

P R E S E N T I N G

THE FIRST AUDUBON CALENDAR

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON is supposed to have been born in San Domingo in 1785 and to have been taken to France at the age of four. He came to America in 1803, and died in New York in 1851. Although he once studied drawing under Jacques Louis David, he had quickly turned from formal instruction to experiment with water color, the only medium he was ever to use successfully. The 435 plates for *The Birds of America* were all engraved from water color drawings.

THE PAINTINGS: The drawings of Audubon are remarkable both as art and as documents in natural history. Audubon knew his birds—not alone their markings and the colors of their plumage, but their characteristic attitudes, their habits, their peculiarities. This knowledge, the fruit of painstaking observation, gave his work the authenticity which lovers of birds admire to this day. His attention to accuracy extended also to the field of backgrounds. The trees, flowers, fruits, and other objects used with the birds are true to nature, and each bit of material plays its part in the composition of a pleasing picture.

THE ENGRAVINGS: In 1826 Audubon went to Edinburgh in search of a publisher. Work was begun there by W. H. Lizars, who engraved ten subjects, including The Turkey Cock (the most famous and most valuable of the original prints) which is reproduced on the fourth panel of this Calendar. Then the work was transferred to Robert Havell and his son, Robert, Junior, at London, who between them completed the work of engraving the remaining plates during the following twelve years.

The total number of complete sets printed was probably a little less than two hundred. Many of these have been broken up to provide individual prints for framing. The value of the sets which remain intact has been rising steadily. At the time this is written, we have an authoritative estimate that a fine set offered at auction might bring from \$20,000 to \$25,000.

THIS CALENDAR: In preparing this Audubon Calendar we have been moved by many considerations. We have desired to produce a calendar which

would appeal widely among the many thousands of our friends for its beauty and artistic qualities, hoping at the same time that it would merit the special approval of those who are already well aware of Audubon and his place in American art. No pains have been spared in our attempt to secure superb reproductions: the four prints reproduced in this Calendar have been printed by the Deeptone Offset process, which means that we have availed ourselves of the utmost resources of fine modern color printing.

It is hoped that this Calendar will serve to acquaint all Americans, including school children, with the rich inheritance which has come down to us from the hand of the great bird painter, John James Audubon.

If, as we expect, many of these reproductions are eventually framed and used to adorn the walls of homes and schoolrooms, our efforts will have been well rewarded.

FINALLY: Should this first Audubon Calendar also be the last? Or should there be a second, a third—perhaps a series? A great treasury of additional material remains among the 435 prints in *The Birds of America*. If you and many of our other friends share our own enthusiasm for this year's Calendar, it is entirely possible that our thoughts may turn to Audubon again. Let us hear from you, please—and rest assured that your suggestions for favorite Audubon subjects will be received gratefully.

THE WOOD DUCK, most beautiful of American waterfowl, is remarkable for the fact that it nests in old woodpecker holes or natural tree cavities, often thirty to forty feet above ground. Distribution: temperate North America southward from Southern Canada.

THE BALTIMORE ORIOLE is found from the Atlantic to the Rocky Mountains, and from Texas to Saskatchewan. Its woven nest of fibers is suspended from slender tree branches as high as fifty feet from the ground.

THE FLORIDA JAY is a harsh-voiced screamer, a marauder in gay plumage, a chronic peace-breaker in the kingdom of the birds. He maintains year-round residence along the Southern Atlantic Coast of North America.

THE WILD TURKEY, finest of native American game birds, was once common throughout North America, from Pennsylvania to the Gulf, and west as far as Kansas. Saved from extinction in recent years, it is now increasing in forest areas in many states under strict protection.