

much as the brilliant but misunderstood 1818 houseguest of Audubon's, Constantine Samuel Rafinesque. In short, he was a naturalist who had come to America to fulfill his obsession: discovering new species. He was convinced that in America they were everywhere. This included one comical scene in which he destroyed Audubon's violin while using it as a weapon to procure a bat—he was convinced it was an unnamed species—that had flown in through an open window of the guest room. To poke fun at his

mania, Audubon spitefully fabricated and sketched ten non-existent, fanciful fishes that Rafinesque, to Audubon's embarrassment, later published in Europe and attributed to him (Eisenbeis 1965). After having suffered such a scientific discomposure in the 1820s, it is doubtful that he would have risked a similar fate a second time by describing a new species within his specialty without being confident of its authenticity.

This conviction was reinforced in 1820 as he procured, studied, and painted a Bald Eagle specimen for four straight days, often forsaking sleep. Upon completion of this marathon and the completion of his painting of a juvenile Bald Eagle, he recorded in his journal that he was—as perhaps we today should also be—convinced that the Washington eagle was indeed a unique and separate species (Audubon 1929). This grand eagle appears to have been lost to time, but deserves, at the very least, the status of a hypothetical species: *Haliaeetus washingtonii*.

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