

JOHN GOULD FRS
1804 – 1881



John Gould was an English ornithologist and bird artist born in Lyme Regis. He had very little education becoming a gardener alongside his father who was a foreman in the Royal Gardens of Windsor. He later studied and became an expert in the art of taxidermy. He started his own business in London and this led to him becoming the first Curator and Preserver at the Museum of the Zoological Society of London in 1827.

As he was often the first to see collections of birds brought in from other lands so his interest in birds grew.

In 1830 he published "A Century of Birds from the Himalayan Mountains." The illustrations were lithographed by John Gould's wife, Elizabeth. Some of his illustrations in other books were by Edward Lear of "Owl and the Pussycat" fame. These books earned him a fortune and in 1838 he and his wife moved to Australia to work on the birds of Australia. He wanted to be the first to produce a major work on the subject. Shortly after their return to England in 1841 his wife died after the birth of their 8th child, Sarah. The result of his trip to Australia was seven volumes of "The Birds of Australia" which included 600 hundred plates, 328 of the species described were new to science and named by Gould.



Himalayan Black Lored Tit



Kookabura



Bleeding Heart Pigeon



Pink Parrot



Blue Fairy Wren



Lady Gouldian Finch



Rainbow Lorikeet



Ruby Throated Humming Bird

All through his professional life he had a very strong interest in humming birds but despite this interest he had never seen a live one. So he travelled to the USA with his second son Charles but he arrived too early in the season to see humming birds in New York. The first live one he saw was in May 1857 in Philadelphia – a Ruby Throated Humming Bird.

In Washington DC he saw large numbers and attempted to bring some live specimens to England but he was not aware of conditions necessary to keep them and they only lived for two months at most.

"Birds of Great Britain" showed the development of his aesthetic style in which he added illustrations of nests and young on a large scale. Most of his work was done on rough sketches on paper by his wife and later other artists created lithograph plates in his books. One of his works on birds published in 1838 and 1842 in five volumes was edited by Charles Darwin.

Gould had a number of animals named after him e.g. Gould's Monitor Lizard and Gould's Black Headed Snake. The Gould League founded in 1909 in Australia is named after him and in 1976 they honoured him with an Australian postage stamp. His work even deserved a reference in Charles Darwin's book "The Origin of the Species." He was also the man who introduced budgerigars into the UK.



Gould's Monitor Lizard



Gould's Black Headed Snake



Gould aged 73

Nicknamed "The Bird Man" he died on 3rd February 1881 aged 76 and is buried in Kensal Green Cemetery in London.