



# Gould's Toucans

## REBORN

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## GOULD'S TOUCANS REBORN

Lockdown has led many of us to pursue new projects at home, and Sotheran's has been no different. We took some time to explore our vaults and were very excited to find the complete text and plates of the second edition of John Gould's magisterial monograph on the Toucans, just as it was when we bought the great ornithologist's estate in 1881.

This has always been one of his most celebrated works, as the birds are so beautiful and the plates so splendid. It seemed ridiculous that, after more than a hundred and fifty years, this book should still be kept under wraps.

However, the plates were just as they were when they were first printed - that is, uncoloured. If we wanted to bring this work to life, we would have to do what Gould did and find a hand-colourist to painstakingly apply watercolour to each plate, following the facsimile reference copy in our collection.

Gould had a number of wonderfully accomplished artists available, none of whom ever received a credit and all of whom are now lost to posterity. Our pool of talent was much smaller and more difficult to find. After some trial and error we found a great colourist and we are very happy to give him his full credit. Chris Mayger has done a superb job in rendering these colours as faithfully to Gould's originals, and to nature, as possible.

The final stage was to put this astonishing work into a binding fittingly sumptuous and historically sympathetic, and we went to a binder with a distinguished history of handling Gould's work. Shepherd's have handcrafted a beautiful gilt morocco binding with silk endpapers as if for a Victorian collector's prize library.

We are proud to present this work alongside a selection of individual plates from the first and second editions of the Toucans, many of which feature original nineteenth century hand-colouring by Gould's own team of painters.







**1. GOULD, John.** A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or family of toucans. Published by the author. 1854. **£30,000**

Imperial folio. Full green morocco by Shepherds, elaborate gilt borders to sides, spine divided into six compartments with gilt raised bands, tooling and lettering, gilt turn-ins, green silk endpapers, all edges gilt; pp. 9-26, 1 uncoloured plate, **51 later hand-coloured lithograph plates by Gould and H.C. Richter**; fine.

Second edition, a revised version of the 1833-35 edition with new plates and discussions of species not formerly treated, including the uncoloured plate and accompanying text provided by **Professor Richard Owen**. The text and plates of the species newly discussed in this edition were issued in 1855 as a supplement to the first edition of 1833-35, which had been illustrated with 20 plates by Edward Lear.

After the production of the first edition Gould was left with nine spare toucan plates that he initially intended to publish in the third part of *Icones Avium* (1837-8). However, the third part never appeared, publication of the work being halted by Gould's departure for Australia.

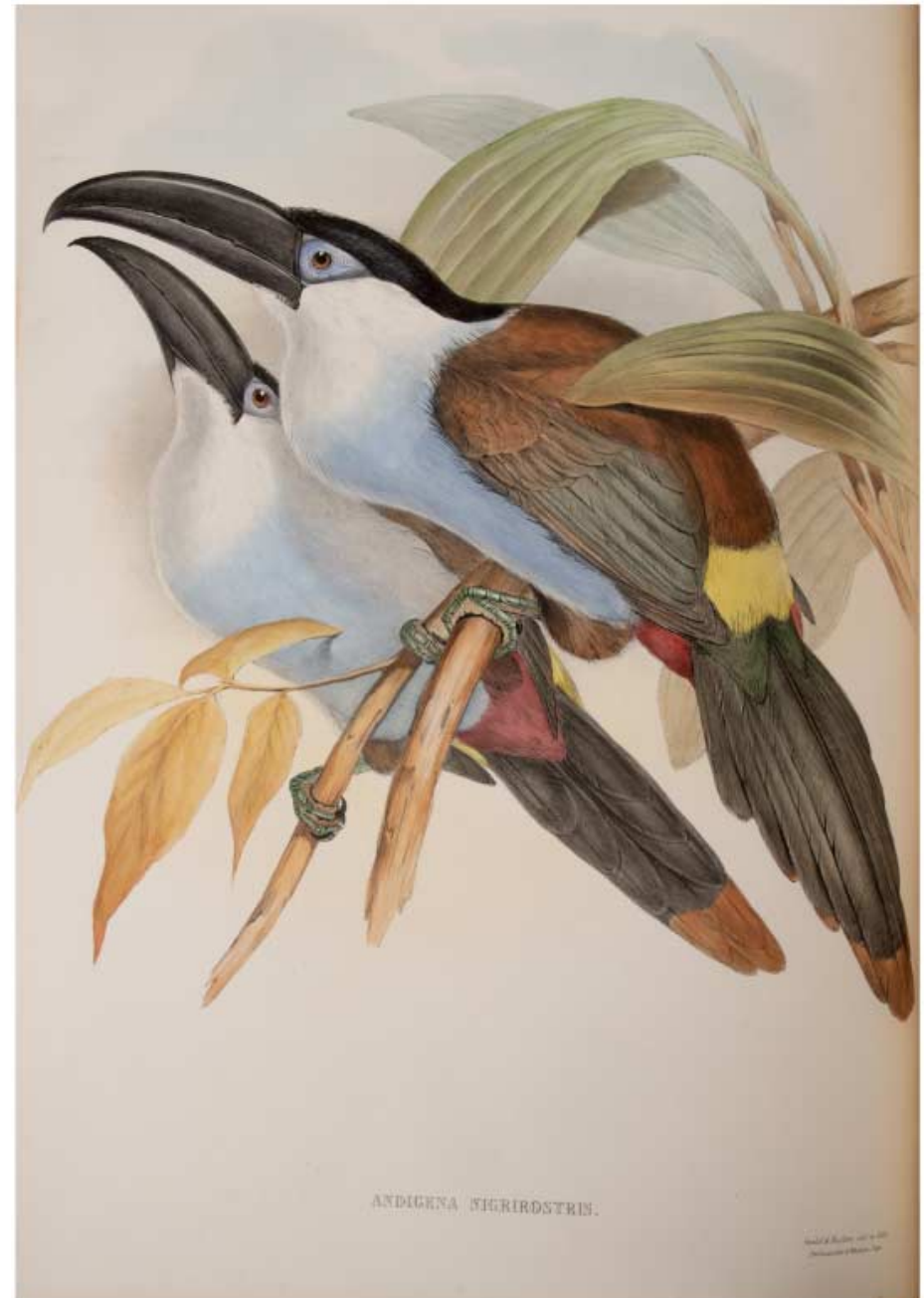
By 1852 Gould had amassed further samples and new species; he was convinced that he had enough material to produce a new edition of the whole work. All of the plates were redrawn using the skills of his latest artistic collaborator, H.C. Richter, and the text rewritten.

The first edition was Gould's earliest monograph using the lithograph process and had been a huge success. His decision to concentrate on the exotic and previously poorly understood toucan family had won him as much critical acclaim as it had commercial success. It is a testament to his commercial nous that he realised a market existed for a revised book on these birds - he had 191 subscribers for this work, and about 250 copies were produced - but it is also an indication of his scientific seriousness that he felt impelled to clarify previous errors.

The toucans had proved a particularly awkward family to study, as with the scarcity of good specimens and the rapidity with which new species were being discovered it was often difficult to establish their taxonomy. Many species in the first edition are renamed in the second: for instance, the Banded Aracari became the Yellow-Billed Aracari, while Swainson's Toucan became the Tocard Toucan and four Aracaris were reclassified as Groove Bills. In the name of clearer and more accurate identification alone, the second edition was more than justified. Moreover, Gould discovered that the specimen of one of the toucans featured in the first edition, the Lemon-rumped Toucan, was actually the head of a Sulphur-and-White-breasted Toucan grafted on to the body of a Red-billed Toucan. Unsurprisingly, this bird does not feature in the second edition.

The plates, as ever with Gould, provide drama and colour. Revisiting the work allowed Gould and Richter to recast the drawings worked up by Lear twenty years earlier in their mature style, with more attention paid to habitats, foliage and foregrounds. Nevertheless, the wild variety of the toucans themselves is given the fullest and most fantastic rein. As Sitwell writes: '... the evil, as one is taught when young, are clothed in garish colours. The toucans, with their enormous beaks, have gone in for unimaginable transformations of their basic colours; their eyes, even, vary from bright blue to red. The beaks can be black, with an upper edge of pale straw yellow, or the beak is crimson red with a black dividing line. But sometimes the bill is green, olive green; or the lower bill, a bright blue with green shadings....' (*Fine Bird Books*, pp42-3). It is no surprise that these birds remain some of the most popular in Gould's work.

*Fine Birds Books*, p. 101; Zimmer, p. 259; Nissen 378; Wood, p. 365.

























## INDIVIDUAL PLATES

The prints for Gould's 1st edition of the "Family of Toucans" were issued in three parts. The 2nd edition included an additional 18 examples of prints of Toucans. These prints represent Toucans from Mexico, Central and South America as well as some West Indian Islands.

Most of the prints in our collection have original hand colouring but we also have a few with later hand colouring which have been done by hand using watercolour.

Some of the prints in the 2nd edition were drawn by Edward Lear but he was not credited for these and instead the names Gould & Richter appear in his place.

Lear was however given recognition for 10 prints produced for the 1st edition.



RAMPHASTOS TOUCARD. 227

Painted by Edward Lear  
Engraved by J. W. B. & Co.



**2. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Langsdorff's Toucanet. [*Selenidera langsdorffi*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx. **£1,000**



**3. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Hooded Hill Toucan. [*Andigena cucullatus*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx. **£1,700**





**4. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Laminated Hill Toucan. [*Andigena laminirostris*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx.  
**£1,700**



**5. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Gould's Toucanet. [*Selenidera gouldii*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx.  
**£1,000**



**6. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Black-billed Hill Toucan. [*Andigena nigrirostris*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx.  
**£1,600**



**7. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Reinwardt's Toucanet. [*Selenidera reinwardtii*]. Original lithograph with hand-colouring, for Gould's *A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*, 2nd edition, London 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx.  
**£1,000**





**8. John and Elizabeth Gould.** Earl of Derby's Groove-bill Aracari. [*Pteroglossus Derbianus*]. An original lithograph with later hand-colour for Gould's 'A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans'. First edition, 1833-35. 470 x 315 mm approx. **£695**



**9. John and Elizabeth Gould.** Peacock Groove-bill Aracari. [*Pteroglossus pavoninus*]. An original lithograph with later hand-colour for Gould's 'A Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans'. First edition, 1833-35. 320 x 270 mm approx **£695**





**10. H.C. Richter and J. Gould.** Tocard Toucan. [Ramphastos Tocard]. An original lithograph with later hand-colour for Gould A *Monograph of the Ramphastidae, or Family of Toucans*. Second edition 1852-54. 475 x 360 mm approx. **£1,600**



