

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS

Newsletter - August, 1985

It is not an easy task to give notice to our subscribers that there will be one final delay before the book, Of Birds and Texas, by Scott and Stuart Gentling and John Graves, is ready for delivery. Postponements of the delivery date will come as no surprise to collectors of rare contemporary limited editions which are almost always offered to the public before they go to press. However, since so many of our customers are not dedicated collectors of limited editions, it is easy to see how such delays can cause worry and frustration.

I am pleased to be able to announce with confidence that the Gentling-Graves book of Texas birds will be in our hands and ready for delivery by the first week in December. There will thus be ample time to get the books to all our customers before the Christmas season so that those who have planned to do so may give them as presents. The books actually will be finished about a month before this date, but we are giving ourselves a month's grace just to be on the safe side. Those who wish to have their books a little earlier than the announced December delivery date for shipment overseas should contact me as soon as possible at the telephone numbers listed below.

For those of us involved in the day-to-day routine of overseeing the publishing and sales of the Gentling-Graves book, the next four months will pass all too quickly. For those who are anxious to receive their long-awaited publication, we would like to ease their waiting somewhat by giving each subscriber a facsimile-size print of an original painting of Boat-tailed Grackles executed by John James Audubon at Philadelphia in the Spring of 1824. (This print will appear in the book on a page of text and cannot be framed separately without destroying the page.) Each print will bear the exclusive Gentling Editions seal and will be strictly limited to 1,000 copies. To own one of these prints is to possess a small treasure in its own right, for this small picture is a reproduction of the very first Audubon painting from which a print was made. It was presented by Audubon to the great ornithologist, Charles Lucien Bonaparte, nephew of Napoleon, who published it in 1825 in his famous four volume supplement to Alexander Wilson's AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY (1808 - 1814). The Wilson publication in nine volumes was the first great work on

American birds produced in this country. Both the Wilson books and the Bonaparte supplement are now considered by rare book collectors to be one work. The grackle painting as it appeared in the Bonaparte supplement was printed in a considerably altered form and has never, until now, been reproduced as it was originally created. Though Audubon did receive credit in the book, he was furious over the way that his painting had been printed, and it was this experience which made him determined to seek a publisher in Europe. The original painting was thought to be lost for 160 years until it was discovered in 1984, and the Gentlings acquired it. It is the only original Audubon bird painting reproduced in his lifetime that is still in private hands. The Gentlings have, in their own way, corrected an old injustice by reproducing the painting properly for the first time in their own book which is dedicated to Audubon.

I mentioned in my newsletter of March 1985 that, by including this historically important picture which has never been seen by the public in the 160 years since its creation, the Gentlings have symbolically linked their publication not only to Audubon's work but also to the books of Charles Bonaparte and Alexander Wilson, and thus to the first great nineteenth century book of American Ornithology. There is no other contemporary publication which can claim this unique quality.

I shall conclude by saying that this is the last newsletter that you will be receiving from us. We are pleased to be able to state with absolute assurance that the next time we contact you will be with a written notice that your copy or copies of OF BIRDS AND TEXAS are ready for delivery. If you have any further questions concerning the publication of this book, please contact me at the following numbers, 732-0302 or 332-7059.

Sincerely,

E. Ralph Carr, Project Manager