

NEW PROSPECTUS

Occasionally there occurs in the world of book publishing an event so special as to justify superlatives. Such an event is the recent publication of a new book entitled OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, a Great Imperial Folio with color plates and commentary by painters Scott and Stuart Gentling and an important new work ^{of prose} by noted Texas author John Graves. Although this book is dedicated to the memory of John James Audubon and its folio-size format will inevitably lead to comparisons with the great ornithological books of the past, OF BIRDS AND TEXAS ^{a book about birds} is not only a bird book. In spite of its impressive size it is an intimate work which presents the personal views of three Texas artists as they look at their state, its long history and a few of its more interesting inhabitants — feathered and otherwise.

This special Gentling-Graves collaboration is further enhanced by the association of master printer David Holman of Wind River Press and book binder-conservator Craig Jensen, both of Austin, Texas. This team has created a book of exceptional elegance that has no precedent in the history of Texas arts and letters. Rare book dealers, librarians, museum directors, critics and aficionados of Texana have received the book with enthusiasm and praise — and no small amount of astonishment that such an ambitious project could be successfully undertaken by a small regional press. This prospectus can only hint at what the book OF BIRDS AND TEXAS is really like. It simply must be seen to be fully appreciated.

The inspiration for doing the book began with the Gentlings in 1966, but the twin brothers did not actually start the project until a decade later. It took about eight years to produce the paintings which comprise this volume's 50 offset color plates. Both plates and text are printed on sheets of acid-free, Mowhawk Superfine paper measuring 22 inches by 28 inches. This Great Imperial Folio size is rarely used anywhere for books today, and the publication of a fine art book of such dimensions has never been successfully attempted in Texas. As with some of the best European books of similar scale and importance, the pages of this volume are not bound but are arranged in two linen-covered portfolios which are then placed in a linen-covered box. Both the box and portfolios are structured with museum caliber bookboard. They are designed by Craig Jensen and are hand-crafted at the Jensen Bindery in Austin. Only the most appropriate PH neutral (acid-free) materials have been used

throughout to insure that the book meets the highest standards of archival quality.

In the critical matters of typography and page design award-winning printer David Holman worked closely with the Gentlings to create a work of classical clarity and simplicity. He printed the entire text by letterpress, setting the type by hand, using Centaur monotype, an elegant lettering derived from texts carved upon the Column of Trajan at Rome. At the same time that he was working on the text Holman was also printing the color plates by himself. Because of the book's exceptional page size, it was necessary for him to purchase two Heidelberg presses especially for this project. The resulting product of both presses, issuing from what is basically a one-man shop, has been described as nothing less than a printing tour-de-force.

THE PORTFOLIOS

Portfolio One contains 10 color plates of Texas landscape subjects painted in the Gentlings' more familiar drybrush watercolor style. A page of commentary preceeds each plate. Stuart Gentling contributed the Acknowledgements and the Introduction as well as the Dedication page enhanced by a small portrait of John James Audubon by Scott Gentling. The Foreword was written by Harry Tennison, world sportsman and conservationist and currently president of Game Conservation International.

The literary highlight of this portfolio is an essay by John Graves entitled "Recollections of a Texas Bird Glimpser". Graves is best known for his book, GOODBYE TO A RIVER, which has been issued in thirteen editions in this country and translated into eight foreign languages. This book is about the history of a threatened Texas river — the Brazos — and its impact upon the author's own life. He contemplates both while on a solo canoe trip down that river in the autumn of 1959. GOODBYE TO A RIVER is on every critic's list of the ten best books about Texas, many regarding it as the best Texas book ever written.

Although he has produced a significant number of essays and magazine articles, John Graves is not regarded as a prolific writer. He has published only two full-length books since GOODBYE TO A RIVER appeared in 1960, and yet this body of work has earned him the reputation as the best prose stylist in Texas. Any new writing by John Graves is a literary event of importance. In "Recollections of a Texas Bird Glimpser" the author reviews his past and some

of the people and places of his native Texas and elsewhere which have deeply influenced him. It is both an amusing and a serious work. Most of Graves's writing is autobiographical, but "Recollections" is his most personal work so far.

Portfolio Two contains 40 color plates of Texas birds with a page or more of Gentling commentary preceding each plate. All the birds except the wild turkey are depicted life-size against backgrounds of the state's many different regions, showing seasonal changes and the varying moods of day and night. In keeping with the book's dedication to Audubon, the Gentlings have also included two remarkable pieces of Audubon memorabilia. On page 73 is a facsimile reproduction of the first page of an original Audubon manuscript, the great bird artist's unedited first-draft account of the red-shouldered hawk written in 1830 for his famous ORNITHOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY. The entire manuscript is published here for the first time with ^{Audubon's} punctuation and spelling and charming syntax preserved unedited, thus giving the reader a rare insight into the man and his thinking. The manuscript serves as commentary to the Gentlings' own portrait of the red-shouldered hawk.

The twin brothers also share with the reader a very unique and important Audubon discovery which they made while working on this book. On page 87, published for the first time in its unaltered original state, is an Audubon painting of a pair of boat-tailed grackles which the artist created in 1824 in Philadelphia at a time when he made his first attempt to find a publisher. The story of Audubon's Philadelphia experience is one of the most interesting highlights of his many biographies, but mysteries have remained until the Gentlings spotted this small painting in a print dealer's catalogue, recognized the work for what it was and bought it. By an interesting coincidence the painting came into their hands in January 1985, the bicentennial year of Audubon's birth. It has since been authenticated by the New York Historical Society, the leading authority on Audubon paintings.

The Historical Society also confirmed Scott and Stuart Gentling's belief that this picture was, indeed, Audubon's first published work. It is the very picture, long thought to be lost or destroyed, which appeared considerably altered in plate IV, volume one of Charles Lucian Bonaparte's four-volume supplement to Alexander Wilson's AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY. Wilson's book was the first great publication about American birds produced in this country. It was Audu-

bon's cold reception by the Philadelphia science and publishing establishment and the manner in which this particular picture was treated that made him resolve to go to Europe to find a publisher for his BIRDS OF AMERICA. The whole fascinating story is told in the Gentling commentary which provides insights into many of the mysteries not answered by existing biographies. This picture of the boat-tailed grackle, sometimes called the great crow-blackbird in Audubon's day, is not only Audubon's first published bird painting, it is the only Audubon bird painting published in the artist's lifetime that remains in private hands. It is published in the Gentling-Graves book in facsimile size for the first time as Audubon actually painted it and would have wanted it to be seen. Its re-discovery and publication here unites OF BIRDS AND TEXAS in a very unique way to the two most important 19th century books about American birds — Alexander Wilson's AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGY and the BIRDS OF AMERICA by John James Audubon.

CONCLUSION

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS is certain to become a classic in the history of Texas publishing, but this book is meant to be more than a regional work. With the publication of this prospectus it is now being offered for the first time to dealers and collectors outside the state. So far more than half the regular edition and all the Artists' Copies have been sold — mostly to Texans. With less than 250 books remaining for collectors in the rest of the country and abroad, there is no way of predicting how long the supply may last. Unfortunately dealers will rarely have copies available for inspection, since most of them already have clients in mind when they place their orders so that the books never ~~seem to~~ remain in their care for long. While this brochure adequately describes the general contents of the Gentling-Graves book, it has already been noted that it can not convey a sense of its impressive physical presence. A brochure simply cannot take the place of actually reviewing the book in person as most of the collectors in Texas have done. Those who wish to purchase a copy should fill out and mail the accompanying order card. If you are interested but would like to make further inquiries, please do not hesitate to call. Orders will be filled according to the postage date of the purchase order.

SPECIFICATIONS:

OF BIRDS AND TEXAS, a limited edition of 500 copies numbered and signed on the Colophon Page by Scott and Stuart Gentling and John Graves. There 25 additional books designated Artists' Copies that are remarked with an original watercolor study of a Texas bird by one or both of the Gentlings.

BOOK SIZE: 23 inches x 30 inches x 3 inches (Box size)

PAGE SIZE: 22 inches by 28 inches

WEIGHT: 46 lbs.

EXTENT: 137 pages

PAPER: Illustrations and text are printed on 80 lb. Mowhawk Superfine

ILLUSTRATIONS: 50 color plates, picture size 20 inches by 26 inches

3 additional facsimile-size color illustrations

1) Portrait of John James Audubon by Scott Gentling

2) First page of an Audubon manuscript commentary on the red-shouldered hawk.

3) Reproduction of John James Audubon's original 1824 painting of the great crow-blackbird (boat-tailed grackle).

COLOR SEPARATIONS: Color Separations Incorporated, San Antonio, Texas

PRINTED BY: David Holman (Wind River Press, Austin, Texas). Text printed by letterpress with Centaur Monotype. Color work by four-color offset. Heidelberg presses.

BINDING: The text and color plates are not bound but are arranged in two linen-covered portfolios which are then placed in a linen-covered box. Linen, bookboard and glue are of archival quality, PH neutral (acid-free) materials. Box and Portfolios manufactured by Craig Jensen and staff at the Jensen Bindery at Austin, Texas.

PUBLICATION DATE: August, 1986

LIST OF BIRD PLATES

PLATE XI	TURKEY VULTURE
XII	CARDINAL
XIII	CATTLE EGRET
XIV	PIGEON HAWK
XV	AMERICAN OYSTERCATCHER
XVI	WILD TURKEY
XVII	PURPLE GALLINULE
XVIII	BURROWING OWL
XIX	AMERICAN WOODCOCK
XX	ACORN WOODPECKER
XXI	ROSEATE SPOONBILL
XXII	HOUSE WREN
XXIII	SHARP-SHINNED HAWK
XXIV	SNOW GOOSE
XXV	SCALED QUAIL
XXVI	BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON
XXVII	BARN SWALLOW
XXVIII	RED-SHOULDERED HAWK
XXIX	RED-BILLED PIGEON
XXX	BUFFLEHEAD DUCK
XXXI	MOURNING DOVE
XXXII	FLAMMULATED OWL
XXXIII	GREAT-TAILED GRACKLE
XXXIV	PYRRHULOXIA
XXXV	RUFUS-SIDED TOWHEE
XXXVI	PURPLE MARTIN
XXXVII	CRESTED CARACARA
XXXVIII	MOCKINGBIRD
XXXIX	BOBWHITE QUAIL
XL	SIX MIGRATING WARBLER SPECIES
XLI	CANVASBACK DUCK
XLII	RIVOLI'S HUMMINGBIRD
XLIII	ROADRUNNER
XLIV	CLIFF SWALLOW
XLV	CHUCK-WILL'S-WIDOW
XLVI	ZONE-TAILED HAWK
XLVII	SCISSOR-TAILED FLYCATCHER
XLVIII	LICHTENSTEIN'S ORIOLE
XLIX	RING-NECKED PHEASANT