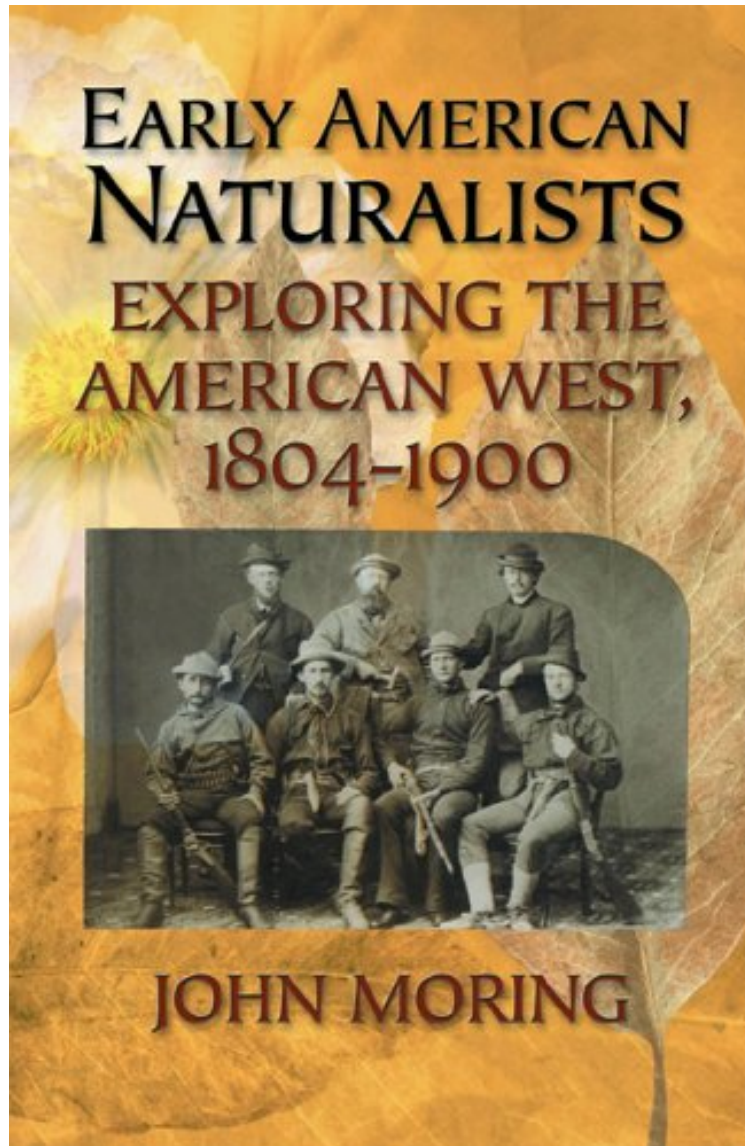


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Early American Naturalists: Exploring the American West, 1804-1900

John Moring

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Beginning with the trailblazing expedition of Lewis and Clark, *Early American Naturalists* tells the stories of men and women of the 1800s who crossed the Mississippi River and encountered the new life of the western New World. Explorers profiled include John James Audubon, Martha Maxwell, and John Muir.

From Publishers Weekly Moring (Men with Sand), a professor of zoology at the University of Maine, examines the lives of several explorers who documented American flora and fauna during the 19th century. He begins with the work of Lewis and Clark, who were charged not only with opening up new territories, but also collecting samples and drawings of the unfamiliar North American wildlife. Moring details the efforts of later naturalists, including Englishman Thomas Nuttall (who studied the lives of birds and was so badly bitten by mosquitoes during his explorations of the Delaware coast that people assumed he had smallpox); Charles Wilkes, a navy officer who explored the Pacific coast; and the legendary painter of birds, John Audubon. Moring discusses naturalists' increasing reliance on photography (rather than drawings), the development of natural history museums (before which wildlife specimens were kept in laboratories and universities for scientific study only) and the evolution of naturalism itself over the course of the century. Instead of scrutinizing discreet specimens, the "New Naturalists," exemplified by conservationist John Muir, became interested in ecology as a living whole. "Instead of merely collecting a plant or animal for later study, naturalists of the late nineteenth century would sit for hours watching a bird construct a nest." These biographical sketches make for an absorbing and accessible if somewhat narrowly focused survey that should please those with a bent for natural history. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Moring (zoology, Univ. of Maine; Men with Sand: Great Explorers of the American West) profiles the 19th-century naturalists who trekked across the continent from 1804 to 1900, tracing how the nature of their work changed over the century. As exemplified by Lewis and Clark, many of these early explorers were self-trained amateur naturalists; their expeditions were followed by similar government-sponsored trips that included trained scientists and skilled artists like John James Audubon and Titian Peale. And then came the new naturalists, best represented by John Muir, whose goal was not to collect but to explain humanity's place in nature. Encyclopedic in style, this book is filled with adventure and introduces the reader to many lesser-known, early American naturalists. Recommended for college and larger public library environmental history collections. Patricia Ann Owens, Wabash Valley Coll., Mt. Carmel, IL Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. About the Author John Moring (1946-2002) was professor of zoology at the University of Maine and author of Men with Sand: Great Explorers of the American West.