

John James Audubon

The text provided courtesy of the National Audubon Society

He was wild about birds?

John James Audubon was a naturalist and an artist who traveled throughout the United States in the 1800's painting birds and other animals in the wilderness.



Audubon was born in Haiti in 1785 and spent his childhood in France. He came to the United States when he was 18. He did not speak English when he arrived, but he soon learned the language and, in 1812, became a U.S. citizen.

Today, throughout the United States, parks, streets, and buildings are named in honor of Audubon. What did he do to earn such respect?

Audubon was fascinated by nature and wildlife-especially by birds-even as a young boy.

He combined his love of nature with his skills of drawing and painting. In America, he quickly fell in love with the vast and beautiful wild places he saw all around him.

Audubon carried his paints and his gun into wild and unspoiled forests. He waded into swamps and drifted in small boats down rivers. He became a skillful woodsman and an expert rifleman. He faced many dangers on the frontier.

Wherever he went, Audubon looked for birds. Some of them were unknown to scientists. His travels let him observe North America's birds in all kinds of habitats.

Audubon believed birds were so exciting that he wanted to paint them as big as life. He insisted on using the biggest paper available to create the book of his bird paintings. The sheets measured a little more than three feet by two feet, and are called "double elephant sheets." When it was published, Audubon's book, *The Birds of America*, was a great success. It had life size paintings of 497 species of birds, more than half of the birds found in North America. Today copies are owned by many large museums and very wealthy people. It would cost you more than a million dollars to buy one! But there are copies in some museums that people can see, including the John J. Audubon Center in Audubon, Pennsylvania.



Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Who was John James Audubon?
 - a. A naturalist and artist
 - b. A scientist and researcher
 - c. A farmer and woodsman
 - d. A playwright and author
2. What does this text describe?
 - a. This text describes John James Audubon's favorite painting locations out in the wild.
 - b. This text describes the way John James Audubon became a skillful woodsman and an expert rifleman. It also describes the many dangers he faced on the frontier.
 - c. This text describes John Hames Audubon's journey to the U.S., his adventurous explorations to find birds, and his famous bird paintings.
 - d. This text describes the many locations of John Hames Audubon's book of paintings, *The Birds of America*.
3. Audubon was fascinated by nature and wildlife-especially by birds.

What evidence from the text supports this statement?

- a. Audubon carried his paints and gun into wild and unspoiled forests.
 - b. Wherever he went, Audubon looked for birds.
 - c. Audubon quickly fell in love with the vast and beautiful wild places he saw all around him.
 - d. Audubon waded into swamps and drifted in small boats down rivers.
4. Read the following sentences from the text:

Today, throughout the United States, parks, streets, and buildings are named in honor of Audubon. What did he do to earn such respect?

What does the word **honor** mean in the text above?

- a. To hope for desperately
 - b. To replace quickly
 - c. To explain something
 - d. To treat with great respect
5. What is the main idea of this text?
 - a. John Hames Audubon, an artist and naturalist, traveled around the U.S. in search of birds and is remembered today for his beautiful bird paintings.



- b. During the early 1800's, John Hames Audubon had to carry a rifle when he went out into the wild and unspoiled forests because of how dangerous it was.
- c. When looking to paint large photos of birds, John Hames Audubon had a hard time finding paper that was big enough.
- d. ***The Birds of America*** was a great success. Today copies are owned by many large museums and very wealthy people.