

## Book Reviews

*America's Other Audubon*. 2012. Joy M. Kiser. Princeton Architectural Press. New York, New York. 191 pages, including 68 color plates. ISBN 978-1-61689-059-9.

**T**HIS IS A WONDERFUL “COFFEE TABLE” BOOK with 68 beautiful color plates showing the nests and eggs of common Ohio birds. Were they not bound together in book form, many of the 11 by 13-inch plates would be beautiful framed and hanging on the wall. Each plate shows, at approximately life size, accurate and finely detailed illustrations of nests and the eggs or of just the eggs.

This book is an annotated reissue of the 1886 publication of *Illustrations of the Nests and Eggs of Birds of Ohio*, by Mrs. N. E. Jones and Howard Jones and dedicated to the memory of their daughter/sister, Genevieve Jones. The original book was initiated in 1877 by Genevieve Jones of Circleville, Ohio, and her close friend Eliza J. Shulze. Genevieve died after completing only five illustrations, but the family eventually determined to complete the full book. Only 90 complete copies of the original book were ever produced and fewer than 30 copies are currently known to survive. Accordingly, Kiser's re-publication with annotations is one of the few ways most people today could view these detailed and accurate works.

Joy Kiser wrote a twenty-page introduction for the current re-publication that documents the fascinating history of Genevieve Jones, her family, and the production of the original book. Kiser also adds notes from various original sources (mostly by Genevieve's brother Howard, who wrote full-page discussions for each plate) discussing the species illustrated on the opposite pages. These annotations include both scientific and English common names used at the time of the original publication as well as currently accepted names and the name of the illustrator for each plate. One item lacking was any size scale on the original illustrations. While the plates were intended to be approximately life-size, some appear to be a little reduced and the eggs—where illustrated adjacent to the nest—appear to be even further reduced. This is partially compensated in the rear of the book in a “Key to the Eggs” prepared by Howard Jones, with tables that include size of the eggs, colors, numbers in a set, typical locations, materials used in the nest,

and other notes. Of course, all this is an artifact of the original 1886 publication, so there was not much Kiser could do to adjust it in her edition.

Genevieve learned her love of birds starting at age six while traveling with her father Nelson on his rounds as a medical doctor. She was further inspired later when she had an opportunity to see a copy of Audubon's *Birds of America*. Then she became disappointed that there was no book that could help her identify the nests and eggs which she and her brother collected. In 1877, at age 30, she became determined to produce her own book of artwork to fill this void and enlisted her close friend Eliza Shulze to help.

Genevieve's father and brother joined the project, and her father arranged to self-publish the book. Genevieve learned to draw on lithographic plates (the originals were 15.4 x 17.3 inches and the lithograph stones weighed 65 pounds), which were sent to Cincinnati for printing and then returned as black-and-white prints that were individually hand-colored. The plan was to sell sets of three prints every three months by subscription at a cost of \$5 for colored prints and \$2 for uncolored prints. This would allow Genevieve's

father to keep up with the huge costs of publication. The first set of 3 illustrations with text was sent out for review in December of 1878 to various ornithological publications. The set received raving acclaim from noted ornithologists of the period. The first 20 subscribers, which included Rutherford B. Hayes and Theodore Roosevelt, received their initial sets in July of 1879.

I was a little disturbed by the title of Kiser's book and the author's text, which appears to offer the major credit for the book to Genevieve Jones. It really was a product of her entire family plus her friend Eliza. The frontispiece of the 1886 book lists “illustrations by Mrs. N. E. Jones; text by Howard Jones, A.M., M.D.” The following page dedicates the book “To the memory of Miss Genevieve Estelle Jones.” One month after the first set of illustrations went out, Genevieve was struck by typhoid fever. She died three weeks later, August 17, 1879. After Genevieve's death and a period of mourning, Genevieve's zeal and inspiration motivated the family to continue the project. Genevieve's father always had a passionate interest in birds, having studied for his medical degree under the famed doctor/ornithologist Jared Potter Kirtland in Cleveland. Not only did Genevieve's father support his daughter's zeal for the project but he spent his life savings seeing it into completion.

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Younger brother Howard Jones, who also became a medical doctor, enjoyed roaming the woods and fields and supplied most of the nests and eggs that went into the family “cabinet” and became the reference library for the drawings. Genevieve’s mother, Virginia, supported any project her daughter was involved with but had no personal interest in ornithology and natural history. She also had no training as an artist. After Genevieve’s death, Virginia’s love for her daughter and wishes to honor her memory inspired her to join her husband and son in the project. Virginia taught herself the skills needed to draw on the lithographic stones and how to color them. Genevieve’s friend, Eliza Shulze, drew additional plates and helped Virginia finish the coloring of plates. In all, Genevieve drew only five plates, Eliza did ten plates, Howard drew eleven plates (of 66 species of birds’ eggs), and Virginia completed the remaining 42 plates. Several other family friends were hired to help color the plates for the final book.

William Brewster, co-founder of the American Ornithologists’ Union, claimed the original plates a masterpiece unrivaled by any work since Audubon. Elliot Coues, editor of the AOU’s journal *The Auk*, wrote that the series “promises to be one of the great illustrated works on North American Ornithology.” As the original is so obscure, anyone interested in birds’ nests and eggs should find this both a useful reference as well as a delightful and inspiring artistic accomplishment. Kiser discovered a copy of the 1886 book while working as a librarian at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History and became interested enough to search out the history behind the original book. Kiser’s narrative of Genevieve’s zeal for the project and her family’s love and devotion to carry the book to completion can be an inspiration to citizen scientists everywhere. Joy Kiser is to be thanked for bringing both the art and the story of its production to the public eye.

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***Discovery and Renewal on Huffman Prairie: Where Aviation Took Wing.*** 2018. David Nolin. Kent State University Press. Kent, Ohio. 208 pages.  
ISBN 978-1-60635-346-2.

JOHN MUIR WROTE “WHEN WE TRY TO PICK OUT anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe.” David Nolin’s book about Huffman Prairie is an excellent example of this concept. Nolin clearly shows the connections—in both directions—

between the natural environment and the rich history of this special place.

Huffman Prairie today is a 114-acre fragment of its original area within the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, a short distance east of Dayton, Ohio. In 1986 the natural portion of the Huffman Prairie was designated as an Ohio Natural Landmark Area and in 1990, Huffman Prairie Flying Field was designated as a National Historic Landmark. It is a component of the National Aviation Heritage Area.

The book weaves together several themes: an excellent history of the land even before the Wright brothers got involved, the brothers’ work on developing and improving airplane design, and the eventual development of Wright-Patterson Air Force Base (which encompasses the Huffman Prairie). Furthermore, it documents the native prairie, its flora, fauna, and overall ecology. Finally, it details the re-discovery of the prairie as well as work to restore and make it accessible to the public. Both the history and natural history are richly illustrated with historic black-and-white photos, as well as beautiful color photos of the prairie flora and fauna.

Nolin retired in 2015 after 32 years working with the Five Rivers MetroParks in land acquisition and habitat management, ending his career as director of conservation. Certainly, his professional background enabled and enriched his work on Huffman Prairie.

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His book reveals his zeal for preserving and restoring Huffman Prairie and one suspects he spent many hours of personal time on prairie restoration and writing this book.

Nolin obviously read extensively about the history of the Wright brothers and searched out extensive archives on the early history of the area. He details the first explorations of the region and the settlements of the site by William P. Huffman and his descendants, who owned the land when the Wright brothers flew their first plane. He also details later developments from ditching, building railways and roadways, and the site’s establishment as an air force base. He introduces and enriches all this history with a wealth of historic photos. Nolin also documents the impact of glaciers over Ohio and the changes that followed, especially the Xerothermic Period when the “Prairie Peninsula” expanded into west-central Ohio. In 1984, Nolin stumbled across Huffman Prairie. He not only studied