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## 100 Years Ago in The Auk

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From "On an old portrait of Audubon, painted by himself, and a word about some of his early drawings" by R. W. Shufeldt (1886, *Auk* 3: 417-420):

[Shufeldt had come into possession of three drawings, which he described as follows.]

"They are each and all drawn by a combination of crayon and water-colors upon a thin and *not expensive* kind of drawing-paper, now brittle and soiled by age. Audubon had evidently numbered these drawings of his, and these numbers are 44, 77, and 96, a European Magpie, a Coot, and a Green Woodpecker, respectively . . .

"As I have said, the earliest of these drawings is the one of the Magpie—and let us look at it for a moment. It is life size, as they all three are, and the bird is represented standing on the ground, being drawn lengthwise on the paper. The execution is quite crude, though the naturalist 'sticks out' in it, for notwithstanding the somewhat awkward position the bird is in, there is life in it. The ground is simply a wash of pale green and brown, while over on one side of the paper he has 'tried his brush,' having made some rough concentric circles with paint dabs about them. Beneath this drawing we find written in lead-pencil in two lines, 'La Pie, Buffon,' 'Pye, Piot Magpye, Pianet, english,' and over to the left-hand corner, 'No. 44.'

"The second picture is that of a Coot, and is a marked improvement upon the Magpie. Far more pains have been taken with the feet, legs, bill, and eye, though little has been gained in the natural attitude of the bird. It is also represented standing up on the dry ground, which is here of a pale violet wash, unbroken by anything in the shape of stones

or vegetation. Except very faintly in the wing, no attempt has been made to individualize the feathers, the entire body being of a dead black, worked in either by burnt cork or crayon. Beneath this figure has been written in lead-pencil, but gone over again by the same hand in ink, 'La foulque ou La Morelle—Buffon, Riviere Loire Joselle—' 'English—the Coot,—'

"As is usually the case among juvenile artists, both this bird and the Magpie are represented upon direct lateral view, and no evidence has yet appeared to hint to us of the wonderful power Audubon eventually came to possess in figuring his birds in their every attitude.

"There is a peculiar pleasure that takes possession of us as we turn to the third and last of these figures, the one representing the Green Woodpecker (*Cecinus viridis*). It is a wonderful improvement, in every particular, upon both of the others. The details of the plumage and other structures are brought out with great delicacy, and refinement of touch; while the attitude of the bird, an old male, is even better than many of those published in his famous work. The colors are soft and have been so handled, as to lend to the plumage a very flossy and natural appearance, while the old trunk, upon the side of which the bird is represented, presents several evidences of an increase of the power to paint such objects. We find written in lead pencil beneath this figure, in two lines, and in rather a Frenchy hand, 'Le Pic vert, Buffon,' 'the Green Woodpecker—British Zoology.'"