



PRESS RELEASE
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Splendid Plumage Showcases Stunning Birds at SB Museum of Natural History

SANTA BARBARA, CA— The Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History’s latest exhibit depicts birds with some of the most elaborate feathers in the world. *Splendid Plumage* in the John and Peggy Maximus Gallery features a colorful selection of 30 evolutionary marvels. Originally published in the nineteenth century by the likes of John Gould and John James Audubon, these hand-colored lithographs mark an intersection between scientific illustration and high-status art. Most of the works on view are new donations to the Museum’s antique print collection and are being exhibited in the gallery for the first time.

"In spring 2023, we were asked if we’d accept a large donation of 340 hand-colored lithographs by John Gould, the famous nineteenth-century British ornithologist and publisher," recounts Gallery Curator Linda Miller. "In 22 years, this is the largest single donation I've seen. It took weeks to unpack, sort, photograph, and accession all the prints to the database." Miller is delighted to now share numerous newly donated marvels like John Gould’s Blue-throated Toucanet in the new exhibit’s stunning lineup.

"We're showcasing some of the most extreme plumage out there," remarks Miller. For guests who may think the long tails and eye-popping colors represent artistic license, a video playing in the gallery includes modern footage and wildlife photography of the various species depicted by the artists. A soundtrack of their calls and songs adds ambiance.

Behind the scenes, Miller preserves and organizes a collection of over 5,000 engravings and lithographs, representing a sampling of European and American natural history illustrations from the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries. Changing exhibitions in the Maximus Gallery draw upon this collection and interpret topics of artistic, historic, and scientific interest.

Splendid Plumage is open through September 8 and is included in Museum admission. Members are always admitted free.

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SANTA BARBARA MUSEUM *of* NATURAL HISTORY

About the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History

Inspiring curiosity for over 100 years. Founded in 1916, the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History inspires a thirst for discovery and a passion for the natural world. The Museum seeks to connect people to nature for the betterment of both, and prides itself on being *naturally different*. For more information, visit sbnature.org.



“Blue-throated Toucanet,” from John Gould’s 1833 *Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*



***Splendid Plumage* in the Maximus Gallery at SBMNH**



“Orange-crested Bower Bird,” from John Gould’s 1875–1888 *Birds of New Guinea*