

## John James Audubon

In addition to being the most famous bird painter of his time, John James Audubon was a respected naturalist and a prolific writer who witnessed and helped to document the rapidly changing frontier of early 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

## The Audubon Octavos

My interest in the documentary and in this academic conference stems from the Audubon Octavos. The seven-volume set, *Birds of America*; and the three-volume set, *Quadrupeds of North America*, were published by John James Audubon and his family between 1839 and 1856. They are a manageable one-eighth the dimension of the great double elephant folios.

A matched 10-volume set, bought by my father when in college, stood invitingly in our living room bookcase as I was growing up. The 650 hand-colored prints were special but what turned me on to Audubon, and, as I learned later, set the volumes apart from any other work by him, was inclusion of his written descriptions of each bird and animal – more than 3,000 pages of scientific observation and personal commentary.

Today, few are aware that Audubon made major contributions to natural history and ornithology. Even fewer know that, in colorful prose, he captured scenes from daily life on the American frontier over a tumultuous 15-year period.

This story deserves retelling. The documentary film genre is made to order and Larry Hott and Diane Garey are prizewinning documentary filmmakers.

The Audubon Octavos themselves deserve discussion. Only here can one find Audubon the artist and writer. But complete sets still in private hands are being acquired by certain dealers who then 'break' them, remove individual prints, and discard the text. Selected prints sell for several thousand dollars. The asking price for one particularly popular print is \$3,500.

Audubon Octavos may not survive this pressure from the market place – pressure that may only increase once the Hott-Garey American Masters/PBS documentary is broadcast to an audience projected to be over 12 million.

How to raise awareness of the Audubon Octavos and preserve remaining sets will be a focus of the roundtable.

Roswell Eldridge, M.D.

## How to find Rensselaerville and the Rensselaerville Institute:

**The Hamlet of Rensselaerville** is in the Town of Rensselaerville, 27 miles southwest of Albany, at the end of NY Rt. 85 which begins in Albany. It's about the same distance northwest of Catskill. It's 1800 ft. up in the Helderbergs, northern foothills of the Catskill Mountains.

**From the north and east**, follow Route 85 to the middle of the hamlet of Rensselaerville. At the T-intersection, turn right one block and go up the hill on Pond Hill Road. Turn right at Rensselaerville Institute sign to enter Institute campus.

**From the south**, leave NYS Thruway (I-87) at Exit 21, Catskill. Turn left after the toll booth and proceed about half a mile to the right turn entrance to Rt. 23 west. Proceed west on Rt. 23 for approximately 8 miles. At the traffic light turn right onto Rt. 32 north and go about 8 miles to Greenville. Stay on Rt. 32 north through Greenville. About 2 miles north of the Greenville traffic light and a mile past Bryant's Square shopping center, turn left on Rt. 405 at blinking light. When Rt. 405 merges with Rt. 402, turn left onto Rt. 402 for about half a mile, then bear right at the fork to pick up Rt. 351. Follow Rt. 351 to Rensselaerville. Turn right at Pond Hill Road (two blocks after corner where Presbyterian Church is). Go up hill and turn right at Rensselaerville Institute sign to enter Institute campus.

**From the west**, take Rt. 145 south through Middleburgh. Just after Middleburgh turn left at the Middleburgh Diner on Schoharie County 20 and go up the hill towards Huntersland. It is easy to miss this turn so be watching for it. Stay on this road. The name changes to Albany County Rt. 10. Follow the road to its end at a T-intersection. Turn left on Rt. 353 to hamlet of Rensselaerville. After crossing bridge at Grist Mill, turn left at next road which is Pond Hill Road. Go up hill and turn right at sign into Rensselaerville Institute campus.

Brochure design: Barbara Bolster-Barrett

## John James Audubon and his America Revisited in Film and Conversation



Passenger pigeon, detail

## Conference

Featuring the  
World Premiere of the PBS film

## John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature

**Saturday, October 21, 2006**  
Rensselaerville Institute Conference Center

Hosted by the Edmund Niles Huyck Preserve  
Rensselaerville, NY 12147

## Speakers

### The Film's Producers...

- ✧ Larry Hott and Diane Garey, Florentine Films/Hott Productions, award-winning producers of the documentary film *John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature*, which will be broadcast nationally on PBS on the American Masters series. The film will have its world premiere at this conference

### Guest Speakers...

- ✧ John Chalmers M.D., author of *Audubon in Edinburgh and his Scottish Associates*
- ✧ Christoph Irmscher, Ph.D., noted authority on Audubon's writings

### Roundtable Panelists...

- ✧ Ron Tyler, Ph.D., author of *Audubon's Great National Work: The Royal Octavo Edition of Birds of America*
- ✧ Bill Steiner, author of *Audubon Art Prints: A collector's Guide to Every Edition*
- ✧ Leslie Kostrich, owner of *minniesland.com*, an online gallery specializing in Audubon prints
- ✧ Tom Blanton, an expert on the *Audubon Octavos*

To learn more about our guests, please visit:  
[www.huyckpreserve.org](http://www.huyckpreserve.org)

The conference is cosponsored by the W.P. Carey Foundation and the E.N. Huyck Preserve.

## Conference Schedule

### Saturday, October 21<sup>st</sup>

- ✧ 10 AM-1:00 PM Conference registration
- ✧ 11:30 AM - 12:45 PM Lunch (optional - advance registration required)
- ✧ 1:00 PM Introductions
- ✧ 1:15 - 2:45 PM World premiere of the film **John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature** with remarks and Q&As by the producers, Larry Hott and Diane Garey, Florentine Films.
- ✧ 3:00-4:30 PM Presentations by John Chalmers and Christoph Irmscher.
- ✧ 5:00 PM Cocktails and Dinner at the Huyck Carriage House Restaurant
- ✧ 7:00 PM The *Audubon Octavos*: Ron Tyler, keynote. Roundtable Discussion with Tyler, Bill Steiner, Leslie Kostrich, and Tom Blanton.

### Sunday, October 22<sup>nd</sup> – Optional activities

- ✧ Morning bird walk
- ✧ Explore the E.N. Huyck Preserve
- ✧ Explore Rensselaerville

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**John James Audubon: Drawn from Nature** is a co-production of Florentine Films/Hott Productions and American Masters, Thirteen/WNET, N.Y. Funding is provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the W.P. Carey Foundation and Roswell Eldridge, M.D.

To learn more about the film, please visit:  
<http://www.florentinefilms.org>

## Registration

Limited enrollment

To obtain a registration form:

- ✧ Visit: <http://www.huyckpreserve.org>, or
- ✧ E-mail: [audubonconference@huyckpreserve.org](mailto:audubonconference@huyckpreserve.org), or
- ✧ Call 518-797-3105, or
- ✧ Write:  
Audubon Conference  
E.N. Huyck Preserve,  
P.O. Box 189,  
Rensselaerville, NY 12147

Fees:

- ✧ Conference Fee: \$40.00
- ✧ Lodging (includes breakfast)  
(single \$111/room; double \$132/room)
- ✧ Lunch \$16 (optional)
- ✧ Dinner \$28 (optional)
- ✧ Transcript \$7 (includes postage)

Directions to the Rensselaerville Institute Conference Center may be obtained from their web site:  
[www.riconferencecenter.com/directions.html](http://www.riconferencecenter.com/directions.html)

**The E.N. Huyck Preserve and Biological Research Station** was founded in 1931 to increase the general knowledge and love of nature . . . by providing a means for increasing and protecting the birds and wild animals . . . within [its boundaries]. E.N. Huyck sighted the last known Passenger Pigeon in New York State on land that later became the Huyck Preserve.

As we revisit John James Audubon's contribution to art and natural history it is fitting to celebrate the vision of "Ted" and Jessie Van Antwerp Huyck during the Preserve's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year.

For more information about the Huyck Preserve, please visit: [www.huyckpreserve.org](http://www.huyckpreserve.org)