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There can be little doubt that the extraordinary volume, Of Birds and Texas, produced and illustrated by the brothers Scott and Stuart Gentling of Fort Worth, Texas, is primarily a book for looking. Thus far the fortunate few have been allowed to discover this magnificent folio and to turn the pages with a growing feeling of awe and delight in much the same manner as the Gentling twins first discovered John J. Audubon's, The Birds of America, with its 435 reproductions when they were thirteen years old.

Stuart Gentling recounts in his introduction how the experience of Audubon's, The Birds of America changed their lives and led, after thirty years, too their unique pictorial homage to that artist. In Of Birds and Texas, the Gentlings have truly captured the Audubon spirit even while retaining their own identity. This is as true in the ornithological accuracy of the birds represented as in the dramatic Texas landscapes where the birds flutter or nestle throughout the hours of the day and the seasons of the year.

One's viewing pleasure is greatly enhanced by the elephantine format of the pages--22 x 28 inches--as well as the rich quality of the paper which forces the reader to treat each sheet as a precious object for fear of dinging an edge or rumpling a corner. Even so, one might wish that in time there will be a more compact and popular volume which can be readily available to the average bird and/or Texas lover.

Having said this much about visual joy which this folio evokes. It would be morally wrong not to insist that it be read as well. John Graves has contributed a highly prized and personalized essay which leaves the reader full of the richness of semi-rural life in Texas. His writing, so visual and visceral, attaches to the illustrations like an old glove does to a workers hand.

Harry Tennison, a friend and mentor to Scott and Stuart Gentling as they grew up, offers wonderful insights into their early precocious and highly creative behavior which served as portent to the Fort Worth community of their unique bonding and rare talents. Like the Corsican brothers, these unusual twins seem to feel each others happiness and pain and extend each others talents to a level where the whole does much more than equal the sum of the parts.

Henry
Henry T. Hopkins
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*Please feel free to do with them as you wish
my Best*

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