



John L. Audubon

From the original painting by G. B. S. in the possession of the public library

Engraved by G. B. S. in 1840, New York

Published by G. B. S. in 1840, New York

ANNALS OF IOWA

VOL. XVI, No. 6

DES MOINES, OCTOBER, 1928

THIRD SERIES

JOHN J. AUDUBON AND HIS VISIT TO IOWA

BY DAVID C. MOTT

We here present those portions of the diary of John James Audubon descriptive of what he saw on the western border of what is now the state of Iowa when he made the trip up the Missouri River in 1843. This journal carefully kept by Audubon from day to day as the journey proceeded was never given to the world in its entirety for over half a century after it was written. In *Audubon and His Journals*, by Maria R. Audubon, with zoological and other notes by Elliott Coues, published in 1897, it is said in the introduction to the journal of this trip: "This journey has been only briefly touched upon in former publications, and the entire record from August 16 until the return home was lost in the back of an old secretary from the time of Audubon's return in November, 1843, until August, 1896, when two of his granddaughters found it."¹

This diary is of unusual interest to Iowa people. Audubon was ever in quest of knowledge of wild animal and bird life, so in this diary we have the wild life of our own frontier of pioneer times described inimitably by a master observer of nature.

At the time he made this Missouri River trip in 1843, Audubon was sixty-three years old. He was born in Louisiana, near New Orleans. His father was a French admiral. His mother died when he was a small boy, and his father in his roving returned to France and remarried. The boy, John J., had the care of an indulgent stepmother. He early evinced a passionate love of birds and wild life, and so much preferred the woods to the schoolroom that his academic education was but poorly completed. His father gave him a farm in Pennsylvania near the Schuylkill River, where he lived for a time the life of a gentleman, but pursued his study of birds, and painted hundreds of

¹*Audubon and His Journals* by Maria R. Audubon, with zoological and other notes by Elliott Coues, Vol. I, p. 449.

specimens. Here he married an admirable young lady of the neighborhood. During the next immediate period he made futile attempts in commercial business in New York City and in Louisville and Henderson, Kentucky. But the restless nature-lover neglected business to roam the woods, collecting birds and making drawings of them. With his residence at Henderson, for fifteen years he traveled from the Great Lakes to Florida and from the Alleghanies to beyond the Mississippi, hunting new varieties of birds, and making life-size drawings of them. Having lost his fortune in commercial undertakings Mrs. Audubon heroically assisted in the support of the family and educated the two sons by private teaching, while Audubon, taking some time to teach drawing, music, and dancing, and to the painting of portraits, yet pursued his purpose of making a great collection of paintings of birds. In 1824, when forty-four years old, being urged to do so by ornithologists, he concluded to make an effort to have his writings and drawings published. The first volume of his *Birds of America* appeared in London in 1830. It contained 100 colored plates. Great scientists and eminent rulers soon became his friends. His sons took over the business management of the project and the long struggle against financial adversity was largely over. The work was completed in 1837 in four large folio volumes of colored engravings.

By 1842 Audubon acquired a pleasant home in the suburbs of New York City. For many years his thoughts had turned toward producing a work, *Quadrupeds of America*, for which he and his sons had been gathering material for some time. He had long wanted to go farther into the interior of the West, and although his family thought him too old to undertake such a journey, yet on March 11, 1843, at the age of sixty-three, he started for St. Louis, and went thence up the Missouri on the steamboat "Omega" of the American Fur Company.² The trip was undertaken, as he says, "solely for the sake of our work on the *Quadrupeds of America*."³ He was accompanied by Edward Harris, his friend of many years, John G. Bell as taxidermist, Isaac Sprague as artist, and Lewis Squires as secretary and assistant. All except Harris were engaged by Audubon. They went by railroad by way of Philadelphia and Baltimore as far as Cum-

²*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 72.

³*Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 453.

berland, and by coaches from there to Wheeling. They then proceeded by steamboat from Wheeling to Louisville where they stayed four days, Audubon visiting friends of former years. They then departed on another steamer for St. Louis, reaching there March 28.

In a letter written from St. Louis March 29, 1843, Audubon says: "The weather has been bad ever since we left Baltimore. There we encountered a snowstorm that accompanid us all the way to this very spot, and at this moment the country is whitened with this precious, semi-congealed, heavenly dew. * * * We first encountered ice at Wheeling and it has floated down the Ohio all around us, as well as up the Mississippi to pleasant St. Louis, and such a steamer as we have come in from Louisville here! The very filthiest of all filthy old rat-traps I ever traveled in; and the fare worse, certainly much worse, and so scanty. * * * Our *compagnous de voyage*, about one hundred and fifty, were composed of Buckeyes, Wolverines, Suckers, Hoosiers, and gamblers, with drunkards of each and every denomination. * * * We are at the Glasgow Hotel, and will leave it the day after tomorrow, as it is too good for our purses, * * * \$9.00 per week."⁴

Audubon says: "My time at St. Louis would have been agreeable to any one fond of company, dinners, and parties; but of these matters I am not, though I did dine at three different houses. In fact, my time was spent procuring, arranging, and superintending the necessary objects for the comfort and utility of the party attached to my undertaking. * * * Captain Sire took me in a light wagon to see old Mr. Chouteau one afternoon, and I found the worthy old gentleman so kind and so full of information about the countries of the Indians that I returned to him a few days afterwards."⁵

On April 25 they left St. Louis on board the steamboat "Omega" of the American Fur Company, Audubon says, "with Mr. Sarpy on board, and a hundred and one trappers of all descriptions and nearly a dozen different nationalities, though the greater number were French Canadians, or Creoles of this state. Some were drunk, and many of that stupid mood which

⁴*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 450-52.

⁵*Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 454-55.

follows a state of nervousness produced by drinking and over-excitement.

"Here is the scene that took place on board the 'Omega' at our departure, and what followed when the roll was called.

"First the general embarkation, when the men came in pushing and squeezing each other, so as to make the boards they walked upon fairly tremble. The Indians, poor souls, were more quiet, and had already seated or squatted themselves on the highest parts of the steamer, and were tranquil lookers-on. After about three quarters of an hour, the crew and all the trappers (these are called *engagés*) were on board, and we at once pushed off and up the stream, thick and muddy as it was. The whole of the effects and the baggage of the *engagés* was arranged in the main cabin, and presently was seen Mr. Sarpy, book in hand, with the list before him, wherefrom he gave the names of these *attachés*. The men whose names were called nearly filled the fore part of the cabin, where stood Mr. Sarpy, our captain, and one of the clerks. All awaited orders from Mr. Sarpy. As each man was called, and answered to his name, a blanket containing the apparel for the trip was handed to him, and he was ordered at once to retire and make room for the next. The outfit, by the way, was somewhat scanty, and of indifferent quality. Four men were missing, and some appeared rather reluctant; however, the roll was ended, and one hundred and one were found. In many instances their bundles were thrown to them, and they were ordered off as if slaves. I forgot to say that as the boat pushed off from the shore, where stood a crowd of loafers, the men on board had congregated upon the hurricane deck with their rifles and guns of various sorts, all loaded, and began to fire what I should call a very disorganized sort of a salute, which lasted for something like an hour, and which has been renewed at intervals, though in a more desultory manner, at every village we have passed."

That afternoon they entered the mouth of the Missouri River and reached St. Charles early on April 26. There Mr. Sarpy left them and returned to St. Louis. This was a rainy day. They saw a wild goose running on the shore and it was killed by Mr. Bell, the taxidermist, but the captain would not stop to pick it up, which caused Audubon to grieve for "the poor bird, dead uselessly." They now found their berths were "too thickly

inhabited" for them to sleep in, so they rolled up in their blankets and slept on deck.

April 27 was clear and cool. They saw a few gray squirrels and abundance of common partridges. About four that afternoon they passed the mouth of the Gasconade River. Audubon keeps noting in his diary every day the birds and animals he sees. They traveled all night and the next morning, April 28, they passed Jefferson City, which he thought a "poor place" with the exception of the State House and Penitentiary.

April 29 they were off at 5 in the morning, and stopped at Booneville at 9:00 A. M. There they bought "an axe, a saw, three files, and some wafers; also some chickens at one dollar a dozen."

Sunday, April 30, was cold and a gale from the north soon caused them to stop and wait until afternoon. Audubon, Bell, Harris, and Squires went ashore with their guns, and killed a good deal of game, among which was twenty-eight rabbits. They wounded a turkey hen, but failed to get it. They found the woods full of birds. The boat took on wood and proceeded in the afternoon. That day they passed the mouth of Grand River.

May 1 was a beautiful morning. Audubon was greatly interested in the pouched rat, or gopher, which was new to him, and at this point in his diary wrote down minute descriptions of the animal's habits and manner of work, most of which had been learned from Pierre Chouteau at his plantation near St. Louis. He fortunately secured four live specimens, kept them several days, watched them with great interest, and made drawings of them.

They arrived at Independence on May 2. Here they overtook the steamboat "John Auld" which had on board Father de Smet, a Jesuit priest, known for his labors among Indians in the Rocky Mountains, on the Columbia River, and other parts of the West. They ran all night and reached Fort Leavenworth the morning of May 3. On leaving that place, Audubon says they fairly entered the Indian country on the west side of the river, and saw many Indians in the woods and on the banks gazing at the boat as it passed. They grounded on a bar, had great difficulty, finally got off, and made fast for the night.

May 4 they made better progress. Audubon describes a large number of birds he and his party shot and secured, while the

steamer was aground the day before. May 5 they reached the Black Snake Hills settlement, which he describes as a beautiful site for a city, and predicts one will be there "some fifty years hence."⁶

May 6 brought a high wind, which soon caused them to tie up. The boat hands cut wood for firing and Audubon and his party obtained specimens of birds, squirrels, etc. After starting again and proceeding some distance they stopped and put off their Iowa Indians. Audubon says: "Our Sac Indian chief started at once across the prairie towards the hills, on his way to his wigwam, and we saw Indians on their way towards us, running on foot, and many on horseback, generally riding double on skins or on Spanish saddles. Even the squaws rode, and rode well too! We counted about eighty, amongst whom were a great number of youths of different ages. I was heartily glad our own squad of them left us here. I observed that though they had been absent from their friends and relatives, they never shook hands, or paid any attention to them. When the freight was taken in we proceeded, and the whole of the Indians followed along the shore at a good round run; those on horseback at times struck into a gallop. I saw more of these poor beings when we approached the landing, perched and seated on the promontories about, and many followed the boat to the landing. Here the goods were received, and Major Richardson came on board, and paid freight. He told us we were now in the country of the Fox Indians as well as that of the Iowas, that the number about him is over 1200, and that his district extends about seventy miles up the river."

On May 7 they ran about fifty miles seeing some fine prairie land. Sometime during the next day they passed the southwest point of the present boundary of Iowa, so now we quote the journal verbatim, following the style in spelling, capitalizing, hyphenating, etc., as given in the dairy as edited by Elliott Coues, also giving the Coues footnotes:

May 8, Monday. A beautiful calm day; the country we saw was much the same as that we passed yesterday, and nothing of great importance took place except that at the wooding-place on the very verge of the State of Missouri (the northwest corner) Bell killed a Black Squirrel which friend Bachman has honored with the name of my son

⁶This later became St. Joseph, Missouri.—Editor.

John, *Sciurus Audubonii*.⁷ We are told that this species is not uncommon here. It was a good-sized adult male, and Sprague drew an outline of it. Harris shot another specimen of the new Finch. We saw Parakeets and many small birds, but nothing new or very rare. This evening I wrote a long letter to each house, John Bachman, Gideon B. Smith of Baltimore, and J. W. H. Page of New Bedford, with the hope of having them forwarded from the Council Bluffs.

May 9, Tuesday. Another fine day. After running until eleven o'clock we stopped to cut wood, and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were shot, a common Blue-bird, and a common Northern Titmouse. We saw White Pelicans, Geese, Ducks, etc. One of our trappers cut one of his feet dreadfully with his axe, and Harris, who is now the doctor, attended it as best he could. This afternoon we reached the famous establishment of Belle Vue⁸ where resides the brother of Mr. Sarpy of St. Louis, as well as the Indian Agent, or, as he might be more appropriately called, the Custom House officer. Neither were at home, both away on the Platte River about 300 miles off. We had a famous pack of rascally Indians awaiting our landing—filthy and half-starved. We landed some cargo for the establishment, and I saw a trick of the trade which made me laugh. Eight cords of wood were paid for with five tin cups of sugar and three of coffee—value at St. Louis about twenty-five cents. We have seen a Fish Hawk, Savannah Finch, Green-backed Swallows, Rough-winged Swallows, Martins, Parakeets, Black-headed Gulls, Blackbirds, and Cow-birds; I will repeat that the woods are fairly alive with House Wrens, Blue Herons, *Emberiza pallida*—Clay-colored Bunting of Swainson—Henslow's Bunting, Crow Blackbirds; and, more strange than all, two large cakes of ice were seen by our pilots and ourselves. I am very much fatigued and will finish the account of this day tomorrow. At Belle Vue we found the brother-in-law of old Provost, who acts as clerk in the absence of Mr. Sarpy. The store is no great affair, and yet I am told that they drive a good trade with Indians on the Platte River, and others, on this side of the Missouri. We unloaded some freight, and pushed off. We saw here the first plowing of the ground we have observed since we left the lower settlements near St. Louis. We very soon reached the post of Fort Croghan,⁹ so called after my old friend of that name with whom I hunted Raccoons on my father's plantation in Kentucky some thirty-eight years ago, and whose father and my own were well acquainted, and fought together in conjunction with George Washington and Lafayette, during the Revolutionary War, against "Merrie England." Here we found only a few soldiers, dragoons; their camp and officers having been forced to move

⁷Not a good species, but the dusky variety of the protean Western Fox Squirrel, *Sciurus ludovicianus*; for which see a previous note.—E. C.

⁸Or Bellevue, in what is now Sarpy County, Neb., on the right bank of the Missouri, a few miles above the mouth of the Platte.—E. C.

⁹Vicinity of present Omaha, Neb., and Council Bluffs, Iowa, but somewhat above these places. The present Council Bluffs, in Iowa, is considerably below the position of the original Council Bluff of Lewis and Clark, which Audubon presently notices. See *Lewis and Clark*, ed. of 1893, p. 66.—E. C.

across the prairie to the Bluffs, five miles. After we put out some freight for the sutler, we proceeded on until we stopped for the night a few miles above, on the same side of the river. The soldiers assured us that their parade ground, and so-called barracks, had been four feet under water, and we saw fair and sufficient evidence of this. At this place our pilot saw the first Yellow-headed Troupial we have met with. We landed for the night under trees by muddy deposits from the great overflow of this reason. I slept soundly, and have this morning, May 10, written this.

May 10, Wednesday. The morning was fine, and we were under way at daylight; but a party of dragoons, headed by a lieutenant, had left their camp four miles distant from our anchorage at the same time, and reached the shore before we had proceeded far; they fired a couple of rifle shots ahead of us, and we brought to at once. The young officer came on board, and presented a letter from his commander, Captain Burgwin, from which we found that we had to have our cargo examined. Our captain¹⁰ was glad of it, and so were we all; for, finding that it would take several hours, we at once ate our breakfast, and made ready to go ashore. I showed my credentials and orders from the Government, Major Mitchell of St. Louis, etc., and I was therefore immediately settled comfortably. I desired to go to see the commanding officer, and the lieutenant very politely sent us there on horseback, guided by an old dragoon of considerable respectability. I was mounted on a young white horse, Spanish saddle with holsters, and we proceeded across the prairie towards the Bluff and the camp. My guide was anxious to take a short cut, and took me across several bayous, one of which was really up to the saddle; but we crossed that, and coming to another we found it so miry, that his horse wheeled after two or three steps, whilst I was looking at him before starting myself; for you all well know that an old traveller is, and must be, prudent. We now had to retrace our steps till we reached the very tracks that the squad sent after us in the morning had taken, and at last we reached the foot of the Bluffs, when my guide asked me if I "could ride at a gallop," to which not answering him, but starting at once at a round run, I neatly passed him ere his horse was well at the pace; on we went, and in a few minutes we entered a beautiful dell or valley, and were in sight of the encamp-

¹⁰The journals of Captain Joseph A. Sire, from 1841 to 1848, are extant, and at present in the possession of Captain Joseph La Barge, who has permitted them to be examined by Captain Chittenden. The latter informs us of an interesting entry at date of May 10, 1843, regarding the incident of the military inspection of the "Omega" for contraband liquor, of which Audubon speaks. But the inside history of how cleverly Captain Sire outwitted the military does not appear from the following innocent passage: "*Mercredi, 10 May.* Nous venons tres bien jusqu'aux cotes a Hart, ou, a sept heures, nous sommes sommes par un officier de dragons de mettre a terre. Je recois une note polie du Capt. Burgwin m'informant que son devoir l'oblige de faire visiter le bateau. Aussitot nous nous mettons a l'ouvrage, et pendant ce temps M. Audubon va faire une visite au Capitaine. Ils reviennent ensemble deux heures apres. Je force en quelque sorte l'officier a faire une recherche aussi stricte que possible, mais a la condition qu'il en fera de meme avec les autres traiteurs." The two precious hours of Audubon's visit were utilized by the clever captain in so arranging the cargo that no liquor should be found on board by Captain Burgwin.—E. C.

ment. We reached this in a trice, and rode between two lines of pitched tents to one at the end, where I dismounted, and met Captain Burgwin,¹¹ a young man, brought up at West Point, with whom I was on excellent and friendly terms in less time than it has taken me to write this account of our meeting. I showed him my credentials, at which he smiled, and politely assured me that I was too well known throughout our country to need any letters. While seated in front of his tent, I heard the note of a bird new to me, and as it proceeded from a tree above our heads, I looked up and saw the first Yellow-headed Troupial alive that ever came across my own migrations. The captain thought me probably crazy, as I thought Rafinesque when he was at Henderson; for I suddenly started, shot at the bird, and killed it. Afterwards I shot three more at one shot, but only one female amid hundreds of these Yellow-headed Blackbirds. They are quite abundant here, feeding on the surplus grain that drops from the horses' troughs; they walked under, and around the horses, with as much confidence as if anywhere else. When they rose, they generally flew to the very tops of the tallest trees, and there, swelling their throats, partially spreading their wings and tail, they issue their croaking note, which is a compound, not to be mistaken, between that of the Crow Blackbird and that of the Red-winged Starling. After I had fired at them twice they became quite shy, and all of them flew off to the prairies. I saw then two Magpies¹² in a cage, that had been caught in nooses, by the legs; and their actions, voice, and general looks, assured me as much as ever, that they are the very same species as that found in Europe. Prairie Wolves are extremely abundant hereabouts. They are so daring that they come into the camp both by day and by night; we found their burrows in the banks and in the prairie, and had I come here yesterday I should have had a superb specimen killed here, but which was devoured by the hogs belonging to the establishment. The captain and the doctor—Madison¹³ by name—returned with us to the boat, and we saw many more Yellow-headed Troupials. The high Bluffs back of the prairie are destitute of stones. On my way there I saw abundance of Gopher hills, two Geese paired, two Yellow-crowned Herons, Red-winged Starlings, Cowbirds, common Crow Blackbirds, a great number of Baltimore Orioles, a Swallow-tailed Hawk, Yellow Red-poll Warbler, Field Sparrow, and Chipping Sparrow. Sprague killed another of the beautiful Finch.¹⁴ Robins are very scarce,

¹¹John Henry K. Burgwin, cadet at West Point in 1828; in 1843 captain of the 1st Dragoons. He died Feb. 7, 1847, of wounds received three days before in the assault on Pueblo de Taos, New Mexico.—E. C.

¹²The question of the specific identity of the American and European Magpies has been much discussed. Ornithologists now generally compromise the case by considering our bird to be subspecifically distinct, under the name of *Pica pica hudsonica*.—E. C.

¹³No doubt Thomas C. Madison of Virginia, appointed Assist. Surg., U. S. A., Feb. 27, 1846. He served as a surgeon of the Confederacy during our Civil War, and died Nov. 7, 1866.—E. C.

¹⁴Concerning the Finch Audubon says in his journal of May 4 when the party was a little above Fort Leavenworth, "Bell shot one Lincoln's Finch—strange place for it, when it breeds so far north as Labrador," and Coues says in a footnote concerning it, "Apparently the very first intimation we have of the beautiful Finch which Audubon dedicated to Harris as *Fringilla harrissii*, * * *"

Parrakeets and Wild Turkeys plentiful. The officers came on board, and we treated them as hospitably as we could; they ate their lunch with us, and are themselves almost destitute of provisions. Last July the captain sent twenty dragoons and as many Indians on a hunt for Buffaloes. During the hunt they killed 51 Buffaloes, 104 Deer, and 10 Elks, within 80 miles of the camp. The Sioux Indians are great enemies to the Potawatamies, and very frequently kill several of the latter in their predatory excursions against them. This kind of warfare has rendered the Potawatamies very cowardly, which is quite a remarkable change from their previous valor and daring. Bell collected six different species of shells, and found a large lump of pumice stone which does float on the water: We left our anchorage (which means tied to the shore) at twelve o'clock, and about sunset we did pass the real Council Bluffs.¹⁵ Here, however, the bed of the river is utterly changed, though you may yet see that which is now called the Old Missouri. The Bluffs stand, truly speaking, on a beautiful bank almost forty feet above the water, and run off on a rich prairie, to the hills in the background in a gentle slope, that renders the whole place a fine and very remarkable spot. We tied up for the night about three miles above them, and all hands went ashore to cut wood, which begins to be somewhat scarce, of a good quality. Our captain cut and left several cords of green wood for his return trip, at this place; Harris and Bell went on shore, and saw several Bats, and three Turkeys. This afternoon a Deer was seen scampering across the prairies until quite out of sight. Wild-gooseberry bushes are very abundant, and the fruit is said to be very good.

May 11, Thursday. We had a night of rain, thunder, and heavy wind from the northeast, and we did not start this morning till seven o'clock, therefore had a late breakfast. There was a bright blood-red streak in the horizon at four o'clock that looked forbidding, but the weather changed as we proceeded, with, however, showers of rain at various intervals during the day. We have now come to a portion of the river more crooked than any we have passed; the shores on both sides are evidently lower, and the hills that curtain the distance are further from the shores, and the intervening space is mostly prairie, more or less overflowed. We have seen one Wolf on a sand-bar, seeking for food, perhaps dead fish. The actions were precisely those of a cur dog with a long tail, and the bellowing sound of the engine did not seem to disturb him. He trotted on parallel to the boat for about one mile,

¹⁵Council Bluff, so named by Lewis and Clark on Aug. 3, 1804, on which day they and their followers, with a number of Indians, including six chiefs, held a council here, to make terms with the Otoe and Missouri Indians. The account of the meeting ends thus: "The incident just related induced us to give to this place the name of the Council-bluff; the situation of it is exceedingly favorable for a fort and trading factory, as the soil is well calculated for bricks, there is an abundance of wood in the neighborhood, and the air is pure and healthy." In a footnote Dr. Coues says: "It was later the site of Fort Calhoun in the present Washington Co., Neb. We must also remember, in attempting to fix this spot, how much the Missouri has altered its course since 1804." (*Expedition of Lewis and Clark*, 1893, p. 63.)

when we landed to cut drift-wood. Bell, Harris, and I went on shore to try to have a shot at him. He was what is called a brindle-colored Wolf,¹⁶ of the common size. One hundred trappers, however, with their axes at work, in a few moments rather stopped his progress, and when he saw us coming, he turned back on his track, and trotted off, but Bell shot a very small load in the air to see the effect it would produce. The fellow took two or three leaps, stopped, looked at us for a moment, and then started on a gentle gallop. When I overtook his tracks they appeared small, and more rounded than usual. I saw several tracks at the same time, therefore more than one had traveled over this great sandy and muddy bar last night, if not this morning. I lost sight of him behind some large piles of drift-wood, and could see him no more. Turkey-buzzards were on the bar, and I thought that I should have found some dead carcass; but on reaching the spot, nothing was there. A fine large Raven passed at one hundred yards from us, but I did not shoot. Bell found a few small shells, and Harris shot a Yellow-rumped Warbler. We have seen several White Pelicans, Geese, Black-headed Gulls, and Green-backed Swallows, but nothing new. The night is cloudy and intimates more rain. We are fast to a willowed shore, and are preparing lines to try our luck at catching a Catfish or so. I was astonished to find how much stiffened I was this morning, from the exercise I took on horseback yesterday, and think that now it would take me a week, at least, to accustom my body to riding as I was wont to do twenty years ago. The timber is becoming more scarce as we proceed, and I greatly fear that our only opportunities of securing wood will be those afforded us by that drifted on the bars.

May 12, Friday. The morning was foggy, thick, and calm. We passed the river called the *Sioux Pictout*,¹⁷ a small stream formerly abounding with Beavers, Otters, Muskrats, etc., but now quite destitute of any of these creatures. On going along the banks bordering a long and wide prairie, thick with willows and other small brush-wood, we saw four Black-tailed Deer¹⁸ immediately on the bank; they trotted away without appearing to be much alarmed; after a few hundred yards, the two

¹⁶This Wolf is to be distinguished from the Prairie Wolf, *Canis latrans*, which Audubon has already mentioned. It is the common large Wolf of North America, of which Audubon has much to say in the sequel; and wherever he speaks of "Wolves" without specification, we are to understand that this is the animal meant. It occurs in several different color-variations, from quite blackish through different reddish and brindled grayish shades to nearly white. The variety above mentioned is that named by Dr. Richardson *griseo-albus*, commonly known in the West as the Buffalo Wolf and the Timber Wolf. Mr. Thomas Say named one of the dark varieties *Canis nubilus* in 1823; and naturalists who consider the American Wolf to be specifically distinct from *Canis lupus* of Europe now generally name the brindled variety *C. nubilus griseo-albus*.—E. C.

¹⁷Little Sioux River of present geography, in Harrison Co., Iowa; see *Lewis and Clark*, ed. of 1893, p. 69.—E. C.

¹⁸Otherwise known as the Mule Deer, from the great size of the ears, and the peculiar shape of the tail, which is white with a black tuft at the tip, and suggests that of a Mule. It is a fine large species, next to the Elk or Wapiti in stature, and first became generally known from the expedition of Lewis and Clark. It is the *Cervus macrotis* of Say, figured and described under this name by Aud. and Bach. Quad. N. A. ii., 1851, p. 206, pl. 78, and commonly called by later naturalists *Cariacus macrotis*. But its first scientific designation is *Dam-elaphus hemionus*, given by C. S. Rafinesque in 1817.—E. C.

largest, probably males, raised themselves on their hind feet and pawed at each other, after the manner of stallions. They trotted off again, stopping often, but after awhile disappeared; we saw them again some hundreds of yards farther on, when, becoming suddenly alarmed, they bounded off until out of sight. They did not trot or run irregularly as our Virginia Deer does, and their color was of a brownish cast, whilst our common Deer at this season is red. Could we have gone ashore, we might in all probability have killed one or two of them. We stopped to cut wood on the opposite side of the river, where we went on shore, and there saw many tracks of Deer, Elk, Wolves, and Turkeys. In attempting to cross a muddy place to shoot at some Yellow-headed Troupials that were abundant, I found myself almost mired, and returned with difficulty. We only shot a Blackburnian Warbler, a Yellow-winged ditto, and a few Finches. We have seen more Geese than usual as well as Mallards and Wood Ducks. This afternoon the weather cleared up, and a while before sunset we passed under Wood's Bluffs,¹⁹ so called because a man of that name fell overboard from his boat while drunk. We saw there many Bank Swallows, and afterwards we came in view of the Blackbird Hill,²⁰ where the famous Indian chief of that name was buried, at his request, on his horse, whilst the animal

¹⁹Wood's Bluff has long ceased to be known by this name, but there is no doubt from what Audubon next says of Blackbird Hill, that the bluff in question is that on the west or right bank of the river, at and near Decatur, Burt Co., Neb.; the line between Burt and Blackbird counties cuts through the bluff, leaving most of it in the latter county. See *Lewis and Clark*, ed. of 1893, p. 71, date of Aug. 10, 1804, where "a cliff of yellow stone on the left" is mentioned. This is Wood's Bluff; the situation is 750 miles up the river by the Commission Charts.—E. C.

²⁰Blackbird Hill. "Aug. 11 [1804] . . . We halted on the south side for the purpose of examining a spot where one of the great chiefs of the Mahas [Omahas], named Blackbird, who died about four years ago, of the smallpox, was buried. A hill of yellow soft sandstone rises from the river in bluffs of various heights, till it ends in a knoll about 300 feet above the water; on the top of this a mound, of twelve feet diameter at the base, and six feet high, is raised over the body of the deceased king, a pole about eight feet high is fixed on the center, on which we placed a white flag, bordered with red, blue and white. Blackbird seems to have been a person of great consideration, for ever since his death he has been supplied with provisions, from time to time, by the superstitious regard of the Mahas." (*Expedition of Lewis and Clark*, by Elliott Coues, 1893, p. 71.)

"The 7th of May (1833) we reached the chain of hills on the left bank; . . . these are called Wood's Hills, and do not extend very far. On one of them we saw a small conical mound, which is the grave of the celebrated Omaha chief Washing-Sabba (the Blackbird). In James' *Narrative of Major Long's Expedition*, is a circumstantial account of this remarkable and powerful chief, who was a friend to the white man; he contrived, by means of arsenic, to make himself feared and dreaded, and passed for a magician. . . . An epidemical smallpox carried him off, with a great part of his nation, in 1800, and he was buried, sitting upright, upon a live mule, at the top of a green hill on Wakonda Creek. When dying he gave orders they should bury him on that hill, with his face turned to the country of the whites." (*Travels in North America*, Maximilian, Prince of Wied.)

Irving, in chap. xvi. of *Astoria*, gives a long account of Blackbird, based on Bradbury and Brackenbridge, but places his death in 1802 incorrectly; and ends: "The Missouri washes the base of the promontory, and after winding and doubling in many links and mazes, returns to within nine hundred yards of its starting-place; so that for thirty miles the voyager finds himself continually near to this singular promontory, as if spell bound. It was the dying command of Blackbird, that his tomb should be on the summit of this hill, in which he should be interred, seated on his favorite horse, that he might overlook his ancient domain, and behold the backs of the white men as they came up from the river to trade with his people."

was alive. We are now fast to the shore opposite this famed bluff. We cut good ash wood this day, and have made a tolerable run, say forty miles.

Saturday, May 13. This morning was extremely foggy, although I could plainly see the orb of day trying to force its way through the haze. While this lasted all hands were engaged in cutting wood, and we did not leave our fastening-place till seven, to the great grief of our commander. During the wood-cutting, Bell walked to the top of the hills, and shot two Lark Buntings, males, and a Lincoln's Finch. After awhile we passed under some beautiful bluffs surmounted by many cedars, and these bluffs were composed of fine white sandstone, of a soft texture, but very beautiful to the eye. In several places along the bluffs we saw clusters of nests of Swallows, which we all looked upon as those of the Cliff Swallow, although I saw not one of the birds. We stopped again to cut wood, for our opportunities are not now very convenient. Went out, but only shot a fine large Turkey-hen, which I brought down on the wing at about forty yards. It ran very swiftly, however, and had not Harris' dog come to our assistance, we might have lost it. As it was, however, the dog pointed, and Harris shot it, with my small shot-gun, whilst I was squatted on the ground amid a parcel of low bushes. I was astonished to see how many of the large shot I had put into her body. This hen weighed $11\frac{3}{4}$ pounds. She had a nest, no doubt, but we could not find it. We saw a good number of Geese, though fewer than yesterday; Ducks also. We passed many fine prairies, and in one place I was surprised to see the richness of the bottom lands. We saw this morning eleven Indians of the Omaha tribe. They made signals for us to land, but our captain never heeded them, for he hates the red-skins as most men hate the devil. One of them fired a gun, the group had only one, and some ran along the shore for nearly two miles, particularly one old gentleman who persevered until we came to such bluff shores as calmed down his spirits. In another place we saw one seated on a log, close by the frame of a canoe; but he looked surley, and never altered his position as we passed. The frame of this boat resembled an ordinary canoe. It is formed by both sticks giving a half circle; the upper edges are fastened together by a long stick, as well as the center of the bottom. Outside of this stretches a Buffalo skin without the hair on; it is said to make a light and safe craft to cross even the turbid, rapid stream—the Missouri. By simply looking at them, one may suppose that they are sufficiently large to carry two or three persons. On a sand-bar afterwards we saw three more Indians, also with a canoe frame, but we only interchanged the common yells usual on such occasions. They looked as destitute and as hungry as if they had not eaten for a week, and no doubt would have given much for a bottle of whiskey. At our last landing for wood-cutting, we also went on shore, but shot nothing, not even took aim at a bird; and there was an Indian with a flint-lock rifle, who came on board and stared until we

left, when he went off with a little tobacco. I pity these poor beings from my heart! This evening we came to the burial-ground bluff of Sergeant Floyd,²¹ one of the companions of the never-to-be-forgotten expedition of Lewis and Clark, over the Rocky Mountains, to the Pacific Ocean. A few minutes afterwards, before coming to Floyd's Creek, we started several Turkey-cocks from their roost, and had we been on shore could have accounted for more than one of them. The prairies are becoming more common and more elevated; we have seen more evergreens this day than we have done for two weeks at least. This evening is dark and rainy, with lightning and some distant thunder, and we have entered the mouth of the Big Sioux River,²² where we are fastened for the night. This is a clear stream and abounds with fish, and on one of the branches of this river is found the famous red clay, of which the precious pipes, or calumets are manufactured. We will try to procure some on our return homeward. It is late; had the weather been clear, and the moon, which is full, shining, it was our intention to go ashore, to try to shoot Wild Turkeys; but as it is pouring down rain, and as dark as pitch, we have thrown our lines overboard and perhaps may catch a fish. We hope to reach Vermilion River day after tomorrow. We saw abundance of the birds which I have before enumerated.

After leaving the point where the Big Sioux enters the Missouri, and where the latter stream no longer marks the western boundary of the present state of Iowa, the boat proceeded up the Missouri past Fort Pierre, Mandan, and to the mouth of the Yellowstone River, near the northwest corner of what is now

²¹"Aug. 20, 1804. Here we had the misfortune to lose one of our sergeants, Charles Floyd. . . . He was buried on the top of the bluff with the honors due to a brave soldier; the place of his interment was marked by a cedar post, on which his name and the day of his death were inscribed." (*Expedition of Lewis and Clark*, by Elliott Coues, p. 79.)

"On the following day [May 8, 1833] we came to Floyd's grave, where the sergeant of that name was buried by Lewis and Clark. The bank on either side is low. The left is covered with poplars; on the right, behind the wood, rises a hill like the roof of a building, at the top of which Floyd is buried. A short stick marks the place where he is laid, and has often been renewed by travellers, when the fires in the prairie have destroyed it." (*Travels in North America*, p. 134, Maximilian, Prince of Wied.)—M. R. A.

Floyd's grave became a landmark for many years, and is noticed by most of the travellers who have written of voyaging on the Missouri. In 1857 the river washed away the face of the bluff to such an extent that the remains were exposed. These were gathered and reburied about 200 yards further back on the same bluff. This new grave became obliterated in the course of time, but in 1895 it was rediscovered after careful search. The bones were exhumed by a committee of citizens of Sioux City; and on Aug. 20 of that year, the 91st anniversary of Floyd's death, were reburied in the same spot with imposing ceremonies, attended by a concourse of several hundred persons. A large flat stone slab, with suitable inscription, now marks the spot, and the Floyd Memorial Association, which was formed at the time of the third burial, proposes to erect a monument to Floyd in a park to be established on the bluff.—E. C.

²²Which separates Iowa from South Dakota. Here the Missouri ceases to separate Nebraska from Iowa, and begins to separate Nebraska from South Dakota. Audubon is therefore at the point where these three states come together. He is also just on the edge of Sioux City, Iowa, which extends along the left bank of the Missouri from the vicinity of Floyd's Bluff to the Big Sioux River.—E. C.

North Dakota. Every day Audubon and his party were alert in observing wild life and in securing specimens for mounting. They reached Fort Union, which was on the north side of the Missouri six miles above the mouth of the Yellowstone, on June 12, forty-eight days after leaving St. Louis. They remained at Fort Union two months, took many side trips, up the Yellowstone, up the Missouri, and into the surrounding country, had interesting experiences killing buffaloes, bears, elks, deer, and other game, met Indians of different tribes, and lived much in the open. Audubon kept his journal faithfully and wrote fascinatingly of the life among the hunters, trappers and Indians.

They built a flat boat forty feet long, loaded their hides and specimens, and on August 16 started on their homeward trip. Their food was largely fish which they caught and wild fowls and wild animals which they killed as needed. They traveled slowly, and camped on the river bank at nights. By September 8 they reached Fort Pierre where they exchanged their boat for a larger one. After remaining there until September 14, they resumed their journey. On October 1 they reached the mouth of the Sioux River, the present boundary of Iowa, and we now quote from the journal as written during their trip down to the Missouri boundary:

Sunday, October 1. The wind changed, and lulled before morning, so we left at a quarter past six. The skies looked rather better, nevertheless we had several showers. Passed the [Big] Sioux River at twenty minutes past eleven. Heard a Pileated Woodpecker, and saw Fish Crows. Geese very abundant. Landed below the Sioux River to shoot Turkeys, having seen a large male on the bluffs. Bell killed a hen, and Harris two young birds; these will keep us going some days. Stopped again by the wind opposite Floyd's grave; started again and ran about four miles, when we were obliged to land in a rascally place at twelve o'clock. Had hail and rain at intervals. Camped at the mouth of the Omaha River, six miles from the village. The wild Geese are innumerable. The wind has ceased and stars are shining.

Monday, 2d. Beautiful but *cold*. The water has risen nine inches, and we travel well. Started early. Stopped at eight by the wind at a vile place, but plenty of Jerusalem artichokes, which we tried and found very good. Started again at three, and made a good run till sundown, when we found a fair camping-place, and made our supper from excellent young Geese.

Tuesday, 3d. A beautiful calm morning; we started early. Saw three Deer on the bank. A Prairie Wolf travelled on the shore beside us for

a long time before he found a place to get up on the prairie. Plenty of Sandhill Cranes were seen as we passed the Little Sioux River. Saw three more Deer, another Wolf, two Swans, several Pelicans, and abundance of Geese and Ducks. Passed Soldier River at two o'clock. We were caught by a snag that scraped and tore us a little. Had we been two feet nearer, it would have ruined our barge. We passed through a very swift cut-off, most difficult of entrance. We have run eighty-two miles and encamped at the mouth of the cut-off, near the old bluffs. Killed two Mallards; the Geese and Ducks are abundant beyond description. Brag, Harris' dog, stole and hid all the meat that had been cooked for our supper.

Wednesday, 4th. Cloudy and coldish. Left early and can't find my pocket knife, which I fear I have lost. We were stopped by the wind at Cabane Bluffs, about twenty miles above Fort Croghan; we all hunted, with only fair results. Saw some hazel bushes, and some black walnuts. Wind-bound till night, and nothing done.

Thursday, 5th. Blew hard all night, but a clear and beautiful sunrise. Started early, but stopped by the wind at eight. Bell, Harris, and Squires have started off for Fort Croghan. As there was every appearance of rain we left at three and reached the fort about half-past four. Found all well, and were most kindly received. We were presented with some green corn, and had a quantity of bread made, also bought thirteen eggs from an Indian for twenty-five cents. Honey bees are found here, and do well, but none are seen above this place. I had an unexpected slide on the bank, as it had rained this afternoon; and Squires had also one at twelve in the night, when he and Harris with Sprague came to the boat after having played whist up to that hour.

Friday, 6th. Some rain and thunder last night. A tolerable day. Breakfast at the camp, and left at half-past eight. Our man Michaux was passed over to the officer's boat, to steer them down to Fort Leavenworth, where they are ordered, but we are to keep in company, and he is to cook for us at night. The whole station here is broken up, and Captain Burgwin²³ leaves in a few hours by land with the dragoons, horses, etc. Stopped at Belle Vue at nine, and had a kind reception; bought 6 lbs. coffee, 13 eggs, 2 lbs. butter, and some black pepper. Abundance of Indians, of four different nations. Major Miller, the agent, is a good man for this place. Left again at eleven. A fine day. Passed the Platte and its hundreds of snags, at a quarter past one, and stopped for the men to dine. The stream quite full, and we saw some squaws on the bar, the village was in sight. Killed two Pelicans, but only got one. Encamped about thirty miles below Fort Croghan. Lieutenant Carleton supped with us, and we had a rubber of whist.

Saturday, 7th. Fine night, and fine morning. Started too early, while yet dark, and got on a bar. Passed McPherson's, the first house in the state of Missouri, at eight o'clock. Bell skinned the young of *Fringilla*

²³J. H. Burgwin. See a previous note, date of May 10,

harrisi. Lieutenant Carleton came on board to breakfast with us—a fine companion and a perfect gentleman. Indian war-whoops were heard by him and his men whilst embarking this morning after we left. We encamped at the mouth of Nishnebotana, a fine, clear stream. Went to the house of Mr. Beaumont, who has a pretty wife. We made a fine run of sixty or seventy miles.

The party passed Fort Leavenworth on the 10th and Independence on the 11th. Audubon complains of the beef they bought at New Brunswick on the 13th, saying that although it was excellent beef, it was very inferior to buffalo. They passed Jefferson City on the 16th and saw twenty-four deer not far below there. They reached St. Louis on the 19th. Audubon went by steamer from there and reached home near New York on November 6, 1843.

HUNTERS IN 1843 BUTCHERING BUFFALO

I have not given the particular manner in which the latter [butchering buffalo] is performed by the hunters of this country—I mean the white hunters—and I will now try to do so. The moment that the buffalo is dead, three or four hunters, their faces and hands often covered with gunpowder, and with pipes lighted, place the animal on its belly, and by drawing out each fore and hind leg, fix the body so that it cannot fall down again; an incision is made near the root of the tail, immediately above the root in fact, and the skin cut to the neck, and taken off in the roughest manner imaginable, downwards and on both sides at the same time. The knives are going in all directions, and many wounds occur in the hands and fingers, but are rarely attended to at this time. The pipe of one man has perhaps given out, and with his bloody hands he takes the one of his nearest companion, who has his own hands equally bloody. Now one breaks in the skull of the bull, and with bloody fingers draws out the hot brains and swallows them with peculiar zest; another has now reached the liver, and is gobbling down enormous pieces of it; whilst, perhaps, a third who has come to the paunch, is feeding luxuriously on some—to me—disgusting-looking offal. But the main business proceeds.—*Journal of J. J. Audubon*, with notes by Coues, Vol I, p. 141.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.