

‘Audubon’s Birds of America’ – A new exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland

A new exhibition will be opening at the National Museum of Scotland from 12 February which examines the artistry and legacy of one of the world’s rarest, most coveted and biggest books.

‘Audubon’s Birds of America’ will showcase 46 unbound prints from National Museums Scotland’s collection, most of which have never been on display before, as well as a rare bound volume of the book, on loan from the Mitchell Library.









This exhibition is a unique opportunity to see so much of Audubon's work in one place.

Published as a series between 1827 and 1838, *Birds of America* by John James Audubon (1785-1851) was a landmark work that achieved international renown due to the epic scale of the project and the book's spectacular, life-sized ornithological illustrations. His paintings of the natural world are still some of the most famous in the history of art and natural sciences.





The exhibition, which is supported by players of People's Postcode Lottery, will also explore Audubon's links with the scientific and artistic community in late-Enlightenment

Edinburgh, where the process of publishing the book began.

He visited Edinburgh six times, including research visits to what is now the National Museum of Scotland. The exhibition will bring the story up to the present day, looking at the conservation status of some of the species featured in *Birds of America*.



FASCINATION FOR NATURE

Audubon was developing his art at a time of burgeoning interest in the natural world, both for scientific study and as a rich inspiration for writers and artists. The late 18th and early 19th centuries also saw the growth of private and public natural history collections. Extravagant displays of specimens in museums fuelled a growing public fascination with nature and many artists used taxidermy as source material.

Audubon claimed never to have drawn from a stuffed specimen and demanded contemporaries who did so 'blame' naturalists. He promoted himself as an artist who drew from life - representing the beauty and beauty of nature observed at first hand, in the wild.







‘Audubon’s Birds of America’

12 February to 8 May 2022

National Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh

Free entry for Members