

20 August 1987

Mr. Roger Tory Peterson
The Cedars
125 Neck Road
Old Lyme, Conn. 06371

Dear Sir,

About a year ago my twin brother Scott and I completed the publication of a rather monumental book entitled Of Birds and Texas. This project took about ten years to complete, and as you will see from the accompanying pages of commentary by important art and book people the folio has been very well-received. Of Birds and Texas is not meant to be a scientific work. In fact it represents an unabashedly personal view of our state and a small part of its wildlife. You will also see that we are great admirers of John J. Audubon and his work, and I think you will be interested in some of the strange coincidences which brought Audubon very close to us while we were publishing our book. We dedicated our book to Audubon ten years ago, and while we were in the midst of publishing it we discovered and purchased a small watercolor of boat-tailed grackles which turned out to be not only an original Audubon painting, but also his first published work and the only Audubon bird painting published in the artist's lifetime remaining in private hands.

I think I should mention that neither Scott nor I are wildlife painters, and I do not see us doing any more books about birds in the future as much as this subject interests us. Infact our next book will be about the great Aztec capitol city of Tenochtitlan as it appeared to the first Europeans in 1519. The Aztec project will take seven or eight years and will, I think, be the definitive visual treatment of this subject for many years to come.

There are now less than 125 copies remaining available to the public from the original limited edition of 525 copies. We would be greatly honored, sir, if you would accept an Artist's Copy of our book. There are only 25 of these copies, and they differ from a regular copy in that they contain an original watercolor study of a Texas bird painted on the title page. If you accept our book, we would like you to suggest the Texas bird which we would paint for your copy. It is important to remember that we always paint our birds life-size, and the bird must fit within the blank space on the title page. When you let us know your choice we will simply send you another title page with the watercolor study.

Mr. Peterson, I realize that you may think it odd that utter strangers would send you such a gift right out of nowhere, but you are certainly no stranger to us. We have always been great admirers of your work and what you have done to raise the interest and awareness of millions of people in birds and other natural things. I can assure you that I can not remember a time when we did not have at least one of your books with us in the field. Since we have benefitted so much over the years from our extensive collection of books about birds, especially our favorite examples by Audubon, Fuertes, Sutton and you, we absolutely relish the idea that you might one day enjoy a book by us! Because most of our books will sell out in Texas, it is also important that other bird people outside our state have a chance to know about Of Birds and Texas before it disappears into rare book libraries and the homes of wealthy collectors. At least the original paintings will be on display here in Fort Worth, since the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History has purchased the entire collection so that it can remain in this city.

By the way, I know that you are currently engaged in forming a new Institute in New York. Perhaps this book might eventually be a pleasant addition to that project. If the membership is open, I would certainly like to join and to do anything that I can to help you in your efforts. In the meantime we hope that you accept our gift and that it returns to you some of the pleasure that you have given us. I am also sending you some background material on us and the book. It is perhaps more information than you will ever want to know, but I think it still might prove helpful. If for any reason you would like to talk to me, my home number is (817) 738 4427 and my studio number with answering service is (817) 332 7059.

Warmest regards,

Stuart
Stuart W. Gentling

P.S. Please study the reading and care instructions before perusing the book. The pages are not bound, and they are slid one over the other instead of being turned as with most books. I am also sending you an uncorrected galley proof which should facilitate your reading the text should you wish to.