

*American Wildlife Art*

David J. Wagner

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424 pages

280 color and 30 black-and-white illustrations

Bookshelves abound with accounts of wildlife artists and their artistry, but no book is truly comparable to *American Wildlife Art*. In *American Wildlife Art*, scholar and curator David J. Wagner tells the story of this popular genre's history, shaped by four centuries of cultural events and aesthetic and ideological trends, from its beginnings in colonial times to the monumental works of the present day. In his insightful accounts of the artists, events, and trends at the heart of this uniquely American art form, Wagner explains how the aesthetic idioms and imagery of American wildlife art have evolved, how its ecological ideologies have changed with changing circumstances and ideas about animals and their habitats, and how artists and entrepreneurs developed and influenced the market for wildlife art.

Wagner's history begins with the works of John White and Mark Catesby, artists who documented the flora and fauna of the New World and presented Europeans with a view of both the economic potential and the natural wonders of the then sparsely settled continent. After the American Revolution, as the new nation grew, artists such as Alexander Wilson and especially John James Audubon caused the course of American wildlife art history to turn and advance, setting the stage for Arthur Tait's collaboration with Currier & Ives, which brought wildlife art to the masses, and the work of Edward Kemeys, whose impressionistic sculpture captured the essence of disappearing wildlife like the wolf and buffalo at the same time that prominent Americans like John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt promoted wilderness preservation and the ethics of sportsmanship. As Wagner's narrative moves to the twentieth century and beyond, it embraces in revealing detail the lives of artists Louis Agassiz Fuertes and Carl Rungius, painters who were among the most influential wildlife artists of their time. Wagner's account concludes with portraits of recent and contemporary wildlife artists such as Ray Harm, Robert Bateman, and Kent Ullberg—artists whose work at once departs from and embodies the legacies, traditions, and innovations that informed and preceded it.

Through a rich array of illustrations and its incisive text, *American Wildlife Art* will appeal to collectors, conservationists, and artists—to everyone who already enjoys wildlife art or who is learning about it for the first time. Wagner's authoritative and even-handed prose brings this compelling art form to life, reminding us of the treasures found on America's wild lands.