



About the Object



John James Audubon documented all the birds in North America in the book *The Birds of America*. The Iceland or Jer Falcon is one of the 435 illustrations in his book. Each bird is rendered in its actual size, resulting in a very large book. In fact, the book is 2 feet by 3 feet and is known as a double elephant folio.

Audubon would first make a watercolor illustration of each page of birds. Then, he would send the images to an engraver in England. The engraver would carve the image onto a metal plate and complete the printing. The prints were in black and white. A group of women would then hand paint each print. So who is the artist? Who should get credit? Audubon? The engravers and printers? The painters? All? Why?

So how was the book distributed? Well, it was a subscription service. Almost every month subscribers would get a set of 5 illustrations: 3 small birds, 1 medium bird, and 1 large bird. It was the job of the subscriber to bind their prints together, if they wanted it in book form. It took 12 years for all 435 illustrations to be printed and mailed!

See other pages in the book here: hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p15150coll3/id/6971/rec/5

More to Explore...

BIRD WALK!

Take a walk outside. If you have binoculars, you should take them!

WATCH. Look for birds. Do you see any? If so, what colors are they? What size? Are they flying or perched on a tree?

LISTEN. Do you hear any birds chirping or singing? What does it sound like? Does it sound like a song or an musical instrument?

If you are not able to go on a bird walk, you can take one digitally. Visit the Audubon website and discover a bird that catches your eye. Discover up-close photos, learn about the bird's characteristics, and listen to the sounds and calls of the bird you chose.

audubon.org/bird-guide

Helpful Terms:

Elephant Folio – Refers to the size of paper that is 24 inches tall.

Engraving – A type of printmaking where the illustration or design is carved into a metal plate. See step-by-step photos of the engraving process here: metmuseum.org/about-the-met/curatorial-departments/drawings-and-prints/materials-and-techniques/printmaking/engraving

QUESTION CORNER

LEVEL UP

Draw your favorite bird or one you experienced on your bird walk. Will you draw the bird in its natural habitat? Or will it be a close-up of just the head? It is up to you. Think about how your drawing is similar or different to Audubon's.

- **What bird did you find, either online or on your walk? What is one fact you found interesting about your bird?**
- **How were the colors you chose to color the Jer Falcon different or similar to the real bird?**