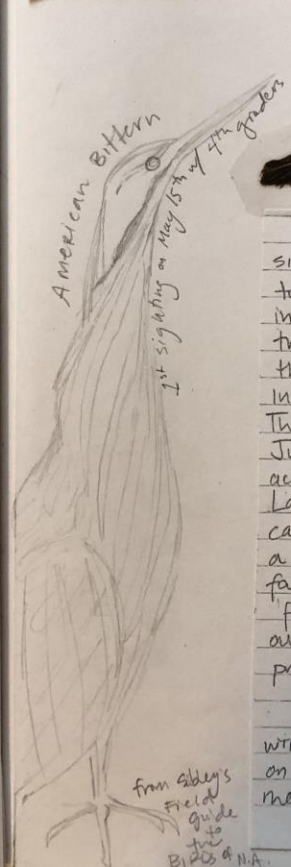
One of my assignments for Joe is the nature notebook I shared with you and Gram. It is a fun and artistic way to record what I have seen, and helps in the learning when I have to pay attention to detail. My struggles lately have been:

- ① There is so much to write about!
- ② I'd rather be out, "experiencing spring" than inside journaling...
- ③ Even when I am motivated to write and draw, it is impossible to capture the special-ness of the things I have seen and heard.



- A list of events and sightings that speak for themselves (or are simply too hard to capture "the essence" of):
- A spectacular, dancing display of the Northern Lights on April 24<sup>th</sup> at midnight in my backyard
  - The colors in the sunrise. Every morning.
  - A Kingfisher - once perched on a beaver lodge (4/22) and once hovering in mid-air, like a giant hummingbird, before flitting away (5/11). Amazing!

There is an American Bittern who has been spending time in the wetlands at Wolf Ridge. They are the silliest birds! The noise they make sounds like a water pump -- so strange! I heard it on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and still haven't seen the bird, but am hoping to go for a search early tomorrow morning in search of it.



On April 2<sup>nd</sup>, Joe took us to a few sites on the cliff-shore of Lake Superior to spot Peregrine Falcons. He has been involved with researching the birds for about twenty years -- rock climbing from the top of the cliff down to a nest to band and get information about young peregrine chicks. The eggs typically hatch end of May to early June, so this is the time to locate active nests. On April 29<sup>th</sup>, I was visiting the Lake and heard and saw a pair of falcons, cackling and swooping around me. Beneath a white pine at the top of the cliff I found handfuls of bright yellow and black feathers and collected them for ID. Turns out, they belong to the Northern Flicker, prey for our peregrine falcon.

I shared this story and the feathers with Joe & he invited me to come along on an adventure to locate nests. We met at Crystal Bay at 1pm on May 6<sup>th</sup>.

from Sibey's Field Guide to the Birds of NA.

Sometimes, MJ puts real things from nature in her nature journal, like this delicate feather!

WILD LEEKS!

APRIL 18 - DAVID STIELER + I STOPPED for a taste on our way to his house... Another nibble on 4-20 on the way to the Wolf Center ("taking a wild [leek]") w/ Joe & Co.

29 April

Emily, Elsa, + Dru + I

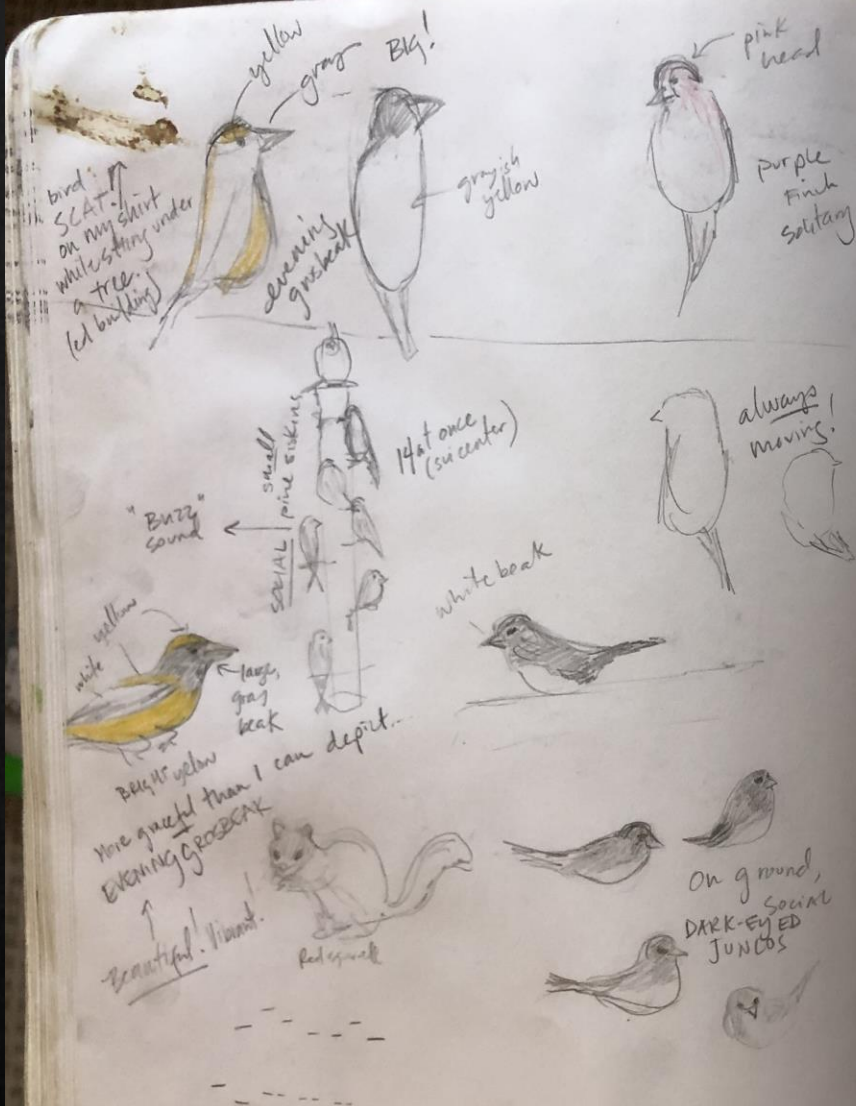
harvested handfuls + handfuls  
for dinner --  
potato leek soup



LAST YEAR'S FLR STALK


SMELL!

INTERNATIONAL WOLF CENTER



COLOR  
SIZE  
BEAK SHAPE  
BEHAVIORS

— social?  
— ground?  
— position?  
fright?



A DAY AT THE FEEDERS  
23 APRIL, 11:30AM; ED  
1:30PM; SC

\*GETTING TO KNOW BIRDS  
THROUGH DRAWING!

↳ I've always felt over-whelmed w/ so many SPECIES + no starting place.  
HERE is the starting place.  
NOW is the time.



← smaller,  
darker  
than  
pine sister?

BLACK-THROATED  
CHICKADEE

pine skin  
in flight

MOVEMENT!

- \* FOX SPARROW (red building window hit)
- \* WHITE-THROATED SPARROW (brush pile near sg feeder)
- \* EASTERN PHOEBE (office picnic tables)