

## John James Audubon's Journal of 1826: The Voyage to The Birds of America

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John James Audubon's Journal of 1826: The Voyage to The Birds of America John James Audubon John James Audubon, an early American naturalist and painter, produced one of the greatest works of natural history and art of the nineteenth century, *The Birds of America*. As the record of the interior story of the making of this monumental work, his journal of 1826 is one of the richest documents in the history of American culture.

The first accurate transcription of Audubon's 1826 journal, this edition corrects many of the errors, both intentional and unintentional, found in previous editions. Such errors have obscured the figure of Audubon as a man struggling to realize his professional and artistic dreams. When Audubon embarked for Liverpool from New Orleans in 1826, he carried with him more than 250 of his watercolor drawings in a heavy case, a packet of letters of introduction, and many a good reason to believe that he was a fool to be gambling his family's fortunes on so risky and grandiose a venture. These journal entries, conveying with energy and emotion Audubon's experience of risking everything on a dream—"Oh, America, Wife, Children and acquaintances, Farewell!"—document an American icon's transformation from a beleaguered backwoods artist and naturalist to the man who would become America's premier ornithologist, illustrator of birds, and nature essayist.

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