



NEW BEDFORD
FREE PUBLIC
LIBRARY

Birds of the First Light and Longhouses

The Prints of John James Audubon

From the Collection of the New Bedford Free Public Library

Curated by Louis Doherty

New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks!

June 1 – October 14, 2018



Barn Owl Plate 171

In 1820, John James Audubon embarked on what would be the defining experience of his life – the study and rendering of every bird species from eastern to central North America. The culmination of his work, *The Birds of America*, redefined the field of ornithological illustration by creating images that combined a creative sensibility with scientific observation. The liveliness and immediacy of Audubon's approach captured the public's imagination in a way no similar work had, before or since. His wild turkey, blue heron and roseate tern remain imprinted on the collective consciousness of the American public.

Four of the Engravings in *Birds of the First Light & Longhouses* Exhibition



American Bittern Plate 337



Henslow Sparrow Plate 70



Summer Duck Plate 206



Raven Plate 101

The New Bedford Audubon Collection and Exhibition

The New Bedford community is fortunate to be one of the 191 public venues worldwide to have the full collection of 435 original hand-colored engravings. In 1866, whaling merchant James Arnold donated four volumes of John James Audubon's first edition double-elephant folio of *The Birds of America* to the New Bedford Free Public Library.



New Bedford Merchant James Arnold



John James Audubon

Sixty of these engravings, many of which have not been seen in more than 30 years, will be on display at the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! in an exhibition entitled *Birds of the First Light and Longhouses*, June 1 through October 14, 2018. The curator of the exhibit is Louis Doherty, a founder of the New Bedford Art Museum, and acknowledged Audubon expert, with extensive experience in Audubon's work. Doherty and Janice Hodson, curator of the Library's art collection, are working with Robert Hauser, a noted paper conservator from the New Bedford Whaling Museum, who is undertaking the conservation treatment and repairs.

The Preservation of the Engravings

To mount this exciting exhibition, the New Bedford Free Public Library and the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! have joined forces, establishing The Audubon Preservation Partnership.

One of the primary missions of The Audubon Preservation Partnership is to repair and conserve part of the collection. Thirty-six of the 60 engravings to be exhibited need restoration. The partnership will raise funds for the conservation matting, and restoration of these engravings. These conservation efforts will preserve these engravings for the viewing pleasure of present and future generations.

In order to safely exhibit the Audubon prints, they must be treated to ensure their preservation. The New Bedford Free Public Library's long-term preservation plan for the Audubon collection involves the following important work:

- Removal of acidic tape causing staining, waving and puckering to the paper and distortion of images
- Removal of engraving glued to acidic paperboard that causes discoloring and makes the paper brittle
- Mending of tears

All 60 of the engravings will receive:

- Archival matting, making them ready for framing for special exhibition purposes



Curators Janice Hodson and Louie Doherty Working on the Engravings
at the New Bedford Free Public Library's Art Room in 2010

Because of the extreme sensitivity to light of the water-based pigments used to color the engravings, even works that have received conservation treatment cannot be continuously displayed. Matting is essential to protecting the prints and making their retrieval from storage much easier.

The Audubon Preservation Partnership Exhibition Event Highlights

There are many exciting activities planned for the exhibition, including:

- Opening Reception on June 1, 2018
- Special private showing of Audubon prints with Janet Hodson at the Library (groups of 5)
- Audubon Lecture Series, including lectures by:
 - Curators Janice Hodson and Louis Doherty
 - Robert Hauser, print conservator, on the restoration of the engravings
- Printmaking experts on the art of Audubon's engraving techniques
- Monthly bird & trail walks at the Audubon Sanctuary in Westport, where Audubon hiked and fished
- Bird Carving demonstrations, wildlife artists and illustration, bird vocalizations and communications
- Sneak Preview Opening Gala
- Children's events, including a scavenger hunts, tours, and art instruction
- Additional programming is being planned

Overview of *Birds of the First Light and Longhouses*

When Europeans came to New England and New York, the Wampanoag, Iroquois, and other native tribes were peopling the area. These settlers cleared the land of its trees and established farms. After a few centuries, industrialization prompted people to move to towns and cities in search of jobs. As a result, many of the birds that Audubon captured in his art, were negatively affected. Over hunting, habitat loss, pollution, climate change, use of Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (commonly known as DDT) and other pesticides were only some of the concerns. Today, many of the feathered families that were present 75 years ago are either extinct or in decline.

On the positive side, many avian species are growing in the North East. The use of bird feeders, the increase of wildlife refuges and other protected lands, the building of nest platforms are some of the reasons the bird population remains. The exhibition of John James Audubon prints will start with 31 bird species that are declining today on exhibit in New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! Skylight Gallery. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the prints will slowly be replaced, a few at a time, by 31 species of birds that are increasing in New England and New York.

The exhibition literally evolves, beckoning bird lovers to return to the Museum for something new several times throughout the run of the exhibition. Viewers will have the opportunity to view 60 Audubon prints that have not been public for decades.

The concerns about climate change and environmental challenges we face today are at the forefront. In a recent Boston Globe article written by David Abel, he quoted Christopher Leahy a field ornithologist from Mass Audubon as saying,

“There is no credible doubt that the Earth’s changing climate and its living inhabitants are now on a collision course...losses for birds due to climate change presage losses in the quality of human life.” This narrative is of exceptional interest today. Help us tell this story and share your experiences through on-going programming. Be a part of the message.

History of the Previous Exhibits at the Museum

In 1997 – 1998 just a few years after the opening of the New Bedford Art Museum, the first major exhibit of the New Bedford Free Public Library’s Audubon collection was held. Thirty-eight of the engravings were on exhibit. In 2009, 32 of the 38 exhibited in 1998 were brought back to the museum as a teaser for the major show, Taking Flight: The Birds of John James Audubon. That exhibit contained 61 Audubon prints in addition to many pieces loaned from other public and private collections. **The 60 engravings to be exhibited this summer are an entirely new set of engravings from the collection.**

The Preservation Partnership Levels of Giving

The total cost of conserving 36 of the Audubon prints that will be shown in the exhibition is approximately \$8,000. An additional \$7,000 is needed to support curating, exhibiting and programming. The Friends of the Library have graciously agreed to donate the conservation costs of the Raven (\$3,000) The following are the suggested levels of giving to become a part of this all important conservation effort and exhibition.

Great Auk \$3,000

- Top listing as Preservation Lead on all printed materials in digital catalogue, press materials, social media and signage at the Museum
- Plaque under specific engraving of your choice associated with your donation
- Limited private showing and tour of the exhibition with Louis Doherty, curator
- Chance to view additional Audubons in the Library collection with Janice Hodson
- Free admittance to all programming scheduled for the duration of the exhibition
- Opportunity to have a group of friends, colleagues and/or associates have a private event

Raven \$1,500

- Listing as Preservation Partnership donor on all printed materials, in digital catalogue, press materials, social media and signage at the Museum
- Plaque under specific engraving of your choice associated with your donation
- Limited private showing and tour of the exhibition with Louis Doherty, curator
- Chance to view additional Audubons in the Library collection with Janice Hodson
- Free access to all programming throughout the duration of the exhibition

Wood Duck \$1000

- Listing a Preservation Partnership supporter on all printed materials and in digital catalogue
- Listing a Preservation Partnership supporter on contributor’s wall
- Limited private showing and tour of the exhibition with Louis Doherty, curator
- Chance to view additional Audubons in the Library collection with Janice Hodson
- Free access to all programming throughout the duration of the exhibition

Blue Heron \$500

- Listing as Preservation Partnership supporter on all printed materials and in digital catalogue
- Listing as Preservation patron on contributors’ wall
- Free access to all programming throughout the duration of the exhibition

Wild Turkey \$250

- Listing as Preservation patron on contributors’ wall
- Free access to all programming throughout the duration of the exhibition

List of Engravings in the 2018 Exhibit: *Birds of the First Light & Longhouses*

1. *Rice Bird* (Bobolink), PL 54
 2. *Henslow's Bunting* (Henslow's Sparrow), PL 70
 3. *Wood Thrush*, PL 73
 4. *Virginian Partridge* (Northern Bobwhite), PL 76
 5. *Seaside Finch* (Dusky Seaside Sparrow), PL 93
 6. *American Sparrow Hawk* (American Kestrel), PL 142
 7. *Black-throated Blue Warbler*, PL 155
 8. *Barn Owl*, PL 171
 9. *Spotted Grouse* (Spruce Grouse), PL 176
 10. *Virginia Rail*, PL 205
 11. *American Puffin*, PL 213
 12. *Razor Bill*, PL 214
 13. *Piping Plover*, PL 220
 14. *Scaup Duck* (Lesser Scaup), PL 229
 15. *Quabird* (Black-crowned Night Heron), PL 236
 16. *Roseate Tern*, PL 240
 17. *Uria Brunnichi* (Thick-billed Murre), PL 245
 18. *American Woodcock*, PL 268
 19. *King Duck* (King Eider), PL 276
 20. *Great Shearwater*, PL 283
 21. *Dusky Petrel* (Sooty Shearwater), PL 299
 22. *Dusky Duck* (American Black Duck), PL 302
 23. *Red-breasted Sandpiper* (Red Knot), PL 315
 24. *Lesser Tern* (Least Tern), PL 319
 25. *Pied Duck* (Labrador Duck), PL 332
 26. *American Bittern*, PL 337
 27. *Little Auk* (Dovekie), PL 339
 28. *Great Auk*, PL 341
 29. *Spotted Grosbeak* (Evening Grosbeak), PL 373
 30. *American Scooter Duck* (Black Scoter), PL 408
 31. *Great American Hen and Young* (Wild Turkey), PL 6
 32. *Carolina Pigeon* (Mourning Dove), PL 17
 33. *Crested Titmouse* (Tufted Titmouse), PL 39
 34. *Cedar Bird* (Cedar Waxwing), PL 43
 35. *Fish Hawk* (Osprey), PL 81
 36. *White-bellied Swallow* (Tree Swallow), PL 98
 37. *Raven* (Common Raven), PL 101
 38. *Pileated Woodpecker*, PL 111
 39. *Bluebird* (Eastern Bluebird), PL 113
 40. *Snowy Owl*, PL 121
 41. *White-headed Eagle* (Bald Eagle), PL 126
 42. *Pine Creeping Warbler* (Pine Warbler), PL 140
 43. *White-breasted Nuthatch*, PL 152
 44. *American Golden-crested-Wren* (Golden-crowned Kinglet), PL 183
 45. *Canada Goose*, PL 201
 46. *Summer Duck* (Wood Duck), PL 206
 47. *Black Guillemot*, PL 219
 48. *Pied Oyster-catcher* (American Oyster Catcher), PL 223
 49. *Black-backed Gull* (Great Black- Backed Gull), PL 241
 50. *Snowy Heron* (Snowy Egret), PL 242
 51. *Double-crested Cormorant*, PL 257
 52. *Herring Gull*, PL 291
 53. *Blue Crane or Heron* (Little Blue Heron), PL 307
 54. *Black-headed Gull* (Laughing Gull), PL 314
 55. *American Avocet*, PL 318
 56. *Yellow-crowned Heron* (Yellow Crowned Night Heron), PL 336
 57. *Glossy Ibis*, PL 387
 58. *Brant*, PL 391
 59. *Golden-eye Duck* (Barrow's Golden-eye), PL 403
 60. *Red-bellied Woodpecker*, PL 416
- Other works also being exhibited:
61. Alexander Wilson, *Short-eared Owl*, PL 33
 62. Alexander Wilson, *White Ibis*, PL 66



Celebrating 25 years of Art in New Bedford