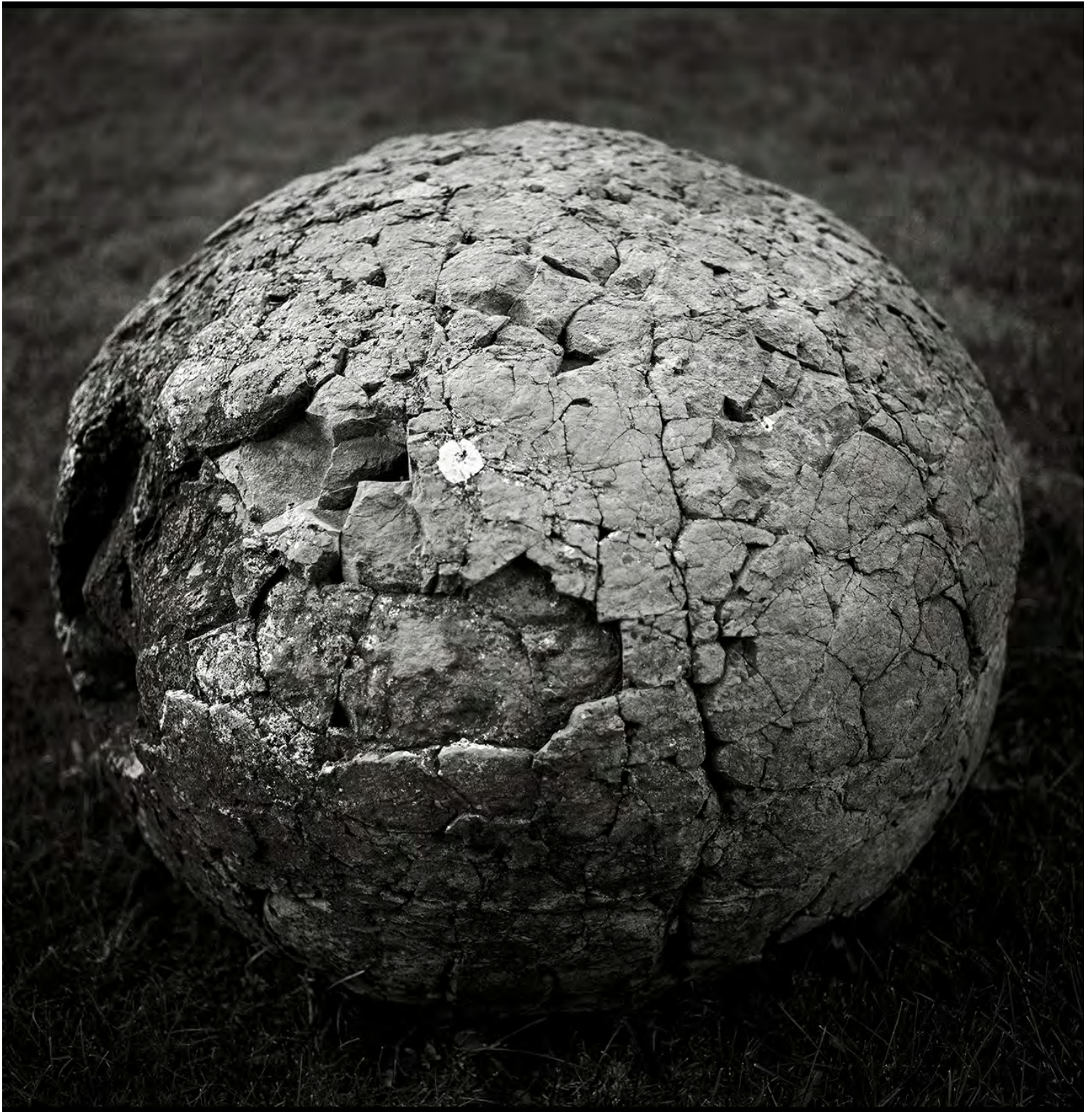


WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?  
RETRACING AUDUBON: ARTWORK BY KRISTA ELRICK

JUNE 4 - NOVEMBER 6, 2021

GALLERY B



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# Content.

Where are the birds?

Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick



## About the artist.

Photographer Krista Elrick is interested in the changes that have occurred in natural ecosystems over prolonged periods of time as a direct result of human intrusion into the landscape. Film-based, in-camera exposures, combined with silver gelatin prints, are the foundation of her creative work. While her photographic process is rooted in the nineteenth century, it is today's wetlands, forests, and watersheds that serve as her backdrop. In tandem, migratory birds and the ecosystems that sustain them are the focus of her current body of work. She sees these once harmonious relationships as disrupted. Because of this disruption, she photographs the land in fragments and then constructs collages to create newly pieced dynamics.

Elrick's recent projects include "Imagine a City that Remembers: The Albuquerque Rephotography Project", by Anthony Anella and Mark Childs, foreword by V. B. Price, photographs by Krista Elrick (University of New Mexico Press 2018); and "Grasslands/Separating Species", with photographs by Krista Elrick, Dana Fritz, David Taylor, Jo Whaley, and Michael Berman with essays by Mary Anne Redding, William deBuys, and Rebecca Solnit (Radius Books 2010) in conjunction with an exhibition at 516 ARTS in Albuquerque.

Elrick received an MFA from Arizona State University in 1990.





## **Artist statement.**

My photographic contribution to Audubon scholarship begins with an image made of the Lovers Rock at Mill Grove [Montgomery County, Pennsylvania], the secret place where Lucy [Blackwell] and John James [Audubon] secured their life-long partnership. At the bluffs of Cincinnati my collage reflects Audubon's feelings, "without any money my talents are to be my support, my enthusiasm, my guide." Here he began his historic float on the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers into New Orleans in 1820. Another key image is of the Three Buttes Ranch in Montana, where I found that cattle and natural gas rigs replace the wild landscape in which Audubon camped to hunt bison and bear. Such unexpected and ironic changes that have occurred in the landscape he described and depicted make this documentation all the more poignant and revelatory.



## Exhibition summary.

Getting lost is the beginning of discovery. For Krista Elrick, one of the ways to know something fully is through the lens of her cameras; for John James Audubon, it was through his pencils and pastels. For both, it was, and is, through seeing and cultivating a creative response based on a deeply held sense of wonder. Audubon created one of the lasting legacies of American ornithological art. His images of birds “drawn from life” continue to inspire. Elrick continues in that same tradition by following in Audubon’s creative footsteps, sometimes responding admittedly out of frustration as to what has been lost and sometimes out of a profound sense of awe as to what she now finds, or doesn’t find, in the landscape. Krista Elrick’s quiet, black-and-white images are a palimpsest for our times, inspiring wonder in viewers and creating an opportunity to see the landscapes, the trees, and even the birds that remain.

The seven sections of the exhibition reflect the seven episodic narratives in the accompanying book, *A Country No More: Rediscovering the Landscapes of John James Audubon*. The book provides extended context for each episode in a conversation between the two artists that spans a century and more searching for the birds.

- Mary Anne Redding

Myself: John James Audubon  
The Swan of December 25th  
In the Land of Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers  
Searching for Bachman’s Warbler in the Lowcountry  
The Floridas  
Along the Missouri River  
The Task is Accomplished

# Project history and process.

Where are the birds?

Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick

"Scholars have been trying to untangle the facts from the fiction about Audubon's life for nearly 200 years. Even he wasn't completely sure of his life's story. Perhaps, as a result, he embellished or fabricated a lot of what he didn't know, presumably to paint a rosier and more aristocratic picture of his origins than the complete truth would have presented. In other words, he is the epitome of the unreliable narrator. This is also complicated by the fact that, after he died, his family wanted to burnish his legacy and either burned or rewrote some of his journals that depicted him in a less-than-flattering light, especially in terms of his killing the same birds and animals in order to draw and paint them."

- Krista Elrick

"Sometimes it's hard to look at and not always pretty, but history matters."

- Krista Elrick

"She views her role as a catalyst for initiating conversations that span 200 years of environmental change... the photographer does not embark on a rephotographic survey; rather she portrays a momentary glitch in the matrix of Americana through a response to place—the disappearing landscapes that Audubon detailed."

- Mary Anne Redding

# Project history and process.

Where are the birds?

Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick

## Resources from Krista Elrick

[The National Congress of American Indians \(NCAI\)](#)

[Indigenous Environment Network \(IEN\)](#)

[Native America Calling](#)

[The Species in Peril](#)

Joy Harjo

- [Poet Laureate Project](#)

- [Joy Harjo Website](#)

Dr. Kelsey Leonard

- [Mid-Atlantic Committee on the Ocean](#)

- [Great Lakes Water Quality Board](#)

- [Peter Benchley Ocean Award](#)

- [Kelsey Leonard Website](#)

Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction

- A vibrant history of the modern conservation movement—told through the lives and ideas of the people who built it, By: [Michelle Nijhuis](#)

# Project history and process.

Where are the birds?

Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick

## Ecological Conservation Organizations

### **MountainTrue**

Mission: "MountainTrue champions resilient forests, clean waters and healthy communities in the Southern Blue Ridge."

### **New River Conservancy**

Mission: "The staff, board of directors, and volunteers of New River Conservancy are dedicated to protecting the waters, woodlands, and wildlife of the the New River Watershed."

### **Audubon North Carolina**

Casual bird watchers. Lifelong birders. Impassioned advocates for our natural heritage. Members of Audubon North Carolina's local chapters are devoted to protecting birds and the places they need, from our mountains to our coast.

### **High Country Audubon Society**

HCAS focuses a great deal of its resources on helping birds. This effort involves primarily the stewardship of the region's Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and area parks but also includes active programs to enhance native habitat for birds. Additionally, HCAS has initiated a school program designed to engage area schools in learning about birds, their interaction with nature and the importance of native landscaping.



# Educational Activity.

Where are the birds?  
Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick

The bald eagle and golden-winged warbler are both endangered bird species in the high country due to climate change and degradation of their natural habitat. Using the links below and any art-making materials you have (paper and pencil, paints, sculptural materials, etc.) create an oasis, or ideal environment, for these birds. Consider what about our current ecological state makes it difficult for these species to survive. How might we combat the environmental factors that are causing harm to their habitat?

Endangered Species, Threatened Species, and Candidate Species,  
Watauga County, North Carolina.

Bald & Golden Eagle Information

Audubon

Guide to North American Birds

Raleigh Ecological Services Field Office

Endangered and Threatened species of North Carolina



Golden-winged Warbler Photo: Michael Stubblefield

# Behind the Scenes.

Where are the birds?  
Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick



# Installation images.

Where are the birds?  
Retracing Audubon : Artwork by Krista Elrick







**Gallery walkthrough.**

[click here](#)

**Flickr Page**

[click here](#)

GALLERY GUIDE

# WHERE ARE THE BIRDS?

Retracing Audubon: Artwork by Krista Elrick  
June 4 - November 6, 2021



## Myself: John James Audubon



1

Audubon's tombstone at Trinity Church Cemetery and Mausoleum in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City.

Krista Elrick (April 26, 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

I made this photograph on what I believed to be Audubon's birthday. Many scholars have published it as April 26, 1785; his tombstone indicates otherwise. The etching on the backside of the memorial reads: "ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN JAMES AUDUBON IN THE YEAR OF 1893 BY SUBSCRIPTION RAISED BY THE NEW YORK ACADEMY OF SCIENCES."



2

Old sycamore trees lining the Wetherill Trail to the backside of the Audubon home, Willow Grove, in Mill Grove, Pennsylvania. The trail wanders toward Perkiomen Creek and, thus, is a quick way to reach Lucy Bakewell's home. "I saw my dear Lucy, and was again my own master," muses Audubon as he reminisces about himself as a young man.

Krista Elrick (September 25, 2011).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

Reproduced courtesy of the John James Audubon Center at Mill Grove, Pennsylvania.



3

Four old trees in Bartram's Garden, located along the banks of the Schuylkill River near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Krista Elrick (2020).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink collage.

Reproduced courtesy of John Bartram Association, in cooperation with the Fairmount Park Commission, of Philadelphia.

## The Swan of December 25th



4

Visions of Recovery for the 21st century.  
Krista Elrick (2020).

Collage insets: Swan Massacre Site at the Confluence of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, including sections of Missouri, Illinois and Kentucky

Krista Elrick (April, 2011)  
Medium: Archival pigment-ink print.

Detail of Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*), Havell Plate No. 406. ca.1836–1837. Watercolor, graphite, oil, black ink, pastel, and black chalk with scratching out, scraping, and touches of glazing on paper, laid on card. Source: Collection of the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library, New York City. Purchased for the Society by public subscription from Mrs. John J. Audubon, 1863.17.406. Digital image created by Oppenheimer Editions.

Detail of a French map depicting Napoleon's Vente de la Louisiane and the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which also was the year of Audubon's arrival in the United States. Lapie, M. Pierre (1806). Reproduced courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



5

Amazing Day. Something greater than me took over me on the ground at the Cache Creek Swan Massacre

Krista Elrick (September 20, 2010)  
Medium: Silver gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print

## In the Land of Ivory-Billed Woodpeckers



6

Étienne de Boré oak (Tree of Life), the oldest live oak in Audubon Park, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Krista Elrick (December 16, 2018).  
Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



7

View of the Ohio River from Cincinnati Bluffs.  
 Krista Elrick (September 23, 2010), 4:00–7:00 p.m.).  
 Medium: Silver-gelatin collage.



8

View of the Ohio River from Cincinnati Bluffs.  
 Krista Elrick (September 23, 2010), 4:00–7:00 p.m.).  
 Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink



9

Oak and hickory trees line a bald cypress swamp on the Old Natchez Trace Trail, Milepost 122.

Krista Elrick (October, 2012).  
 Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



10

Beneath the forest canopy, rhododendrons (Ericaceae) line the stream banks of one of the largest contiguous tracts of old-growth forest in Appalachia, Joyce Kilmer Memorial Forest in North Carolina.

Krista Elrick (May, 2018).  
 Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



11

Ten miles north of Natchez, Mississippi, on the Old Natchez Trace, Milepost 8.7.

Krista Elrick (February 17, 2010).  
 Medium: Silver-gelatin film, silver gelatin collage.



12

Confluence of walking trails at Sunken Trace on the Old Natchez Trace, Milepost 350.5.

Krista Elrick (October, 2012).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

## Searching for Bachman's Warbler in the Low Country



13

A fallen giant in a mixed-hardwood bottomland forest in l'on Swamp.  
Bald cypress bottomland in l'on Swamp.

Krista Elrick (March, 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink prints.



14

Economies in-conflict with Bachman's Warbler.

Krista Elrick (2020).

John James Audubon and Maria Martin, 1833. Bachman's Warbler (*Vermivora bachmanii*), Havell Plate No. 185. Watercolor, graphite, gouache, and black ink with scratching out on paper, laid on card.

Source: Collection of the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library, New York City, New York. Purchased for the Society by public subscription from Mrs. John J. Audubon, 1863.17.185. Digital image created by Oppenheimer Editions. Banknote reproduced courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



15

Re-photograph of Audubon's view of Charleston and the long-billed curlew.

Krista Elrick (2020).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

Collage Insets: Krista Elrick, March 8, 2018. Panoramic view of the Charleston, South Carolina, skyline, from a boat in the harbor. John James Audubon and George Lehman (1831), detail of Long-billed Curlew (*Numenius americanus*), Havell Plate No. 231. Watercolor, graphite, black ink, gouache, and pastel with scratching out and selective glazing on paper, laid on card.

Source: Collection of the New-York Historical Society Museum & Library, New York City, New York. Purchased for the Society by public subscription from Mrs. John J. Audubon, 1863.17.231. Digital image created by Oppenheimer Editions.



16

Shells carefully placed onto a palmetto tree at Botany Bay Plantation Heritage Preserve/ Wildlife Management Area, Edisto Beach, South Carolina, #4.

Krista Elrick (March, 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

## The Floridas



17

Map of Florida Improved to 1827 (Philadelphia, PA: H. S. Tanner, 1827). Reproduced courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



18

Ghost town and palm trees on Indian Key, Florida.

Krista Elrick (November 2012).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

In 1821, Florida was transferred from Spain to the United States, and three years later the eleven-acre island of Indian Key became an unincorporated gathering of Bahamian wreckers and outlaw settlers. By the time the island's most infamous resident, John Jacob Houseman (1799–1842), arrived sometime in early 1830, a community of approximately fifty residents lived there. It was Houseman, however, who had a reputation for operating in illegal pirating ways, who reportedly invested his own money into developing the island into a wrecker's paradise. When Audubon visited the island for four days (May 28–31, 1832), Houseman hosted the famous guest in his Tropical Hotel, which included a restaurant, bar, billiards room, nine-pin bowling alley, and about 150 residents. It is doubtful if Audubon ever heard that Houseman survived the second Seminole invasion on Indian Key early in the morning of August 7, 1840, when the entire island was looted and burned to the ground. Indian Key, popular with tourists, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and is the subject of an archeological project to uncover the historic building foundations.





19

The Old Senator of St. Augustine, the beloved Southern live oak covered with Spanish moss and resurrection ferns in the nation's oldest city, is now located within a Howard Johnson's parking lot next to the Fountain of Youth.

Krista Elrick (March 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



20

View of the gardens inside General Joseph Martin Hernandez's Mala Compra Plantation, now Washington Oaks Gardens State Park, in Palm Coast, Florida.

Krista Elrick (March 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



21

A snowy egret (*Egretta thula*) at a theme park near the St. John's River in Florida.

Krista Elrick (April 2011).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

## Along the Missouri River



22

Confluence of the Missouri (left) and Big Sioux Rivers.

Krista Elrick (June 16, 2015, 5:00–6:30 p.m.).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

My image of the Missouri River from the bluffs of Sioux City, Iowa, shows where three states meet: Iowa in the foreground, Nebraska to the south, and South Dakota to the north. The confluence of the two rivers is the subject of my photograph, because Audubon (as well as the Lewis and Clark Expedition) spent time here. Ironically, both Audubon and I unexpectedly stayed at this confluence longer than we each had planned. The steamship named Omega that brought Audubon up the Missouri River met with an accident that forced an unplanned four-day layover. Audubon and company hunted while the captain and crew arranged all the repair work for a burned-out boiler. The VWcamper van "Lucy" that traveled with me required a similar essential repair job, in my case a complete alternator overhaul that took three days to complete. Spending time in Sioux City, Iowa, I felt I was truly retracing John James Audubon, literally and metaphorically.



23

Spirit Mound State Historic Prairie on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail.

Krista Elrick (June 19, 2015).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

Audubon longed to have been a participant of the 1804–1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition. But he did follow their journey along the Missouri River—as did I. Spirit Mound, or Paha Wakan, was a mound-site known by many tribes long before the Lewis and Clark and Audubon Expeditions visited the area. When I photographed at Spirit Mound, the prairie expanse felt very quiet. The silence was deafening.



24

Cannonball concretion in Mobridge City Park in Mobridge, South Dakota, #2

Krista Elrick (June 26, 2015).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.

Cannonball concretions are so named because of their appearance. Despite being common in sedimentary rocks, they remain a kind of geological mystery. Sometimes they contain fossils. Researchers at Nagoya University in Japan have determined they were created by cementation of sand and silt by calcite.<sup>4</sup> I found the spheres to be subtly powerful and affecting, their uniqueness demanded my attention. Audubon noticed them, too, and mentioned them twice in his account of his Missouri River expedition.

Monday, June 5, 1843

In the course of the morning we passed Cannon Ball River, and the very remarkable bluffs about it, of which we cannot well speak until we have stopped there and examined their nature. We saw two Swans alighting on the prairie at a considerable distance.

Thursday, [August 31, 1843]

Started early; fine and calm. Saw large flocks of Ducks, Geese, and Swans; also four Wolves . . . reached Cannon Ball River at half-past twelve. No game; water good-tasted, but warm. Dinner on shore. Saw a Rock Wren on the bluffs here. Saw the prairie on fire, and signs of Indians on both sides . . . Saw a wonderful example of the power of the Buffalo in working through the heavy, miry bottom lands.



25

View of the Missouri River from Standing Rock Sioux Tribal lands.

Krista Elrick (June 26, 2015).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink collage.

These photographs were made from the bluffs of Grand River Casino and Resort, where one can see the tangle of waterways, bridges, and the city of Mobridge, South Dakota.

## The Task is Accomplished



26

Sycamores and other hardwoods hold the sky above the gravesites at Trinity Church Cemetery & Mausoleum, where Audubon is buried. The view includes Minnie's Land, which is located between 155th and 156th Streets in present-day Washington Heights, and now called the Audubon Park District, New York City.

Krista Elrick (April 26, 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print.



27

A Celtic cross ascends Audubon's Tombstone and a cloud merges with sycamore branches and Trinity Church Cemetery and Mausoleum, 777 Riverside Drive, New York City, New York. O ALL YE BEASTS AND CATTLE, BLESS YE THE LORD; PRAISE HIM, AND MAGNIFY HIM FOR EVER is etched onto Audubon's tombstone.

Krista Elrick (April 26, 2018).

Medium: Silver-gelatin film, archival pigment-ink print collage.



28

Cultural and economic changes in conflict with the ecosystems that supported the ivory-billed woodpecker.

Krista Elrick (2020).

Collage Insets: Krista Elrick, May 8, 2018. View of the waterfall and boulders that frame "The Seven State View" (Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia) at Rock City, Lookout Mountain, Georgia.

Trail of Tears National Historic Trail map. Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Tennessee. Reproduced courtesy of the National Park Service, as a component of the National Trail System. Banknotes reproduced courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.



29

A MAP of the Federal Territory from the Western Boundary of Pennsylvania to the Scioto River laid down from the latest Information and divided into Townships and fractional parts of townships agreeably to the Ordinance of the Honorable Congress passed in May, 1785.

Reproduced courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.

This map shows the first survey made of the Ohio River Valley, and the grid lines mark the new colonial economies. This is the landscape that Audubon lived in and traveled through on his epic quest to find America's birds.





# THANK YOU

FROM THE TURCHIN CENTER FOR THE VISUAL ARTS

The Turchin Center for the Visual Arts at Appalachian State University engages visitors from the university, community, nation and beyond in creating unique experiences through dynamic and accessible exhibition, education, outreach and collection programs. These programs inspire and support a lifelong engagement with the visual arts and create opportunities for participants to learn more about themselves and the world around them.

