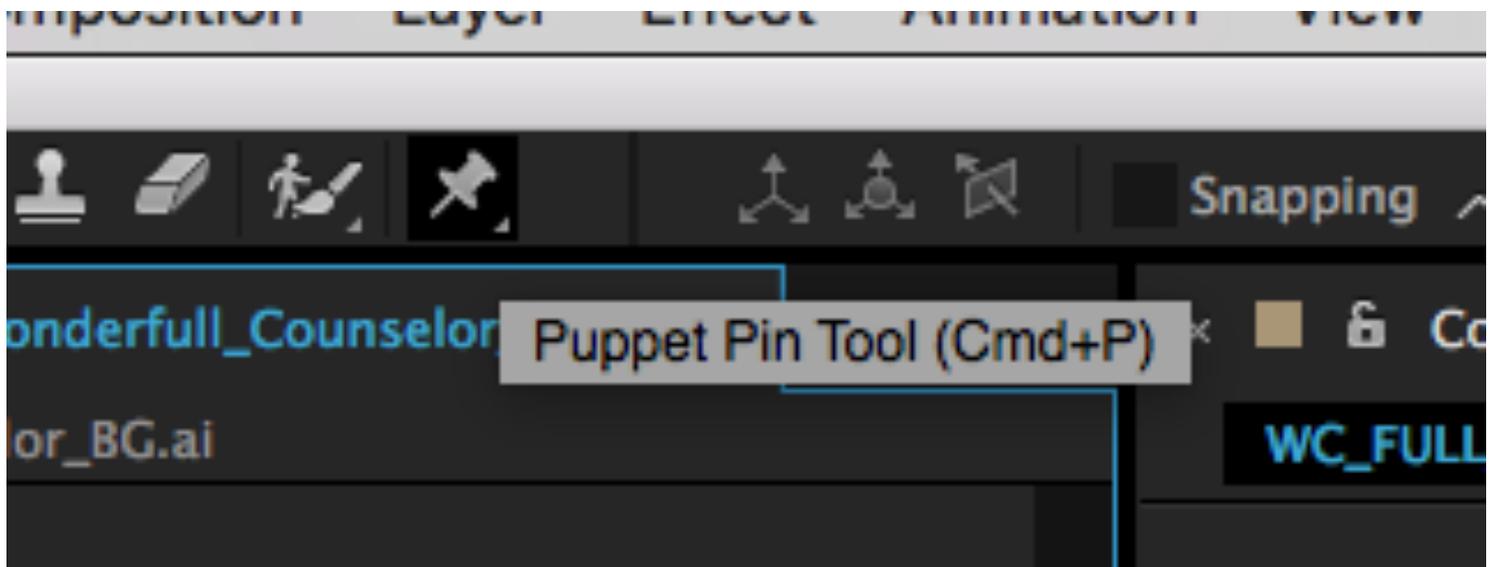# Add subtle animation and bring your designs to life with the Puppet tool in After Effects. Here's everything you need to know.
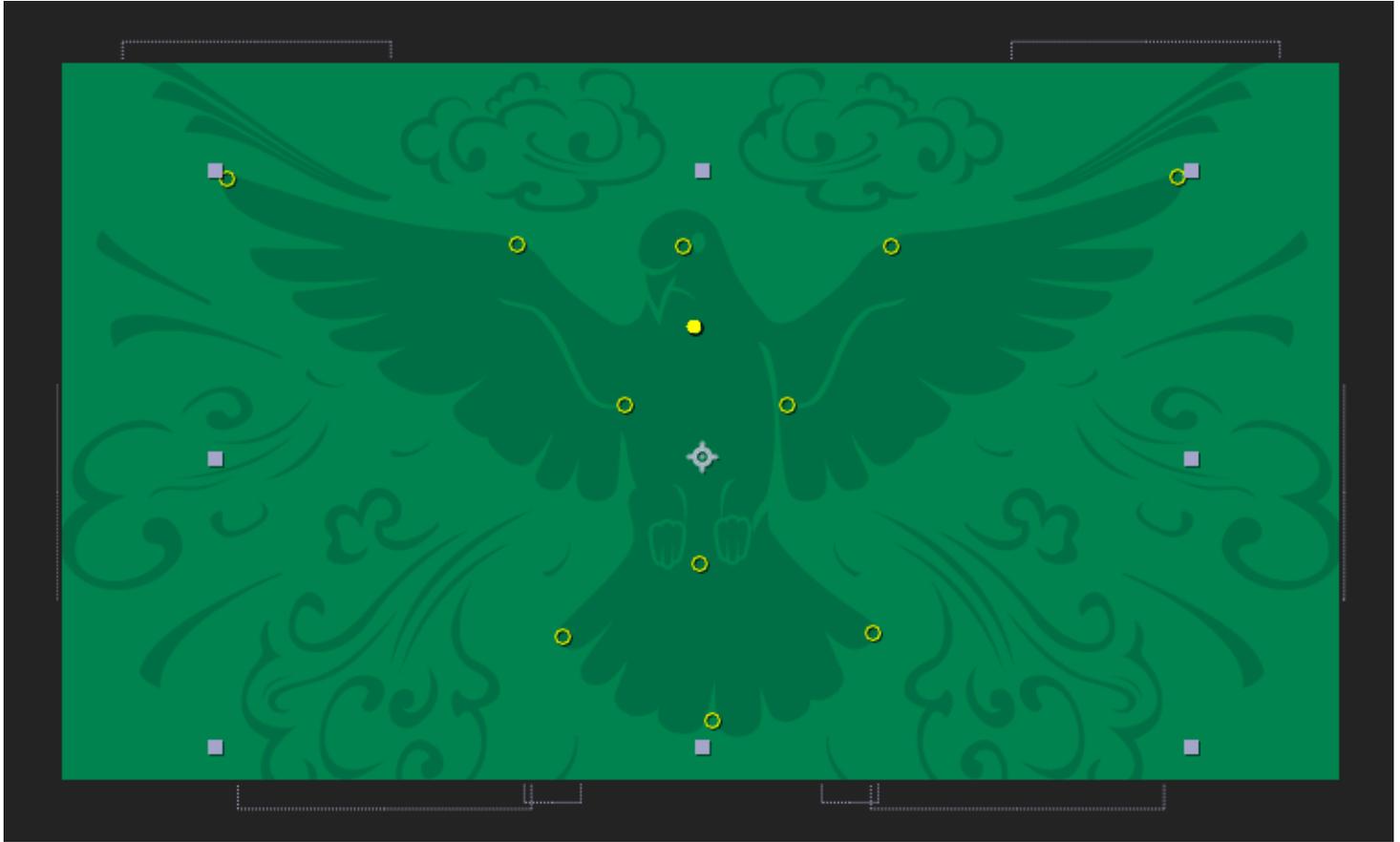
When working with image assets (especially vector designs), subtle application of the **Puppet tool in After Effects** can add life to your animation.

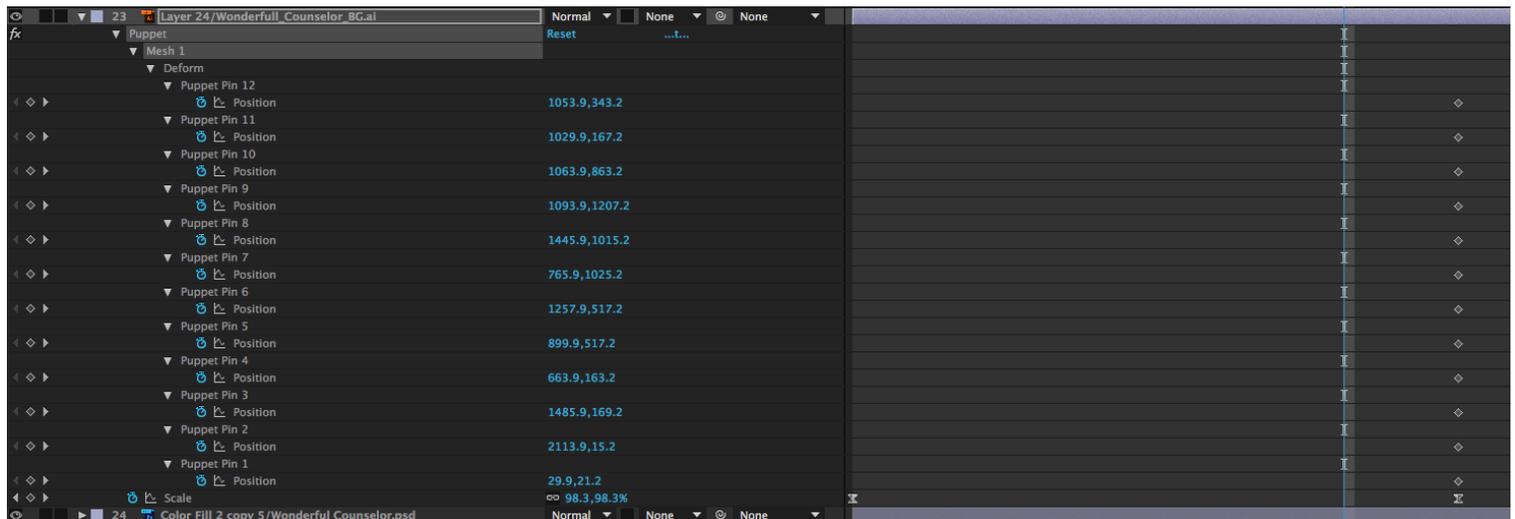In this example, I'm animating a background design of a bird and other design elements scaling up.

The bird feel pretty lifeless, so I'm going to use the **Puppet tool** (the pushpin icon in the menu bar, as seen below) to give it some subtle movement. The **Puppet tool** lets you add "pins" in the image, then move and warp the image based on where you move the pins.

Each time you click on the image with the **Puppet tool**, you add a "pin" which acts as a kind of soft joint. I'm going to start by adding my initial joints, as well as adding a few joints that I won't be keyframing, to keep certain parts of the image from moving. I'm going to place pins on the tips, middle joint, and beginning of its wings, the tips and beginning of his tail, and the middle of the head and the neck.
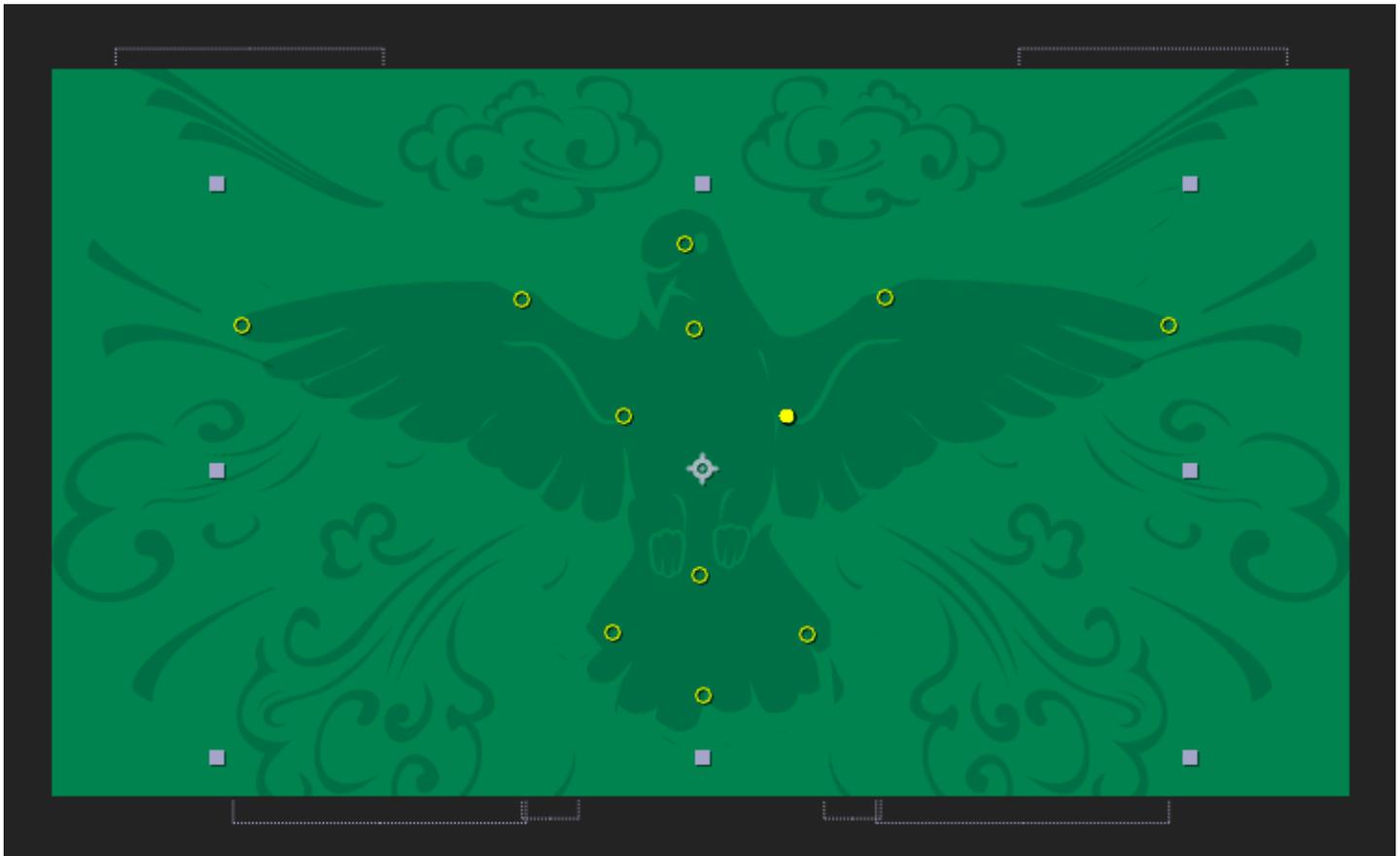
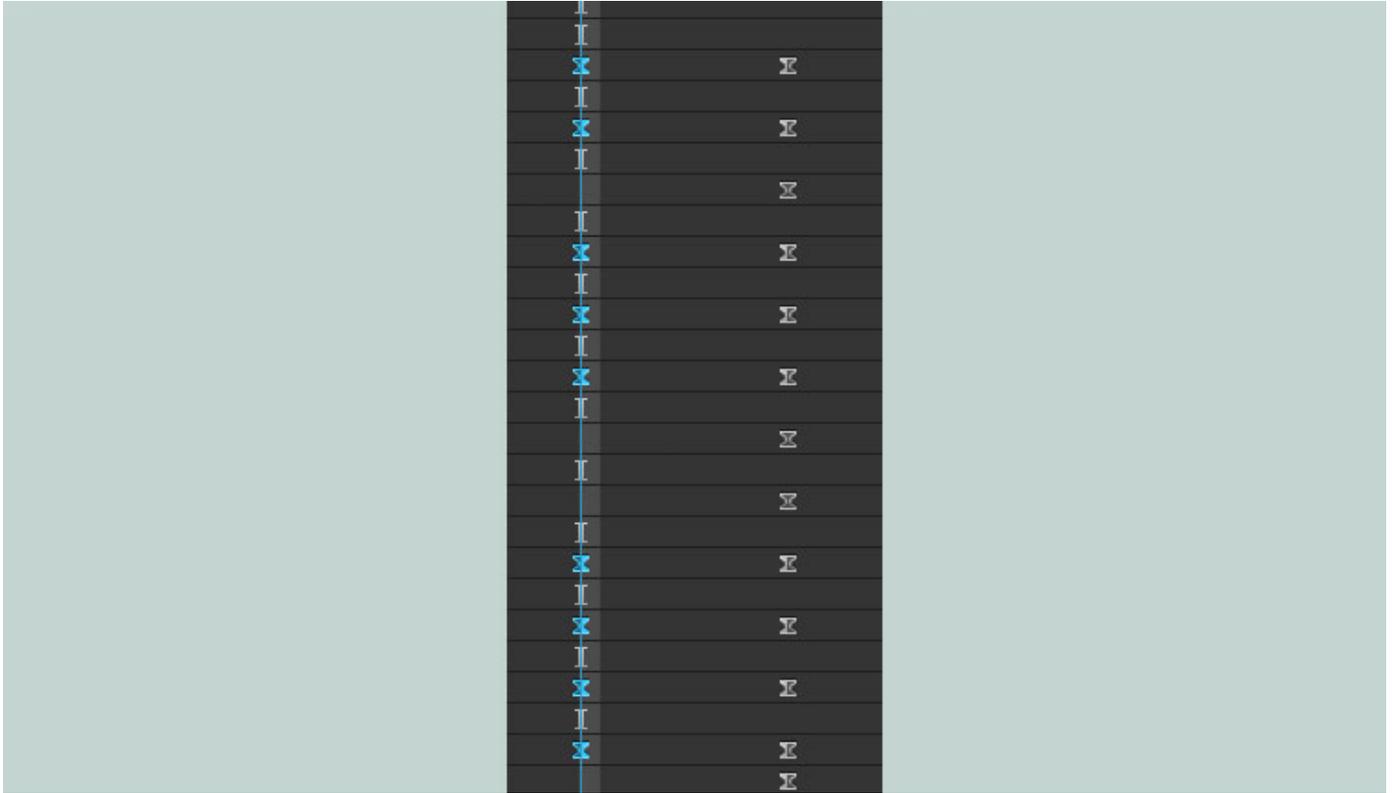By default, as soon as you add a pin, it puts an initial keyframe for that pin wherever your playhead is.

From here, I'm going to move back a few frames and **do my deforming**. I want it to look like the bird is spreading his wings and tail as it scales up, so I'm going to deform it by bringing the tips of its wings down a little and the mid-point of its wings down and a little towards the center of its body.

I'll take the three bottom points on the tail and move them all in a bit towards the top tail joint. Then I'll take the head pin and drag it up just a little, so that it looks like the bird is lowering its head as it spreads its wings into a flying position.
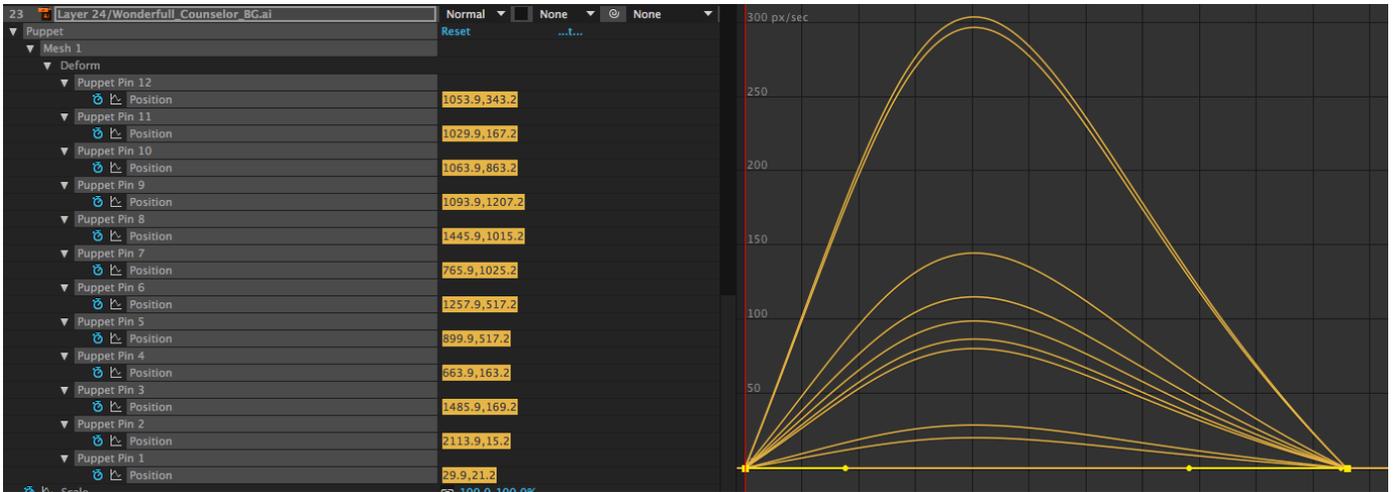

Previewing this, it does look like its wings are stretching out, so now I'm going to move those keyframes to line up with the scale I already have on the layer.

You'll notice it looks a little… funny. This is because the **Puppet tool** movement isn't eased at all. I'm going to select all of the deform keyframes and right click, setting them to "Easy Ease."

After that, I'll jump into the Curve Editor and drag the influence on the end keyframes to about 50%.

This gives us a nice, eased movement.