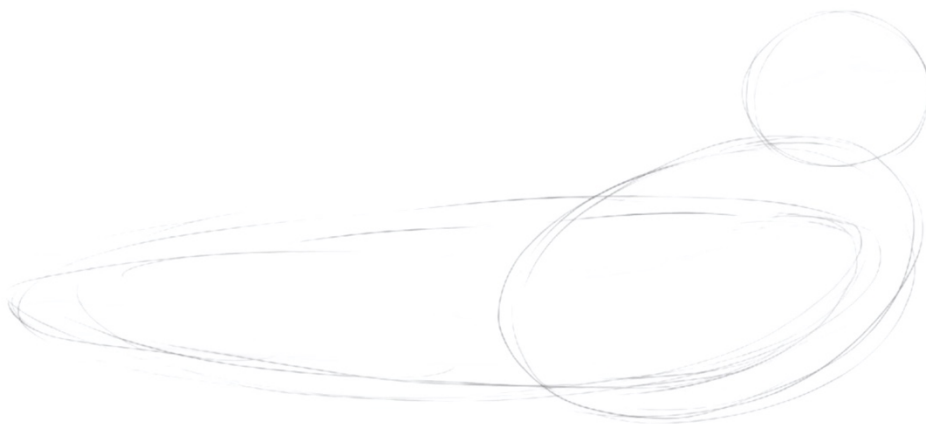


Hello, I'm David Sibley, and here are the steps I use to draw an Arctic Tern.

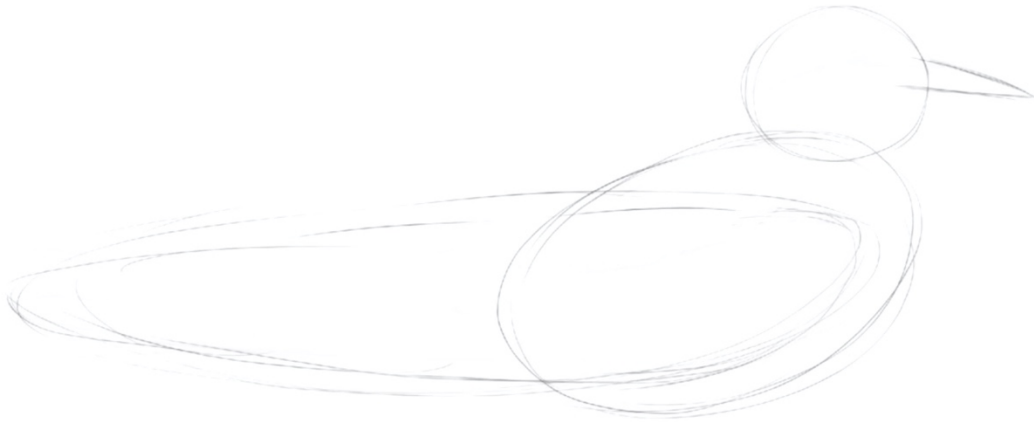
For drawing, the most unusual thing about terns is that they have extremely long wings that fold up when the tern is perched to form long curved points sticking out behind the body. Start with an oval for the body, almost horizontal, and make sure you put it on the right side of the paper to leave room for the wings. Then add a smaller circle balanced on top of the body.



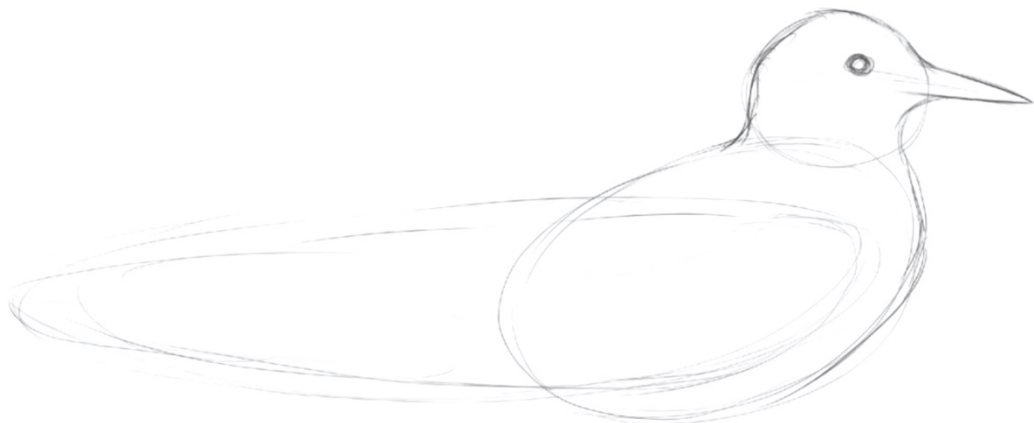
For the folded wing, a long narrow oval extends from just below the head, follows close to the lower edge of the body, and then extends more than one body length back, curving up slightly out behind the body. The lower edge of this oval is all that matters for the drawing.



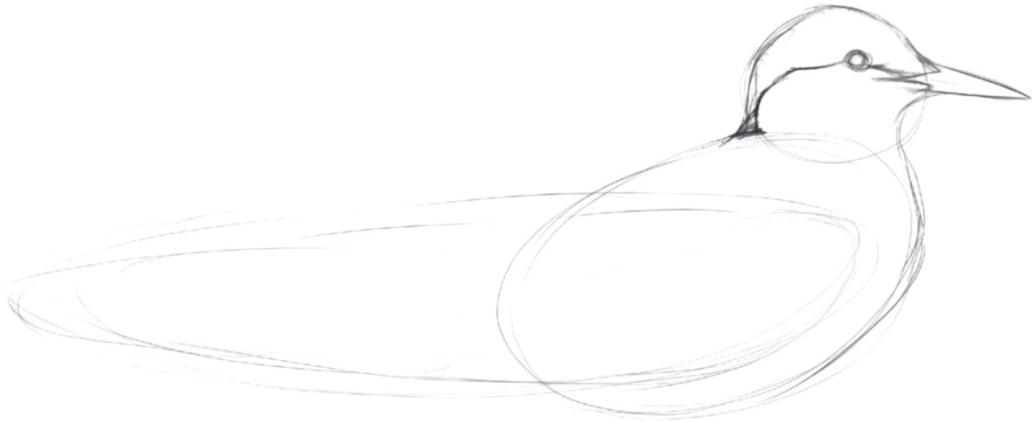
For the bill, draw a straight line, about horizontal and about the middle of the head, then draw a very slightly curved line above that to form a long, narrow triangle.



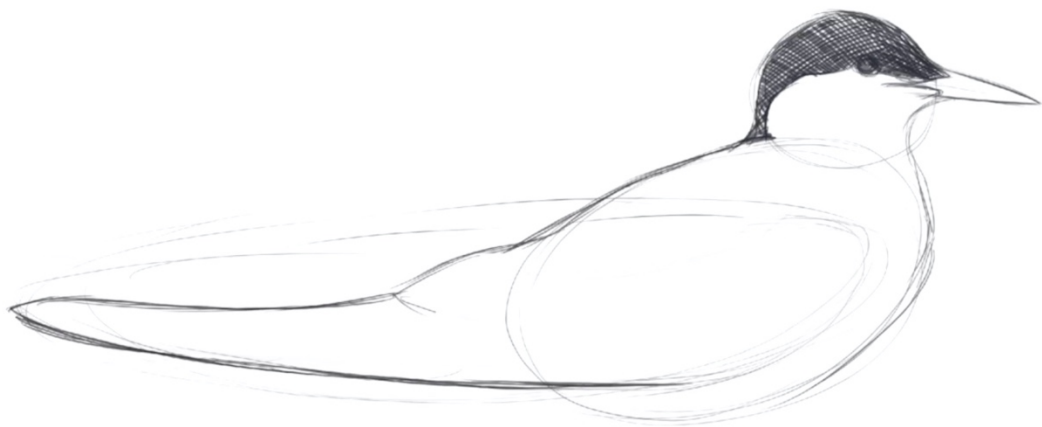
Imagine a line along the middle of the bill coming back into the head. The eye is along this line and just forward of the middle of the head. To form the outline of the head, it's important to remember that terns are very streamlined, so draw smooth curves connecting the bill to the head and the head to the body.



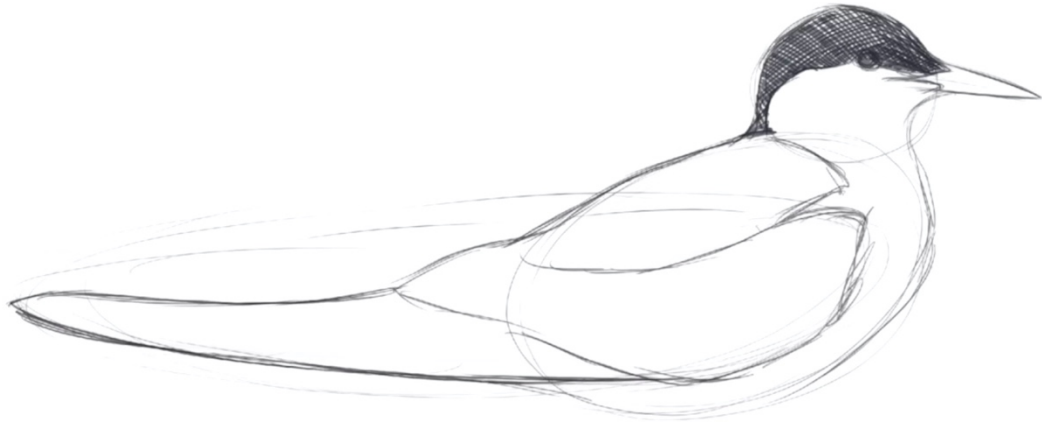
For the tern's black cap, draw a line connecting the bill to the lower edge of the eye, and then a line from the eye, curving in stages down the back of the neck. The eye and all of the feathers above this line are black.



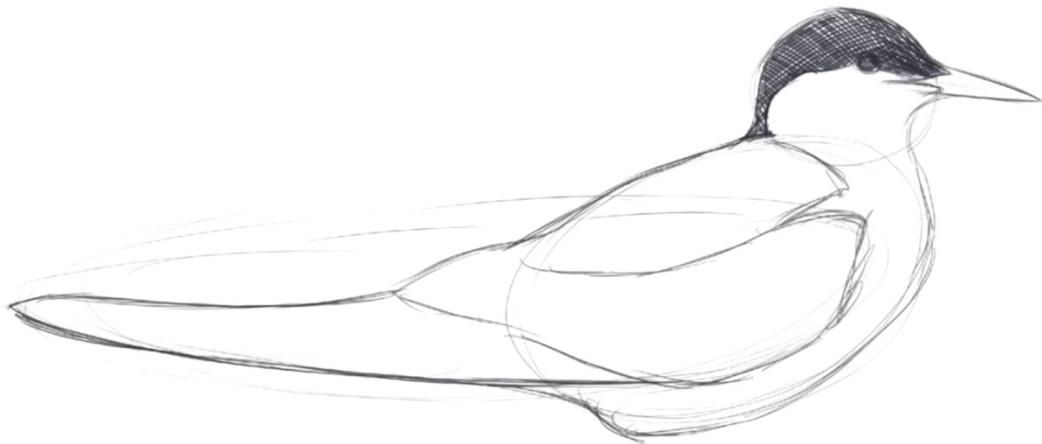
After coloring the cap black, draw the outline of the back, with a slight bulge where the back meets the folded wing, and curving up along the wingtip. Pay special attention to the gentle smooth curve of the lower edge of the wing, all the way from the tip to the middle of the body.



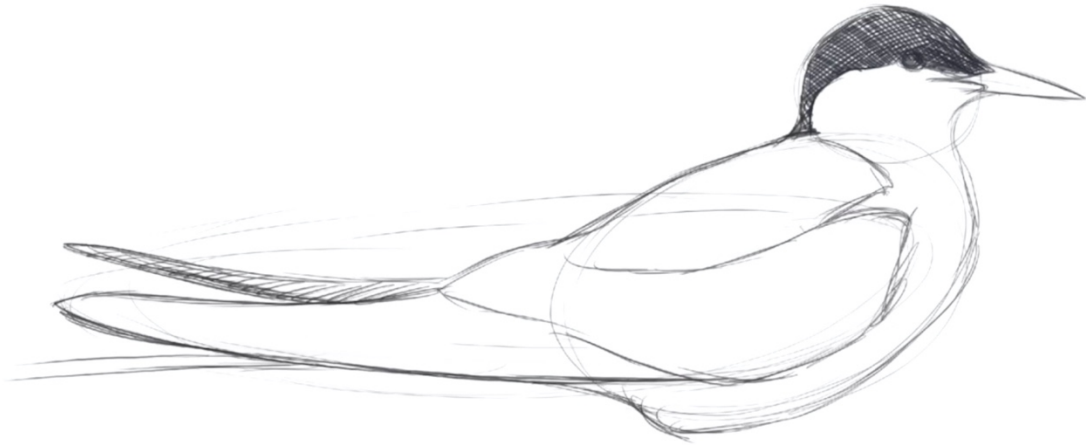
Add the edge of the wing coverts as a diagonal line across the wing; feathers overlapping the leading edge of the wing, and the roughly oval patch of back feathers overlapping the top of the folded wing.



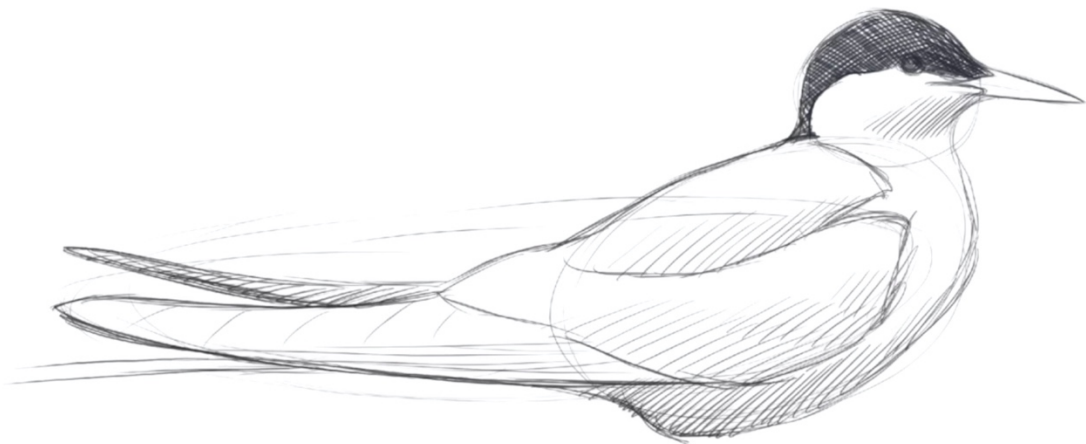
Finish the contour of the belly, with a sharp curve up under the wings.



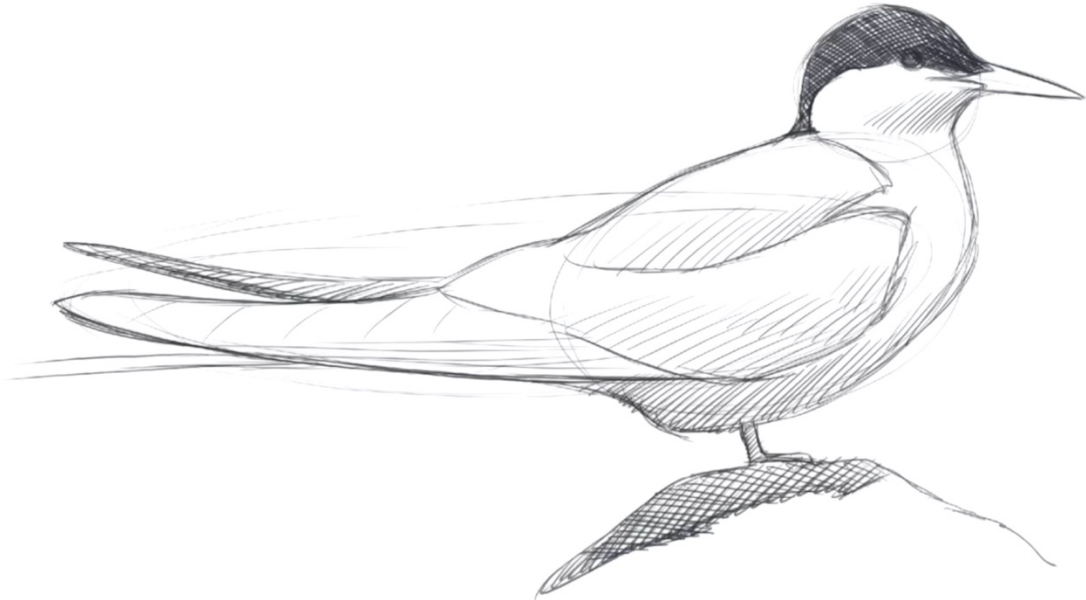
Add the second wingtip, which looks very narrow since it is seen at an angle; and the tip of the very long forked tail, which appears as two slender plumes sticking out from under the wings.



Add details of the wingtip, the big flight feathers show straight lines along the lower edge of the wingtip and diagonal lines marking the tip of each feather. Add some shading on the wing coverts, the edge of the back, and the underside of the body.



Finally, add the feet. Birds always balance over their feet, but because the back end of the tern is formed by such long wing and tail feathers (which weight almost nothing) the balance point is farther forward than you would expect. Put the very short legs just behind the head. Finally, draw a rock for the bird to perch on and add a shadow on the rock.



Have fun, and please share what you've created

#sketchwithsibley