

Alice Ford • Pickering Apts. 206 • Newtown, PA 18940

September 1, 1989

Dear Boys,

There's little more than an hour left before the Post Office closes up for the long Labor Day weekend. I want you to have some word from me by not later than Tuesday. Everything has happened here to delay this first of what is sure to be but one letter of gratitude for your dizzyingly generous and, quite decidedly, sui generis BOOK. You have already been pasted with adjectives and adverbs. I want to get on with my sense of having been taken by the hand into a world unknown to me. It's an art book, a bird book, a storybook, a dual memoir (a triple one if the part by John Graves is counted).

Because of this broad spectrum I can't help seeing it--imagining it, as a documentary film, with both of you as leads, showing your pictures, showing the glimpses of country which figure in your plates and text. The text for the plates has an ideally conversational tone which could easily be tailored for the sound. You would be introduced by the writer of your introduction, a most beguiling one and a charming man, I'm sure. I can see the Graves portion as impossible to bring in without blurring the focus of twins, paintings, country. It isn't possible that you haven't already considered this, or been advised to. The Nat. Fdn'tion for the Arts and/or Humanities might well put up some money for it. No need to spend, yourselves, this time, and be parted from what you have come by in hard ways. (From this you may recognize that I am part editor, and cannot resist such mental exercises on the rare occasions when they are set in motion. And of course from a documentary comes a book, very often?)

I am with you as to the mass invaders of bird privacy, above all the banders with their metal clips. Don't they want mystery about anything? I did appreciate your serendipitous encounter with the F. Owl, while the earnest ones were looking for him the hard way.. I have never joined any of the NAS watching parties or indeed the NAS. During the days before publication of Audubon's Animals I saw much of the inner workings of that sometimes baffling body. (I know of a woman who left them \$1 million, sight unseen, because she liked the birds in her garden.)

The obvious advantage of an octavo edition would be the greater ease of reading, to say nothing of wider distribution and lower price/cost. Again, about film, your manner of seeming to speak to the individual reader directly, informally, makes thoughts of TV inevitable. It would certainly be a production of importance, historically, ecologically, and in other ways. It would have immense romantic and aesthetic appeal?

You may have noticed that Sir Peter Scott died last week. I always meant to see his working corner of England. (I love Gilbert White!!)

I have wondered whether H. Bradley Martin ordered your Folio. He was in a decline by 1985. Did Sotheby provide you with the three catalogs of last June? If not, I shall give you mine, should you like that.

My father was a sportsman. He used to go to Lake Andes, S.D., and stay with Pequot, then head of the Pequot Indians, and owner of a new frame house, his first. Pequot and his wife came to Ft. Dodge, Ia., to visit my father and his fellow duck shooters one time. They stayed in the hotel, but they were entertained at dinner in the three homes. I still have the duck hunting case that my father filled with birds that I helped pluck. It gave me a feeling of the wild that has never left me,

part love, part misery. My ^{late} Minnesota sister was an enthusiastic shot on her husband's forays in northern parts, but I have shot only a robin while supposing I couldn't do it with a beebee gun, when about 10. I gave it a royal, not to say tearful interment, and marked it with pebbles that may or may not be there still. I feel sure that the box elder beside it, and in which turtle doves nested beneath my bedroom window, must be long gone. I have not returned to Iowa in 40 years.

I am so very glad that you included the hawk MS., and the fine color reproduction of the grackle. Because I doubt that they would be suitable for the more direct focus of an octavo?

I assume that when your edition is exhausted your plates will still serve for singles, within the reach of people who long to have and hang their favorites. I hope so.

On the chance that you haven't seen it, and might like to see the early hawk drawing, I am enclosing an invitation article written for the Princeton Library Chronicle years ago. Now, if writing, I might not apologize for the literalness, bareness, realism of the drawing which, as time goes on, I love more and more. I hope to publish it in a book about the years of Audubon in France, before he emigrated, and the years before his naturalization in 1812. But I have no idea who would want to undertake its cost--certainly not Abbeville with whom, in any case, I would not like to continue.

I hope that you are getting on with your care of sight. The new quick cataract operation sounds quick and easy, and the recovery period much, much shorter. Do take steps, especially now that one doesn't wait for the operable stage, as I understand it.

All the best always, Yes,

Alice

MS ALICE E FORD
N LINCOLN AVENUE PICKERING APTS 206
NEWTOWN PA 18940



25¹¹ x 30¹¹ x 3¹¹
45 lbs

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18.30

ME

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