Review of *John James Audubon: The Nature of the American Woodsman*, by Gregory Nobles

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When we think about American ornithology, John James Audubon is often the first name that comes to mind. As evidence to Audubon's lasting ability to enrapture readers, it bears repeating that an original Double Elephant Folio of *Birds of America* sold for an astounding $11.5 million in 2010 (2). Yet, for a man who produced such stunning and memorable visual and literary work on the avifauna of North America, some of the important details of his life and origins have remained highly contested.

Even though Gregory Nobles's new biography is not explicitly tied to the study of the Great Plains, it does bring a fresh and dynamic perspective to Audubon's life and work—which included one trip to the Plains late in his life. According to Nobles, Audubon was largely a "self-made" (in many senses of the word) naturalist-artist, born in Saint Domingue (now Haiti) to a white French slave-owning father and (most likely) a black mother. Nobles argues, however, that it is precisely Audubon's work that allowed the naturalist to fashion himself as the "American Woodsman."

Nobles structures the book chronologically beginning with Audubon's early childhood, a childhood that Audubon inconsistently and at times ambiguously or fallaciously retold. Whether it be in his personal jour-