

## INTRODUCTION

Because Scott and I are not ornithologists, nor are we professional wild-life painters, why then should we have committed so much time and effort and expense to produce as our first publication a book of birds? It is a question that we have asked ourselves many times, and even now after all the work has been done I do not know if we can give either the reader or ourselves a truly satisfactory answer. Perhaps that answer lies buried in the same indefinable and unmeasurable motives which in one way or another drive all artists.

For as long as I can remember Scott and I have been makers of things. I have read letters written by my father from Okinawa Island shortly after the end of World War II commenting on the talent shown in my brother's drawings which my mother had sent him. We were only three and one-half years old at the time. Being twins and in close league with each other we must have been a heavy burden on our mother and to many an unfortunate babysitter trying to control our constant activity. I can not remember a time when we were not drawing and making models of trains and automobiles, farm outbuildings and airplanes. In fact Scott and I were fascinated by everything having to do with flight. Our mother and grandmother used to take us out to the Rochester, Minnesota Airport to watch the military airplanes come and go, and I can still vaguely recall the Russian airplanes with their strange female pilots. Many of our first projects had to do with our often frustrating attempts to make paper copies of the planes which we had seen at the airport.

I do not know if it was our interest in airplanes and flight which sparked a curiosity in all things that fly, but my earliest memories are not centered just around airplanes but with birds as well. It was always a treat to be taken out to Silver Lake in Rochester to feed the resident Mallards in the summer and to watch the Canada Geese come and go in the cold season. In the spring our aunt would take us out to my uncle Ted's farm just outside of town where he delighted in hunting out nesting birds to show us. It was there that we first discovered the nests of Robins, Blue Jays, Redwinged Blackbirds and many others. I especially enjoyed crawling up into my uncle's hay loft to watch the Barn Swallows build their nests and raise their young. I may never know why birds had fascinated Scott and me so early in our lives, but I do know

that by the age of five I in particular was thoroughly inprinted with an interest in birds which has remained undiminished with me to this day.

In the spring of our fifth year my father, a physician, accepted a position at a hospital here in Fort Worth, and our move to this city marked the beginning of a life-long love affair with Texas. The age of five was a magical age for us. It marked the first time that Scott and I could really move and explore our surroundings without being constantly supervised. Everything about our new Texas home seemed exotic and strange, the people with their strange accents and stranger southern ways and, of course, a whole new world of plants and insects and reptiles and birds.

We had arrived in Texas in the Spring of 1948 so that all of the Spring, Summer and the protracted warm days of Autumn gave us more time to remain out of doors than we ever had in Minnesota. I planted my first garden here in Texas, collected butterflies for the first time and for the first time was able to wander the neighboring woods alone. The woods were filled with nesting birds of all kinds. With the generous help of our new neighbors I began to learn one species from another. The excitement which I felt as a five year old boy when I saw a bird new to me is essentially the same emotion that I feel today when I encounter a species that I have never seen before. Just being in Texas at a time when our first independent explorations were possible was so enthralling that I do not remember if Scott and I were ever homesick for Rochester. What I do remember is that we were quite depressed when our parents told us that we were not going to remain in Texas but were moving out to California where my father had been offered what he thought was a better job.

Scott and I were never happy living in San Marino. We were constantly homesick. But the home that we longed to return to was not Rochester, Minnesota where we were born and where we had spent the first five years of our lives. Fort Worth, Texas was our real home. When our parents decided to move the family back to Fort Worth it was truly an answer to our prayers, and though we returned to a different neighborhood and to new friends and experiences we quickly resumed that original love affair with Texas which began when we first saw the state. That affection has remained unchanged. In fact it has grown



and has provided us over the years with a deep spiritual anchor and a source of interest and of artistic inspiration ever since. I feel certain that our interests would have developed along similar lines no matter where we would have lived, but by having Texas as a home with its vastness, its abundance and variety of natural beauty, its fauna and its colorful and unique history we had the perfect setting in which to nurture those early interests.

*Perhaps this should be the beginning*

Rarely can any of us ever point to a particular day or event which can be singled out as pivotal in directing us toward a life long career. Scott and I agree, however, that such an event did occur on one Saturday in the Fall of 1956. In the library of one of our local institutions I discovered a volume of reproductions of the bird paintings of John James Audubon. Though I knew of Audubon's work, I had seen only a handful of reproductions of some of his more famous pictures. What I now held before me was a book filled with 435 Audubons. I could hardly contain my excitement as I thumbed through the pages to see one beautiful picture after another. I already had a small collection of bird books back at home with reproductions of paintings by Fuertes, Peterson, Singer and others, but nothing they had done in any way prepared me for the impact I was to receive from this first look at the complete Birds of America by John James Audubon. I checked the book out and took it home to show Scott wondering if he would experience the same thrill and delight as I had. We were fourteen years old at the time, but because of the interests which we already had developed by that age, we were, I think, well primed to respond to these pictures in an artistic way.

Scott was not quite as interested in birds as I was, but like me he loved art. Since kindergarten and the first grade we had been singled out as the class artists. Our works were often displayed on the class bulletin board, and our teachers kept our pictures for years after we had been in their classes. I frequently tried to draw and paint birds in these early grammar school years. Scott also occasionally painted a bird picture, but he especially enjoyed drawing ancient ships and architectural subjects and now and then a still life or landscape. He particularly enjoyed building models of 16th, 17th and 18th century ships, constructing them from scratch. Also he had a small HO gauge model railroad which kept him occupied in making replicas of frontier towns and farms and bridges and even mountain ranges, all done in exacting detail and carefully painted to look weathered and aged. While working on these models he acquired a great amount of technical knowledge both as a draftsman and a painter.

I, on the other hand, continued with my studies of wildlife. I kept the usual small menagerie of lizards, turtles and snakes, collected butterflies and fossils, even had a collection of animal and bird skeletons which I was always trying to glue together and which were constantly falling apart. By the age of ten I had secretly acquired my first air rifle and had begun to collect birds on which to practice the lessons in taxidermy which I was receiving from a correspondence course I had discovered in a Field and Stream magazine. I soon became the scourge of the neighborhood song birds. I hunted almost every day in the woods near our home, returning just before dinner time to hide my trophies in the back yard until later in the evening when I could get the time to skin and mount them. My taxidermy studies frequently required me to draw birds. It was a difficult and frustrating exercise trying to put onto paper the images that I was seeing in nature and which I had in my mind. If I day-dreamed in school or made doodles in the margins of my notebook, it was usually having something to do with birds. Now and then I attempted an oil painting of birds but with very little success. Wood Ducks and Herons seemed to be my favorite subjects. Over and over again I would try to paint them, always abandoning the pictures before they were finished. I could never bring to the painting of birds that same intensity of interest or dedication that I brought to the study of taxidermy. ~~I have mentioned that I had~~ a good and much-used book on American birds with illustrations by the great artist, Louis Agassiz Fuertes, but beautiful as these paintings were, even they did not excite me enough to undertake a deeper study of the art of bird painting.

My ambivalence toward the painting of birds ended abruptly on that Fall afternoon in 1956 when I opened the book on Audubon's birds and beheld for the first time the magnificent scope of his achievement. I can not really explain my excitement. It was a profound feeling that I had never experienced before. Though many of his paintings of birds were not quite as seen in nature, they contained an inner vitality, a spiritual kind of energy that I had not seen in wildlife art. When I took the book home to show Scott I had already made up my mind about which of the Audubon prints I was going to copy first. It was plate number 206, Audubon's painting of the four Wood Ducks. As I had hoped, Scott turned out to be as enthusiastic as I was about the book and was equally encouraging about my attempting to make a small copy. He thought that doing the Wood Ducks was a good idea, and he watched with interest as I traced the picture, transferred it to watercolor paper and set about to paint it with the help of a tin of watercolors and a couple of much-used brushes. I ran into trouble almost immediately.



The traced images were so small that they required considerable experience in the painting of detail to properly render them. Scott had long been exercising such skills in meeting the demands of his model building. Now and then he would walk up behind me to look over my shoulder and watch as I struggled with the picture. Occasionally he would interrupt with with a technical suggestion. Finally out of frustration I asked him if he would sit down with the picture <sup>for a few minutes</sup> and demonstrate some of the painting techniques that he had learned. Since he was not occupied with a project of his own that Saturday, he agreed. He went on to finish the painting. I never touched another brush to it. He not only ended up by finishing the copy but was very interested in doing another as soon as <sup>his</sup> time would permit.

In the following weeks Scott and I collected and read several biographies on Audubon. It seemed that his life exactly coincided with a period of American history which had long fascinated us. The more I read about him the more I wanted to paint a really good copy of one of his birds. I started that second Audubon copy in early January 1957. It was considerably more ambitious than the first. It was plate number 246, Audubon's painting of the American Eiders, and this time I attempted to draw it life-size by the traditional technique of squaring off the small book illustration then transferring it to a larger piece of water-color paper which likewise had been proportionately squared off. By now we had acquired a good set of paints and brushes. It took me several weeks to draw the picture and to get it ready for painting, and as I began to paint I could see that Scott was observing me with keen interest. Again I soon ran into difficulties. Again Scott was there to take over the picture. He worked on it steadily for weeks, this time with me standing behind him and looking over his shoulder.

Often Scott would wake up at three o'clock in the morning and work until time to get ready for school; then after school he would return to the painting and work until late in the evening. By the time the Eiders were finished Scott was thoroughly hooked on Audubon's work. He was to follow this picture with many more Audubon copies, doing all of the work himself — both the drawing and the painting. In fact he became so interested in Audubon's birds that he resolved to copy all 435 plates in the same order that Robert Havell, the great engraver and printer, produced them in London between 1827 and 1838. While he

pursued this ambitious goal I would at times help him by drawing and transferring the copies to the final sheet of watercolor paper. It was not long before I became interested in doing a original bird painting. <sup>That summer</sup> I drew a small picture of a yellow warbler perched on a brach <sup>N</sup> of a Queen Anne Rose in bloom. I had no sooner begun to paint the bird than Scott, now curious about working on a bird painting of our own creation, took over and completed it. He learned very fast. In fact every picture that Scott painted was significantly better than the one that preceded it. From the painting of birds Scott soon branched out to do portraits for the <sup>High</sup> school Annual and to paint still lifes so that by 1961 as a freshman at Tulane University he was determined not to remain in college but to look for an art school where he might prepare to follow a career as an artist.

Scott's opportunity came in the Spring of 1962 during the course of the Tarrant county Annual art show which was held at the Fort Worth Art Museum. Walter Stuemfig, the well-known Philadelphia painter and teacher at the Pennsylvannia Academy of the Fine Arts, had been invited to judge the show. Scott had not entered the exhibition, but Emily Guthrie Smith, a close family friend and a superb painter and pastelist, took some of Scott's paintings down to the museum to show Stuemfig in the hopes of getting a critical opinion. He was so impressed the pictures that upon returning to Philadelphia he met with the Board of Directors of the Academy and urged them to forge the usual application procedures and to extend an open invitation to Scott to come and study at the school. Scott immediately accepted the Board's honor, and he has pursued a career as an artist ever since.

It was a tough gamble to try to be an artist in the early sixties. The times offered few prospects to anyone wanting to make a living solely as a painter without having to resort to being a commercial artist, or teaching at a University, or accepting private students. I <sup>also</sup> loved art also, but I had neither Scott's skills nor his experience. Trying to be practical I <sup>also</sup> decided to continue my studies at Tulane in order to get a degree. However, during the next three years I was able with Scott's help to begin to pursue my own inclinations as a painter. I shall always be grateful to Scott for blazing the trail <sup>from</sup> I was to follow. After graduating from Tulane and after one lackluster year in the University of Texas School of Law, I listened to my brother, and I submitted some of my work in application to attend the Academy. I was accepted, and the year 1966 saw both



Even to show  
all these years  
I particularly  
enjoy recollecting  
the fact that I

of us in Philadelphia. I have been an artist ever since. Of the three or four paintings which Mrs Smith showed Walter Stuempfig at the Fort Worth Art Museum that Spring day in 1962, the picture that most caught his eye, that so excited his interest that he wanted Scott to come to Philadelphia to attend the Academy — that picture was a small original watercolor of a bird, the painting of a Black Tern.

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Why should two artists like Scott and me who have established a reputation for being "realists" in our paintings of landscapes, still lifes and portraits produce with these bird pictures a body of work that stands outside the current trends of realism which characterize so much of the best of contemporary wildlife art? The answer to this question is somewhat complicated. It has to do with our knowledge and appreciation of the history of bird painting as a genre in both Eastern and Western cultures. Our interest in the study of the publishing of books on American birds is particularly important, and perhaps a brief summary of that history might be useful here.

One of the very first publications on birds ever undertaken was a book on American fauna begun by Mark Catesby in 1731. The book was titled, A Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Bahamas. It was a folio containing 220 plates that were etched and hand-colored by Catesby himself in London from observations and material which he gathered during two trips to the American colonies in 1712 and 1725. Of those 220 plates 109 were pictures of birds. It is obvious when looking at his work to see that Catesby was no artist, though his pictures do possess a genuine charm. This naive but lovely publication was not to be surpassed until Alexander Wilson, who is known as "the father of American Ornithology," published his nine volume, American Ornithology, in Philadelphia between 1808 and 1814. This was the first publication of its kind ever printed in America. As an artist Wilson was considerably more accomplished than Catesby, and though his pictures also had considerable charm they nevertheless were still rather stiff and unsophisticated. After Wilson's death in 1813 Charles Lucien Bonaparte, the nephew of Napoleon, published in four volumes a supplement to the Scottish naturalist's work titled, American Ornithology — Birds not Given by Wilson. This was also published in Philadelphia between 1825 and 1833. The Bonaparte supplement was important in several ways. It employed for the first time the

services of a professionally trained artist. He was Titian Peale, a member of the famous Peale family of Philadelphia. Though it was he who designed the majority of the supplementary illustrations, this publication also contained the work of another and as yet unknown artist. It was a single plate, an illustration of a Boat-tailed Grackle. That unknown artist was John James Audubon who within two years was to begin the publication of what I consider to be the greatest book on birds ever published, the monumental Birds of America. It was on Bonaparte's advice that Audubon was to go to England to seek a publisher, and this great work was produced there in London between 1827 and 1838. It contained 435 hand-colored aquatint engravings, all but the first ten prints having been executed by Robert Havell and his workshop of fifty colorists. The scope of this work will probably never be equaled or even attempted again. Here for the first time were shown birds depicted in their actual size with many of the species being placed against backgrounds of their own natural habitats. The Birds of America was one of the last books to be published employing the pure techniques of engraving <sup>and aquatint</sup> and hand-coloring. In the early eighteen thirties new advances in stone lithography were making a difference in the publishing field, and even though the pictures were still hand-colored, the process of printed coloring lay only a couple of decades ahead. In the early eighteen forties Audubon was relying on the hand-colored lithograph process to produce his famous Viviparous Quadrupeds of America in Philadelphia, and shortly before the American Civil War some years after Audubon's death his son attempted to re-issue The Birds of America by using the complete lithographic technique with the coloring applied to the stones.

The Civil War ended this enterprise before it could be completed, but it did not end the search for better and faster methods of printing. The decades after the Civil War saw the perfecting of the chromolithographic process, and the subsequent scientific advances made in Europe and in America with photography and with photographic methods of reproduction were to bring us to the present era of the high-tech photolithograph. Even if the photolithograph lacks the personal touch of engraving or stone lithography and coloring by hand, it nevertheless produces a print more nearly like the original painting than any other method yet devised.

Along with the rapid growth of science and industry following the Civil War came a new attitude toward ornithology and the painting of birds. At the end



of the century there emerged in this country an artist who was to affect the field of bird painting so profoundly that his influence is still strongly felt to this day. His name was Louis Agassiz Fuertes, and he is considered by many critics of ornithological art to be the finest American bird artist who ever lived. Certainly there is scarcely a bird painter alive who does not owe this man a great debt, for it was he <sup>who</sup> showed birds for the first time as they actually appeared in nature with their colors intimately influenced by the colors of their surroundings. Though he died tragically in 1927 his artistic legacy can still be seen in the works of his two most famous living followers, George Miksch Sutton and Roger Tory Peterson.

Of course, there have been a number of important influences from outside of this country. From Britain and Europe came the early examples of Selby, Gould, Lear and others. From the continent emerged two artists whose influence is almost as important as that of Fuertes. They were Bruno Liljefors of Sweden and Germany's Wilhelm Kuhnert. Both of these artists took their work a step beyond Fuertes in that they placed as great an emphasis on pictorial structure and the environmental background <sup>d</sup> as on the birds or animals being depicted. Liljefors achieved in his paintings an almost mystical union between the two so that in fact both bird and background become truly one. He accomplished in a purely Western way an ideal that had long been the concerns of Oriental artists, especially the Chinese and the Japanese. My favorite periods of Chinese bird painting are the Sung, Yuan and Ming dynasties. Though it was not the aim of these artists to paint backgrounds in the same exacting detail as that found in much of Western art, <sup>ANIMALS</sup> nowhere in painting is there a better expression of the spiritual unity of all the created elements of nature than in the art of Mu-ch'i, Li An-chung, and the Emperor Hui-tsung. In spite of the fact that painters of the later Ming dynasties of the fifteenth century and after emphasized more heavily the decorative qualities of their bird paintings, the works of a painter like Lin Hong, about whose painting little is known, achieve a poetry that, in my opinion, surpasses even that of his predecessors. This decorative tradition reached its most spectacular expression in Japan from the sixteenth through the early nineteenth centuries with the screen paintings of Sansetsu, Setatsu, Kerin and many others. <sup>LAC</sup> I especially like the early nineteenth century screen paintings of barbers fowl by Ito-Jakuchu. By the end of the eighteenth century Japan had developed an active publishing trade, and one of the most outstanding books

produced at this time was A Chorus of Birds by Kitagawa Utamaro, a book of colored woodblock prints by a man more widely known in the West for his Ukiyo-e prints of beautiful women. It is fascinating to see how closely the works of these oriental artists actually parallel the paintings of John James Audubon, though it is certain that Audubon could never have seen them. This explains his widespread popularity in Japan.

The painting of birds and animals has, without a doubt, the oldest tradition in the history of art. Until fairly recently, however, this art form has occupied a subordinate status in relationship to the other fields of painting and sculpture. Even the term, "wildlife art" has a prejudiced air about it, suggesting that the painting of animals and birds is a second-class art. Much of it has been second-class and worse, but in the last twenty years in both the United States and Europe there has been a virtual renaissance in the field <sup>of</sup> portraying natural history subjects. Because of the increasingly healthy market for this genre, and because of the heightened public awareness of nature conservation issues, wildlife painting is attracting the attention of more and more people. Accordingly, quite a good number of very talented artists are either entering this field or are receiving for the first time the proper recognition that is due to them. The works of Guy Coheleach, Al Guilbert, Robert Bateman, and George McClean are a few of my American favorites, but there are many more. These artists paint in a variety of styles and employ a wide range of media and techniques. Though most of them follow their own paths, they clearly are the artistic descendants of men like Fuertes, Liljefors and Kuhnert who along with others established a tradition of wildlife painting that essentially exists today. Scott and I, on the other hand, trace the origins of our style and painting approach to another and somewhat discredited source — the works of the Romantic painters of the nineteenth century and especially the art of John James Audubon.

Why Audubon? Certainly his work is not above criticism. I have discussed his bird paintings with a number of our leading wildlife artists. They are almost universal in their praise of his abilities as a designer, a composer of pictures, but in the same breath they are quick to point out that the poses of his birds are often stiff or distorted and that his paintings are frequently too melodramatic. They are correct. However, I think that they have missed the point. Why I ask is Audubon's work still so popular today in spite of the fact that since his time a number of "advances" have been made in the accurate rendering



of wildlife subjects? I think that there are several reasons for this. First of all it is the age of Audubon's work and the fact that it is very much a part of the Romantic era in which it was produced, a period in American history which many people today think of as an heroic time when this country still had frontiers to explore and to conquer and an abundance of natural beauty that it was never to know again. It was an age of discovery and optimism, and Audubon's great Birds of America very much reflects this. There is another reason for Audubon's appeal. His work is really quite beautiful, the best paintings very elegant. In a critical comment on Audubon's paintings made at the time of their publication an English observer noted that Mr. Audubon's book would probably have a limited public appeal, the pictures being too aristocratic and exclusive for popular taste. He was wrong, of course, about their reception by the public, but in describing the paintings as aristocratic and exclusive he was quite correct.

What so many modern wildlife painters fail to do is to rise above the demands for complete scientific accuracy in their work to the exclusion of important esthetic considerations. In their sincere efforts to let no scientific fact escape their eye so many of these painters despite their individual differences have produced too often an art that has, in my opinion, a kind of sameness to it. In their striving for public acceptability and approval from ornithologists and other bird people they have sought a kind of aesthetic common denominator in which their deeper personalities lie buried and their paintings come perilously close to magazine illustration. Many of these painters — and Fuertes, I am sad to say, is too often among them — follow the illustrator's dictum that the bird being the subject of the picture, the main focus of the painting should therefore be only on the bird. The background, then, ought to be greatly subordinated to the subject or completely fading out at the edges to make a pictorial vignette. What so many of the artists who paint this way cannot tolerate about Audubon's work is the sheer force of his own personality. To them his personality is an intrusion. To Scott and me it is the key to his greatness.

There is a rightness about great paintings of birds that can transcend the most slavish adherence to detail and scientific accuracy. The Chinese call it, "ch'i". The poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins, called it "inscape". These words are not very easily explained. Some define "ch'i" as "spirit", but this is not quite accurate. The flow of a spiritual life essence or life force which manifests itself

as the existence of a natural rightness of things perhaps comes closer to explaining this concept. This does not exclude the pursuit of scientific objectivity, but neither does it demand it. The truth of a work of art is truth as the artist has perceived it. It is the truth of the artist's world filtered through the medium of his own sensibilities, and that is the key to his style. Hopkin's concept of the "inscape" of a thing, though colored by the fact that it rises from a Western tradition, is an equally mystical view. To grasp the meaning of "inscape" it is necessary to perceive God's plan in understanding the rightness and natural function by which the particular identity of a being or thing is defined. Because we in the West are heirs to a 350 year old tradition which has tried to measure the world through the objectivity of the scientific method, we tend to view nature quantitatively so that in order to understand a subject and to properly measure it we tend to separate it artificially from its place in the natural flow of things. This approach forces us too often to take a narrow view, for in order to understand the meaning of "inscape" it is not only necessary to understand the particular structure and function of a thing; it is essential that we know its place and how it participates in the general pattern of existence. To the mystic these principles are immutable, but changless as they may be, they are still colored by our individual perceptions. For the painter then a knowledge of the structure and function of his subject is very important, but for a painting to be a good work of art, it must possess one essential added element. It is the artist's own personality. Therefore the structure and the function of the subject form only two parts of a triad. The essential third part is the artist's own personal perceptions of that structure and function of his subject, be it bird or branch or rock or cloud, which is rendered into paint by his skill as a craftsman. A painting succeeds to the extent that it reflects the artist's own awareness of these principles. Painters who work in whatever medium or pursue whatever kind of subject matter with one eye to the picture and and the other eye to public approval seldom produce art of any real importance.

I mentioned at the beginning of this essay that when it comes to painting birds Scott and I are not as realistic as we appear to be in our other work. Our love of Audubon's paintings is <sup>primarily</sup> responsible for this. We have greatly admired his unmatched compositions, his use of line, his wonderful sense of drama ( or melodrama, if you will ) since the very beginning of our careers. It is true that the poses of his birds, even in his best works, are so very formal that they



are somewhat like a 19th century tableau Vivant, but it is precisely this formality that creates that aristocratic elegance which so impressed critics in the 1820's and 30's and which continues to command respect today. No doubt that he was attempting to paint birds with the utmost scientific accuracy according to the knowledge of the time, but had he painted with a purely scientific aim in mind, he could have produced a highly creditable body of work without straying far from the format established by Alexander Wilson. He did not have to portray the birds life-size as he chose to do. He certainly did not have to depict them against backgrounds of often extraordinary complexity and richness. The fact that he chose the Double Elephant Folio size of 26 1/2" X 39 1/2" for his reproductions was viewed in his time as so impractical that it bordered <sup>ON</sup> of lunacy. Were these choices the acts of a scientist-naturalist or of an artist. Probably both. But where the naturalist might have been contented with a less ambitious undertaking, the romantic idealist, the artist in Audubon could not. Scott and I believe that where Audubon's best work is not always scientifically accurate, it has a spirit and an artistic rightness that quite transcends the demands of science. His work may be of questionable validity to professional ornithologists or to dyed-in-the-wool bird people, but for Scott and me who are artists first and bird people second his paintings have never lost their unique appeal.

Scott and I make no apology for the way in which we paint our pictures of birds. As I have said, we are not professional wildlife painters nor do we intend to make a career of working in this genre. We certainly could have painted birds more "realistically" if we had wanted to paint them that way, but it is precisely those formal qualities of composition, line and form so beautifully displayed in Audubon's work that have pointed the direction which we in our own way have followed. Though our art has taken a different direction from that of most of the best contemporary wildlife painting, our pictures are in no way a reaction to these trends. Our bird paintings are a natural outgrowth of our earliest artistic efforts, and it is true that our painting style did have its beginnings on that Saturday afternoon when Scott and I first saw Audubon's Birds of America and made our first attempt to copy his plate of the Wood Ducks. We have developed from being painters of birds to become painters of landscapes, still lifes and portraits, but even though our art was to take us into new areas, we have returned time and again to paint a picture of birds.

What we have done with this book, Of Birds and Texas, is to bring together two different personal approaches to painting birds. The backgrounds of the pictures are very much related to our landscape style, and the birds themselves reflect our own interpretation of these elegant qualities of line and pose and composition which have so impressed us with the works of John James Audubon. This book, then, is created as a work of art and literature to pay homage to a deep and abiding affection for Texas and all of its natural beauty and to celebrate an art form which in many ways became the foundation of our <sup>own</sup> careers as artists.