



The New-York Historical Society

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James B. Bell, Director

20 May 1987

Mr. Stuart Gentling
4801 Harley Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

Dear Stuart:

My apologies for being incommunicado for so long. My mother recently suffered a heart attack, and I have been commuting back and forth between work and the hospital. As a result, I'm afraid that my professional schedule has been somewhat disrupted. I did try to call both you and Mr. Kirk late last week and early this week without success, but I hope to reach you soon.

I write to add my voice to the already thunderous praise for Of Birds and Texas. You and Scott and Mr. Graves have produced a glorious work, placing the most refined and sophisticated twentieth-century printing technology in the service of the nineteenth century's unbridled reverence for nature. And, wonderfully, the spirit of John James Audubon pervades the pages, revealing in your monumental bird images both the unique and subtle characteristics of each species and the artists' unabashed passion for them.

In the tradition of the best natural history painting, each illustration in Of Birds and Texas keenly evokes the topographic details and particular quality of light characterizing the many different habitats of each species portrayed, and observing with great sensitivity that Texas landscape in which so many bird lovers have wandered with pleasure. Your book's appeal will by no means be limited to Texans, however; for any lover of art or natural history will be captivated by the paintings, and delighted by the enchanting and lyrical text.

You must also know how entranced I was to see the marvelous life-sized red-phase Screech Owl on the title page. The vividness in the rendering of that little creature quite took my breath away, and I suspect that it would make the blood of any mouse run cold. Otus asio is a most appropriate link between your remarkable book and the one in which Audubon painted that bird so perceptively, and, as well, between our two states, in each of which it happily resides.

Many congratulations on this exceptional work. You have created a moving homage to Audubon, to Texas, and to American natural history. Your book will give untold pleasure to lovers of art and science, and will awaken the interest of many others who have yet to explore those mysterious and magical realms.

Stuart Gentling

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With grateful thanks for your most generous and impressive contribution to our library. Of Birds and Texas will have a treasured place in our collections. I do hope that, on your next trip to New York, I will have the chance to thank you personally for sharing your great accomplishment with us, and that you will allow me the honor of taking you through our Audubon gallery.

Sincerely yours,

Carole Anne Slatkin

Carole Anne Slatkin
Assistant Director for Public Programs