

KidsArt

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# Audubon

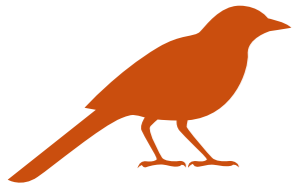
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For Kids

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# John James Audubon

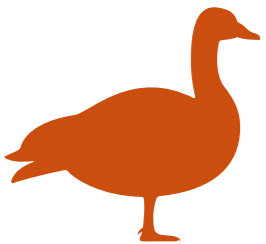
## Wildlife Artist



John James Audubon was one of America's first wildlife artists. He was born over 200 years ago on the island of Haiti.



In the early 1800s, Audubon traveled through the frontier sketching and painting birds in their natural habitat.



Audubon is famous for the paintings in his book, *Birds of America*.



Audubon's history is honored by the National Audubon Society, which is dedicated to the protection of wild animals and their habitats.



John James Audubon was born over 200 years ago on the Caribbean island of Haiti, the son of a French sea captain. He grew up in France and studied art in Paris. In 1802 he moved to Philadelphia, a city in the new country called the United States, so he could avoid the wars of Napoleon.

Audubon was always interested in nature, especially birds and the way they lived. He spent lots of time in the outdoors, sketching and painting. "When I was young," Audubon said, "instead of going to school where I ought to have gone, I usually made for the fields and returned home at the end of the day with birds' nests, eggs, flowers, and even pebbles from the bottom of a stream."

Audubon got married in 1808 and moved to the wilderness of Kentucky. He opened a store and a mill. His business "went on prosperously," he later wrote, "when I attended to it...but then, as now...my thoughts were ever turned toward birds." He explored the fields and forests, dressed in frontier clothes, carrying a gun, a knife and a tomahawk on his belt, hunting and fishing to get food. His wife Lucy was a schoolteacher and earned money to support the family. Perhaps it was lucky for American art that Audubon's store finally failed and he had to work as an artist.





*Birds of America is Audubon's masterpiece. Printed between 1827 and 1838, it contains 435 life-sized illustrations of North American birds in their natural habitat.*

Audubon painted portraits, gave drawing lessons, and even worked as a taxidermist in a museum. And he painted birds! His great goal was to make a picture of every species of bird in North America, and he created hundreds of paintings in precise scientific detail.

He traveled from Florida to Texas to the Canadian wilderness of Labrador, watching and drawing birds in their natural habitat. Years later, his watercolor paintings were printed in the famous book, *Birds of America*.

Audubon's paintings were big! Each painting is the size of a poster. Audubon wanted his birds to look as realistic as possible, and he often painted them life size. Each picture tells a story of the life of that bird.

Audubon's artwork was a great success, first in Europe and then in the States. The British people loved his pictures of backwoods America and its colorful creatures. From his tours in England and Scotland, Audubon raised enough money to begin publishing *Birds of America*. It cost a lot to print this big, beautiful book.

Audubon sketched birds in the wilderness, then painted their pictures in his art studio at home. He used watercolor paints and often added colored chalk to show soft feathers. In his books, the illustrations were careful engravings of the original paintings. The pictures were printed with black lines then each page was colored by hand. Today, nearly 200 years later, Audubon is still considered to be one of America's greatest wildlife painters.

## Audubon On the Internet

The National Audubon Society has a wonderful digital library of *Birds of America* at [www.audubon.org/birds-of-america](http://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america). You can explore the different birds in the famous book and read Audubon's story of each one. Be sure to use the zoom feature on each painting to go in close and look at the tiny details Audubon added to his pictures. Each print is also available as a free high-resolution download.



## Carolina Parrot

In this Audubon painting, a noisy flock of Carolina Parrots gobble seeds on a winter tree. Some of the birds that Audubon painted are now extinct. These colorful American parrots have all died and there are none left in our world.

*"The Parrot does not satisfy himself with cockle-burs, but eats or destroys almost every kind of fruit indiscriminately, and on this account is always an unwelcome visiter to the planter, the farmer, or the gardener...."*

You can read the rest of Audubon's story of the Carolina Parrot, and understand why this hungry bird was often killed by the early settlers, at [www.audubon.org/birds-of-america/carolina-parrot](http://www.audubon.org/birds-of-america/carolina-parrot)

## AUDUBON ART PROJECTS YOU CAN DO

- Go on a nature walk and pick up something to draw. Collect a natural object from outdoors like a leaf, an acorn, or a seashell. Make a careful drawing of your object. Do the drawing life sized or larger. You might even put your object right on the paper and trace around it as a first step. Color your drawing with watercolor paints or colored pencils or crayons, making the colors as true to life as possible.



- A sketch is a really quick drawing. Sketch a small animal from real life. It's easiest to draw your own family pet, but you might also be able to watch and sketch a wild animal like a squirrel at the park or birds at a bird feeder. Make several sketches. Animals move fast, and will not often sit still for you (unless it's your dog taking a nap). Pick your favorite sketch to finish with detailed drawing and coloring.
- Visit a wildlife center or a zoo where you can watch real birds close up. Take your sketchbook and colored pencils along. Pick a favorite bird to draw. Do several sketches of the bird from the front and the side and the back. Draw close up sketches of its beak, its feet, its feathers. Find out all you can about your particular bird, where it lives, what it eats, and what its life is like in the wild.

- Mix watercolors and chalk....to create art in the style of John James Audubon. First, draw a bird. You can look at photos of birds on the Internet or in nature magazines to find a bird you like. Second, paint a bird drawing with watercolors. Let the paint dry, then draw on top with colored chalk to make feathers, shading and texture.
- Make a nest collage. Use brown paint to make branches on a sheet of paper. Make leaves on the branches with a green crayon after the paint has dried. Build a nest with strips of paper and glue. You can also use real dry twigs and grass in your nest, and small bits of yarn and string. The last step is to cut an egg shape out of a piece of paper and glue it into your nest. (This art project is especially fun if you can find a real bird nest to look at and inspire your nest-building work.)



# Mocking Birds

Audubon was a story teller! Not only did he paint birds in their natural settings, but he made his paintings exciting and dramatic.

Do you see the rattlesnake attacking this mocking bird nest? Here's the story from Audubon's field notes about mocking birds:

*"Different species of snakes ascend to their nests, and generally suck the eggs or swallow the young; but on all such occasions, not only the pair to which the nest belongs, but many other Mocking-birds from the vicinity, fly to the spot, attack the reptiles, and, in some cases, are so fortunate as either to force them to retreat, or deprive them of life."*





## KidsArt Coloring Page

Print this page, or go online to <http://kidsart.com/2018/04/06/audubon-coloring-page/> to download and print a pdf file of this dramatic scene.

Use colored pencils or marker pens to color the picture. If you print on heavy paper, you can use watercolor paints. Make the colors the same as Audubon used in his real painting of Mocking Birds. Or use colors that you make up yourself.



# The Duck Stamp

The US Duck Stamp competition is sort of like the “Super Bowl” of wildlife art. It is one of the most respected art awards in the world. Every year, one wild bird painting is chosen to illustrate a special stamp...a stamp that hunters must buy in order to hunt birds in the United States. Collectors and people who love wildlife also buy the stamp. The money is used by the government to protect and develop wildlife habitat in the wetlands and forests where animals live.

Hundreds of paintings are entered in each contest. The winning artist is instantly famous. After their painting is used on the stamp, the artist can sell posters and high-quality prints of the painting to art lovers and collectors around the world. Winning the Federal Duck Stamp competition often means the artist can earn enough money to become a professional wildlife painter.

## There is a Duck Stamp Contest for kids too!

The **Federal Junior Duck Stamp Program** is an art curriculum that teaches kids about wetlands and waterfowl conservation from kindergarten through high school. The Junior Duck Stamp contest begins in late winter when students submit their artwork to a regional contest. Winners in each state are entered into the national contest. Kids are encouraged to include a conservation message on their entry form with their art design, explaining something they've learned about wetlands habitat, conservation or waterfowl. To find out how you can take part, go to <http://www.fws.gov/juniorduck>.





*Arctic Tern by Audubon, from  
Birds of America*

# The Tern

A tern is a beautiful seabird, a bit smaller than a seagull with long pointed wings and a forked tail. There are many different kinds of terns found all over the world.

Audubon painted ten different species of terns, including the Arctic Tern on this page.

You can make a model of a tern with the pattern below. This is a Fairy Tern, an endangered species found in New Zealand. Print this page (or go to the link at the bottom for a larger pattern). Cut out the pieces and follow the directions to fold and build.

There are more bird patterns that you can make at the New Zealand Department of Conservation link.

## Fairy Tern

- 1 Print onto paper, glue print out onto card if you wish
- 2 Cut out body and wing shapes
- 3 Fold along dotted lines
- 4 Cut along solid white and grey lines
- 5 Glue or tape head together (see arrow guide points)
- 6 Slot wings into body



The Fairy Tern pattern is found at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/Documents/getting-involved/activities-with-children/kids/3d-bird-fairy-tern-a4.pdf>

Find more bird patterns and masks at <http://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/conservation-activities/fun-things-to-make/>

# Feather Prints

It's fun to collect feathers at the seashore or at a farm, or sometimes at a park where ducks swim. You can also buy feathers at a craft store. Feathers are pretty, and you can stick them on your hat or in a buttonhole on your jacket. Then later, at your art table, you can print designs with your feathers.

You'll need to have several feathers, some poster paint (tempera paint), wide paintbrushes or a brayer, a flat dish, white drawing paper to print on and lots of scrap newspaper.

But wait..."What's a brayer?" This is a small rubber roller that you use to make prints. It costs around \$6 at an art store, and it's handy for all sorts of great art projects. So get a brayer if you can.



1. Spread a thin layer of paint on the dish.
2. Roll the brayer in the paint until the roller is nicely covered with paint. Or fill a wide paintbrush with paint.
3. Hold a feather by its shaft (the hard center part) on top of newspaper. Then gently roll the brayer over the feather, starting at the bottom and rolling up to the tip. Or brush paint onto the feather with a paintbrush.
4. Lift the paint-covered feather up and lay it on another sheet of clean newspaper...paint side up.
5. Gently put a sheet of white drawing paper over the top of your feather, letting go of the feather shaft with your other hand. Pat the drawing paper firmly against the feather... rub with the thumb and fingers of your clean hand.
6. Lift the drawing paper and pull off the feather. It will leave a beautiful feather print behind! Set the paper aside to dry and print some more.

Always change to clean newspaper when you make a print. You'll end up with one sticky hand (the hand that holds the feather), and one clean hand (the hand that rolls the brayer). Wash your hands often to keep your papers and tools neat and clean.

Make several prints with each feather. Use different colors and let the paints mix together. Once your prints are dry, you can cut the feather designs out and glue them onto other drawings, or you can draw and paint around the feather prints.



# Make a Nature Box

Audubon made many long trips in the wilderness to find the birds he wanted to draw and paint. He collected many things that would help him make true pictures of the birds in their natural settings.

As you explore your neighborhood and the places near your home where animals live, you will also be able to pick up small treasures.

Things to collect in your Nature Box

- Leaves, bark, shells, feathers, an acorn that an animal has chewed, a pine cone. Don't take anything that is still living...only stuff that is not being used any more.
- A list of the birds and animals you have seen in your area.
- Pictures of animals from magazines, or pages printed from Internet sites, or photos you take yourself.
- If you visit museums and parks, you can often get little books and flyers about local wildlife and lands. Maps are cool too.
- And of course, save your own drawings and paintings of the birds and animals you have discovered!



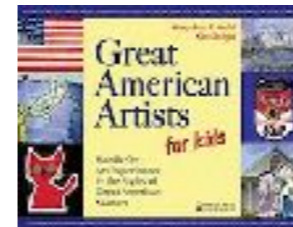
*Only collect things that are not being used by wild animals any more...like a nest that has fallen to the ground but NOT a nest that is still a bird's home.*



# Books & Resources



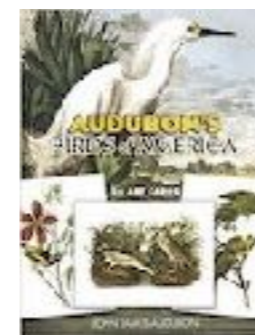
**An Eye for Art** is a book from the National Gallery of Art. In the chapter called **Studying Nature**, kids learn about artists who look closely at the natural world. The lessons are free downloads at <https://www.nga.gov/education/families/an-eye-for-art/studying-nature.html>



**Great American Artists for Kids** has hands-on art activities for more than 70 great artists, including John James Audubon.



There are many art coloring books about Audubon. The book from Dover Publications is especially good. Kids love to color the pictures while looking at the real paintings on the Internet.



And while you are looking at Dover books, their Audubon Postcard book gives kids 24 sturdy little Audubon pictures for all sorts of activities...from writing to science. Buy two books and make a “concentration” game.