

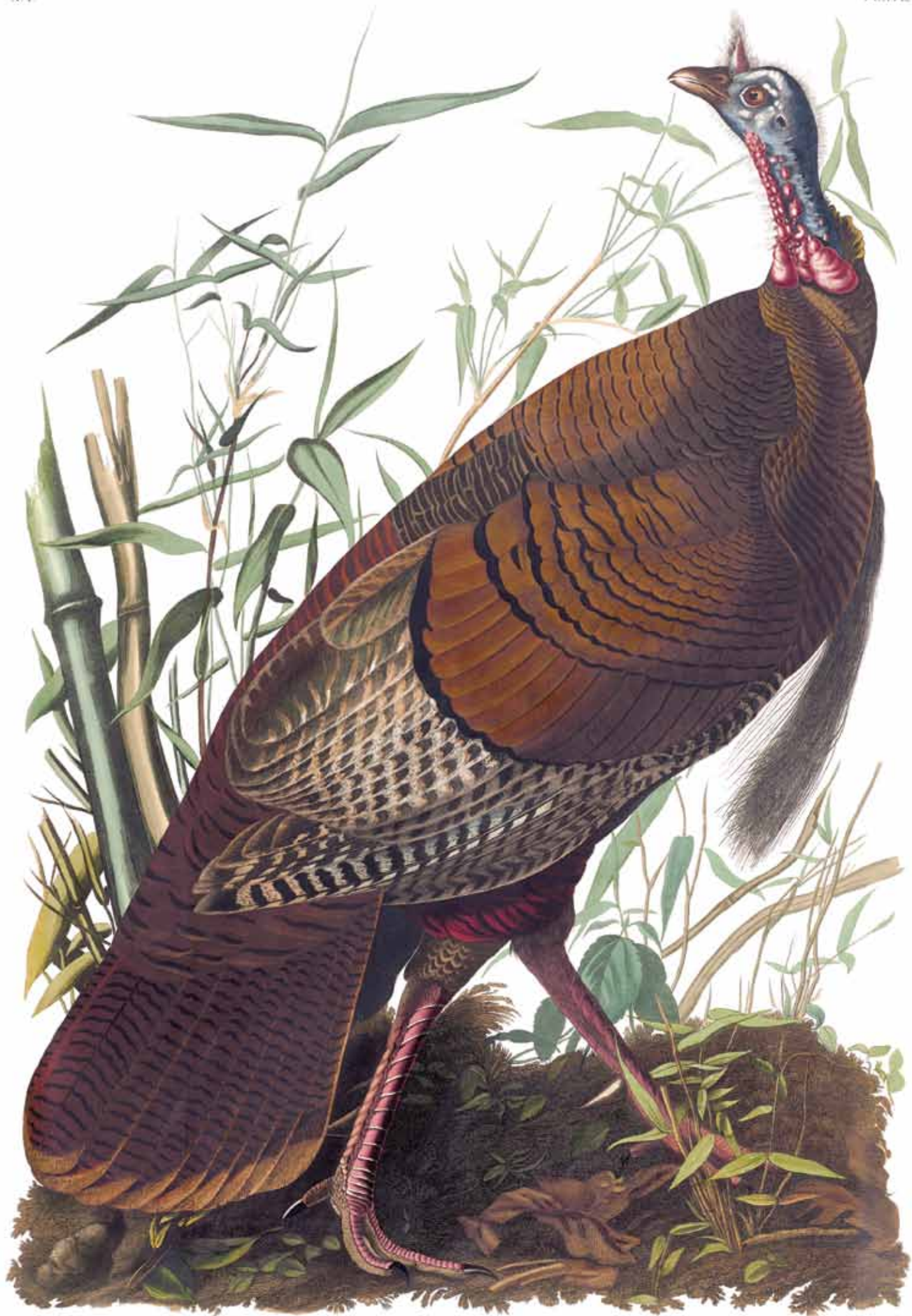
# THE BIRDS OF AMERICA

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

21st Century Edition











## About the original edition

John James Audubon, *The Birds of America*

Acknowledged as one of the most important and beautiful color plate books ever published, John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* is also one of the rarest and most collectable.

It was published from 1827 to 1839 in sets of four volumes. More than 160 subscribers, the exact number is unknown, paid US\$1,000 each (US\$20,200 in today's dollars). There is a consensus that fewer than 200 sets were printed but probably not less than 170.

Line engravings and aquatint by William H. Lizars of Edinburgh and more importantly by Robert Havell Jr. of London, transformed Audubon's original life-size watercolors into a work of rare beauty.

To accommodate these large illustrations, *The Birds of America* was published as a double elephant folio some 40 inches tall and 28 inches wide, equivalent to 100 by 68 centimeters.

*The Birds of America* depicts more than one thousand birds which come vividly alive in its 435 pages. Its value to science and especially to ornithology cannot be overstated.

## 21st Century Edition

The iGroup Press and Yushodo are delighted to publish a limited edition of 100 sets of *The Birds of America* by John James Audubon (1785 to 1851).

To renew John James Audubon's masterpiece for the 21st century, the iGroup Press and Yushodo have photographed the original edition of *The Birds of America* using an 80 megapixel camera. The images have been digitally processed for the first time and printed on specially made paper. Craftsmen in Japan have hand made each book with care, resulting in four volumes as elegant as the originals. The result is an edition of admirable detail, a completely new and never-before-seen version of *The Birds of America* that will be treasured by generations to come.



*Blue Heron, or Egret*  
*ARDEA HERODIAS*  
 (Blue Heron, White Egret, & Great Egret, etc.)



*Trumpeter Swan*  
*CYGNUS BUCCINATOR*  
 (Great Swan, &c.)

## Number of original copies

It is known that *The Birds of America*, published from 1827 to 1839, attracted at least 160 subscribers each paying US\$1,000, a sum used to offset the cost of production and printing. How many copies were eventually printed is unknown, but it is thought to be no less than 170 and no more than 200.

Of the 200 copies of *The Birds of America*, only a handful are owned by individuals. The balance that survive are found in museums, libraries and institutions. Susanne Low, updating Waldemar Fries in the 2006 edition of *The Double Elephant Folio*, estimates 119 complete sets are accounted for, of which 12 are held privately. With the Providence Athenaeum copy passing into private hands, 13 are now owned by individuals and 106 are in institutions. Only two sets are known to be in the Asia Pacific region, one at The State Library of Victoria in Australia, the other at Meisei University, Japan, the latter being the source of this 21st Century Edition.

## Auction prices

At the time of its publication, subscribers to *The Birds of America* paid US\$1,000 each (US\$20,200 at today's prices) for the four volumes of color plates and accompanying volumes describing the birds.

Because of its rarity and because it represents a landmark in art, ornithology and publishing, the few copies of *The Birds of America* known to have been sold have commanded huge prices.

On 1 April 2014 at Sotheby's in New York, Lot 101, the Indiana Historical Society's copy of *The Birds of America*, fetched US\$3,525,000 at auction. Eighty-one years earlier in 1933, the Society acquired it for US\$3,000, or US\$53,000 at today's prices. The pre-sale estimate was US\$3,000,000 to US\$5,000,000.

On 7 December 2010, *Birds of America* became the most expensive book of all time when it was sold at auction in London to an anonymous buyer for GB£7,300,000 the equivalent of US\$11,500,000. It beat the previous record of US\$10,200,000 also fetched by another copy of *The Birds of America* in 2000.

In 2005, the unbound copy owned by the Providence Athenaeum sold at Christie's New York for US\$5,600,000.

The differing prices reflect the condition and provenance of each volume. The more pristine and prestigious the copy, the higher the cost at auction.

*The Economist* (2010) in its ranking of the most expensive books of all time has five places in the top ten occupied by *The Birds of America*.

## Audubon's life

John James Audubon, 1785 – 1851

Jean-Jacques Audubon was born 26 April 1785 in Les Cayes, Saint-Domingue, now known as Haiti. He was the son of Captain Jean Audubon and his French maid. He died in Manhattan, New York, on 27 January 1851.

Because of unrest in Saint-Domingue, and to secure his family's future, Captain Audubon bought an estate, Mill Grove, near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He and his children moved to France where Jean-Jacques was raised by his stepmother in Nantes. It was during his early years in France that Jean-Jacques' fascination for the natural world began.

In 1803 at age 18, and having anglicized his name, John James Audubon left France to settle at Mill Grove, Philadelphia, thus avoiding conscription into Napoleon Bonaparte's army.

It was at Mill Grove that his love of ornithology and drawing became an important part of his life.





*Spotted or Canada Goose*  
*TURDUS CANADENSIS*,  
 Wilson (Humb.)  
*Turdus jama. & Agrippa line.*

Illustration of a Spotted Canada Goose.

Illustration of a Spotted Canada Goose.



*Fregata Aedon*  
 FRANTON - STREASER  
 (See 1. Plate 1)

Illustration of a Frigatebird.

Illustration of a Frigatebird.



He spent much of his time collecting eggs and painting and describing birds. He also learned taxidermy.

It was at this time too that he met Lucy Bakewell, the daughter of a neighbor whom he would marry in 1808 after returning from a further year in France.

There followed several years of unsuccessful businesses, devotion to ornithology, and the raising of four children with Lucy. Audubon's business interests took him to many parts of the United States where he was able to pursue his love of art and birds.

He took American citizenship in 1812 but this happy event turned to sadness when he discovered that some 200 of his watercolors had been eaten by rats. Not to be defeated, Audubon resolved to begin anew and to attain an even higher standard in his art and ornithology.

More years of drawing, travel and lackluster business ventures culminated in a brief spell in jail for bankruptcy in 1819. Upon his release, Audubon stayed in Louisiana determined to produce his life's work, *The Birds of America*.

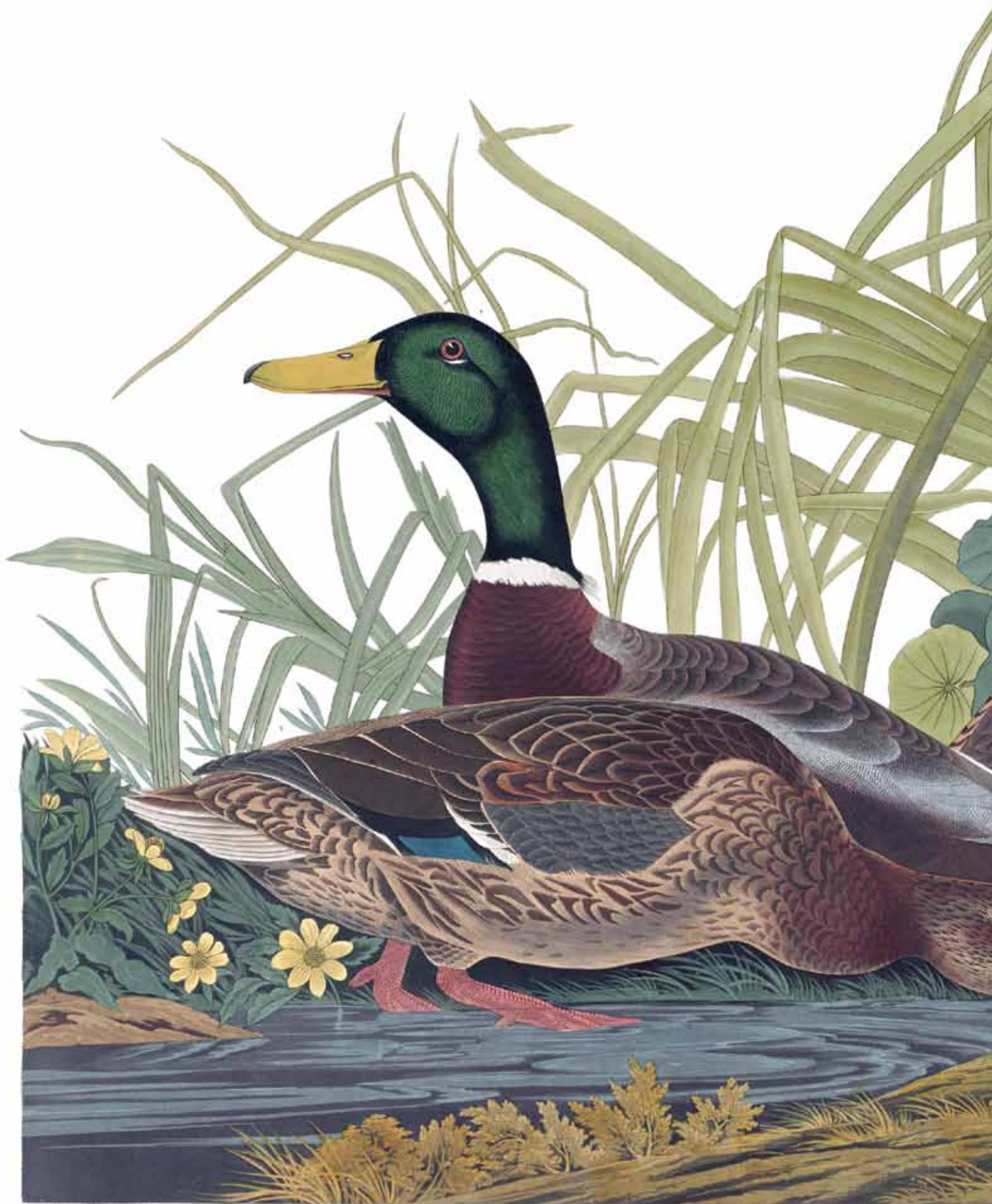
He financed his study and travel to forests, fields and swamps in Alabama, Florida and elsewhere by teaching drawing. He travelled for many years, often to distant places including Labrador, Canada, in 1833, to paint the native bird species.

In these years of travel, Audubon's extraordinary technique resulted in the watercolor drawings and the dazzling color illustrations of *The Birds of America* that we know today. Using real birds which he captured, stuffed and placed in naturalistic poses, he painted their life-size beauty against a version of their habitat, often luxuriant with foliage and blossoms.

His brush strokes are assured and his ability to paint the finest lines, bringing plumage and expressions to life, is unsurpassed.





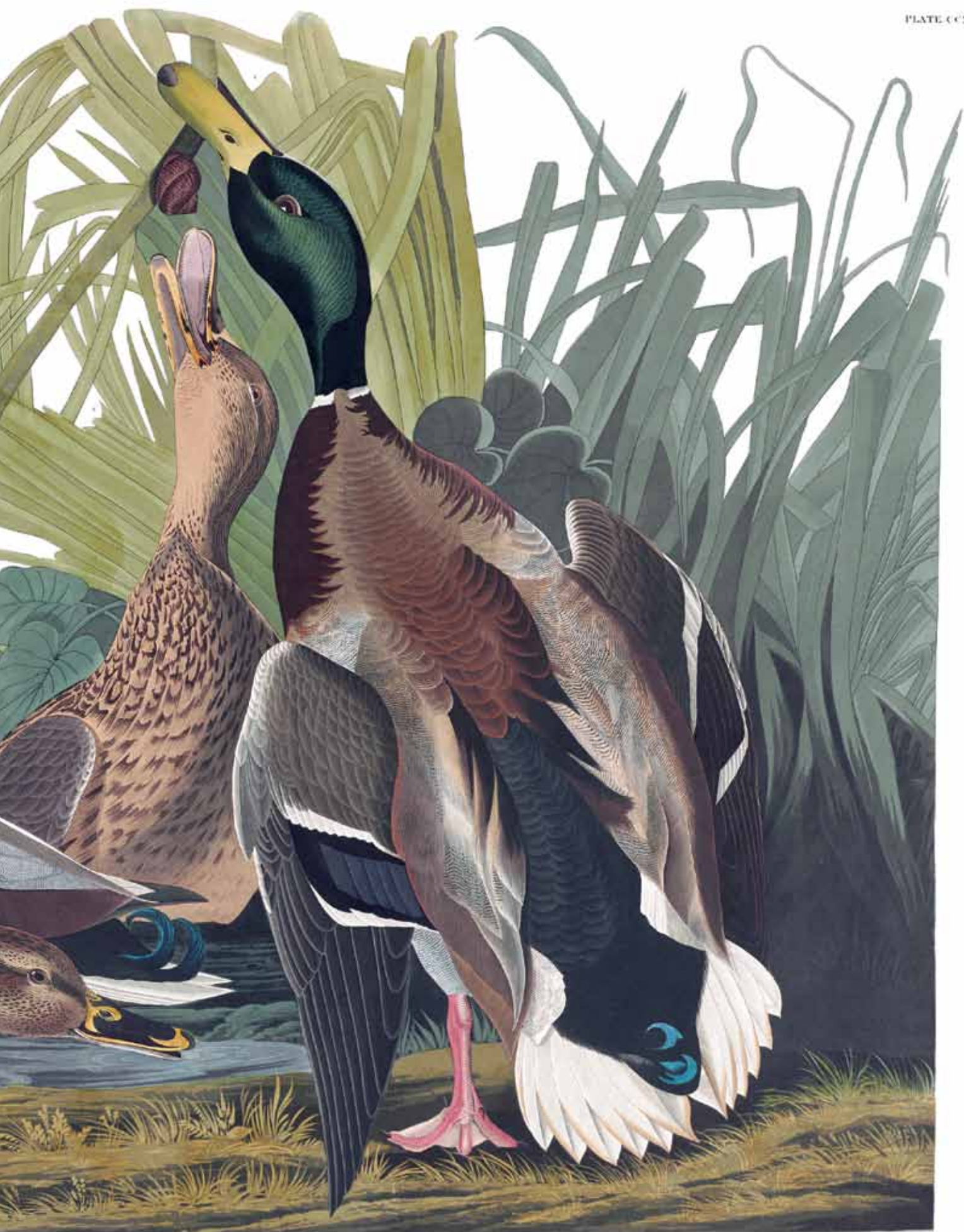


From: Swan Pond by J.J. Audubon, F.R.S.E.

© 1845, John J. Audubon

*Mallard Duck.* 1778





Reynolds, Francis & Charles D. Ketch 1910





*Summer or Wood Duck.*

XYTE (PHALARIS.)

L. N. Wilson & A. S. S. S. S.

Illustrated by J. A. S. S. S.



## Publication of *The Birds of America*

In 1824, Audubon sought to publish his paintings and was advised to have them engraved in Europe. He arrived in England in 1826 with at least 250 of them, creating enough interest to raise money for their publication. Exhibitions of his work in Edinburgh, London and Paris helped to gather subscribers.

In London, Audubon met Robert Havell Jr., a meeting which would change his life and create publishing history. Havell was a celebrated engraver who over the next decade would transform Audubon's watercolor drawings into the brilliance that became the double elephant folio edition of *The Birds of America*.

Each four volume set of *The Birds of America* comprised 435 hand colored life-size prints of 489 bird species. They were engraved on copper plates and printed on 40 by 28 inch paper equivalent to 100 by 68 centimeters. The first ten plates were engraved by W. H. Lizars in Edinburgh but Audubon decided to move production to London to work with Havell.

More than 50 colorists were hired for the original edition, engraved in aquatint by Robert Havell Jr. They colored the printed sheets with Audubon's original watercolor drawings as their guide.

These 435 preparatory watercolors were sold to



the New-York Historical Society by Lucy, his widow, after her husband's death in 1851. Most of the copper plates were sold and scrapped. In 1905, the National Audubon Society, America's pre-eminent environmental organization was incorporated and named in honor of John James Audubon.

More than 160 years since his death, John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* remains the rarest, the most collectable and the most celebrated picture book ever published.

The iGroup Press and Yushodo are pleased to publish this unique edition of *The Birds of America* for the 21st century enabled by digital technology.

## References

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*Snowy Owl* *STRIX NYCTEA*, Linn. *Hab. Canada.*





## 21st Century Edition

To renew this masterpiece for the 21st century, the iGroup Press and Yushodo photographed the original edition at Meisei University, Japan, using an 80 megapixel camera, digitally processing the images for the first time and printing them on specially made paper. Craftsmen hand made each book with care, resulting in four volumes as elegant as the originals. The result is an edition of admirable detail, a completely new and never-before-seen version of the *The Birds of America* that will be treasured by generations to come.

## The publisher

The iGroup Press is part of the iGroup (Asia Pacific) Ltd., a group of companies formed in 1983 in Bangkok, Thailand, by the iGroup Chairman, Mr. Pote Lee (Lee Pit Teong). The

iGroup is a leading provider of scientific research information in print and digital form throughout the Asia Pacific region.

Mr. Lee was drawn to this opportunity to publish the 21st Century Edition of John James Audubon's *The Birds of America* because of his love of birds, the freedom they symbolize and the magic of Audubon's art. Further, the chance to pair the absolute best of 19th century art, engraving and publishing with 21st century digital technology to produce an unsurpassed edition of *The Birds of America*, was the chance of a lifetime.

The result is a four volume work of art with magnificent detail and an elegance rivaling John James Audubon's 19th century masterwork.

## Original Copy

John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*  
Original 435 plates issued by W. H. Lizars and  
R. Havell between 1827 and 1838  
Currently possessed by Meisei University,  
Tokyo



## 21st Century Edition

*The Birds of America*  
By John James Audubon  
Plate Size: 100 cm x 68 cm  
(Double Elephant Folio)  
435 plates  
Full color  
Limited to 100 sets  
From October 2014



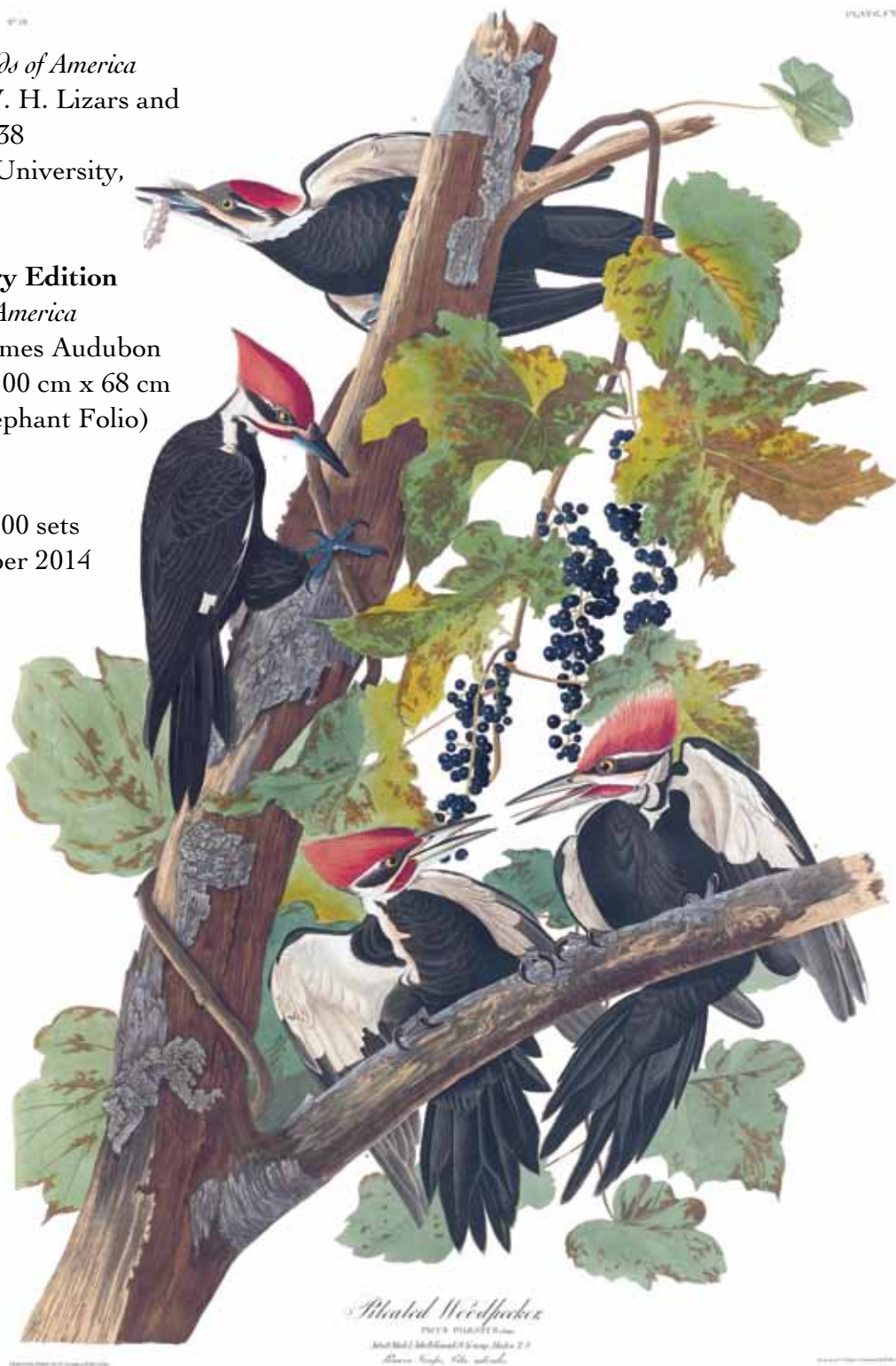
## Bound Edition

4 volume complete set  
Half leather bound  
Bind on demand  
Each set is numbered  
ISBN: 978-974-652-282-3



## Unsewn Edition

4 volume complete set  
Wooden box covered  
with vinyl cloth  
Set on demand  
Each set is numbered  
ISBN: 978-974-652-283-0



Publisher: iGroup Press and Yushodo Co., Ltd.  
Photography, Artwork Creation and Printing: Dai Nippon Printing Company  
Paper Supply: Takeo Co., Ltd.  
Binding: Ooiri Co., Ltd.



## Interactive Display Panel

Combining the best in 19th century publishing with the very latest in technological innovation, the iGroup Press is pleased to offer an optional interactive display panel to view the digital file of the 21st Century Edition of *The Birds of America*.

The 55 inch touch screen LED panel, which is slightly larger than the 21st Century Edition, offers magnification of up to 200 percent allowing

all the fine detail and subtlety of Audubon's art and draftsmanship to be viewed in the highest resolution for the first time.

Audubon's *The Birds of America* can be navigated with advanced Windows browsing tools including image rotation and zoom. A quick index search and auto presentation mode add to the experience of seeing Audubon's wonderful creations in a digital environment.

The display panel can be floor or wall mounted.



Only two copies of the original *The Birds of America* are known to be in the Asia Pacific region. One is owned by The State Library of Victoria in Australia and the other by Meisei University in Japan. This 21st Century Edition from the iGroup Press and Yushodo is a perfect, high resolution facsimile of Meisei University's prized original edition.

### Photography and artwork

The original edition was filmed at Meisei University with an 80 megapixel camera. The images were processed on the spot, compared with the originals and their color adjusted for printing. The process took some five and a half months.



iGroup Chairman, Mr. Pote Lee (Lee Pit Teong), with the double elephant folio 21st Century Edition of *The Birds of America* published by the iGroup Press and Yushodo, 2014.



### The printing process

Standard four color offset printing was used but without any spot color. The richly expressive color is due to digital data processing and perfect color regulation craftsmanship.

an on-demand book-binding service to offer bound and unbound versions to respond to individual customer requests. To maintain a balance with the heavy paper, a wooden book cover is used to provide sufficient thickness and weight. For the unbound book, a vinyl covered wooden box is provided. By making the binding process as simple as possible the true dignity of each illustration and the overall majesty of the four volumes are revealed.

### The paper

To achieve a texture similar to that of the original edition, paper was specially created for this 21st Century Edition. The paper is acid-free, contains more air than regular paper and is low density, low weight and supple. It has a smooth surface without any coating. The luster of the printing surface succeeds in giving a similar feel to that of the original paper favored by Audubon.

### The binding

*The Birds of America*, which exceeds the normal size expectations for a book, was manufactured from start to finish by craftsmen. The iGroup Press and Yushodo use

Enquiries about John James Audubon's *The Birds of America*, 21st Century Edition, and the availability of individual prints can be directed to

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