

reptiles and amphibians sent to the museum by voyagers from throughout the world. The most notable of these was the lower vertebrate section of Ramón de la Sagra's "Histoire . . . de l'Île de Cuba" (French edition, 1839-1843; Spanish 1843-1853), co-authored with his late colleague, J.-T. Cocteau; this book contains some of the most exquisite handcolored plates of reptiles ever published.

• *References*: "Allocution sur la Tome de Gabriel Bibron," by A.-M.-C. Dumeril, Rev. Mag. Zool., ser. 2, 1: 589-592, 1849; "Notice sur G. Bibron," by A.-M.-C. Duméril, 4 page notice inserted after p. vii. In A.-M.-C. Duméril, G. Bibron, and A.-H.-A. Duméril, *Erpétologie Générale*, Paris, vol. 7, 1854; "Gabriel Bibron," by Lemercier, *Nouv. Biogr. Gén.*, 5: cols. 939-940, 1866. • *Portrait*: From Duméril, 1854 (atlas). • *Signature* (1845): Rijksmuseum van Natuurlijke Historie, courtesy Marinus S. Hoogmoed.

### HOLBROOK, John Edwards (1794-1871).

Justly regarded as the Father of American Herpetology, Holbrook was born on 30 December 1794 (see *Note*) in Beaufort, South Carolina. He attended Brown University (A.B. 1815) and the University of Pennsylvania (M.D. 1818). After a short period of private practice in Boston, he received additional training at the University of Edinburgh (1819-1820) and then spent time at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris where he befriended the leading French naturalists of the day—Georges Cuvier, A.-M.-C. Duméril, Gabriel Bibron, and Achille Valenciennes—associations that were to have a lasting influence on Holbrook and his work.

Returning to the United States in 1822, Holbrook established a medical practice in Charleston, South Carolina, one of the most active cities, both scientifically and culturally, in antebellum America. Later, in 1824, he became Adjunct Professor of Anatomy at the Medical College of South Carolina, which he helped to found. During the Civil War he was Chairman of the Examining Board of Surgeons for South Carolina and, despite his age (then 70), he served as a medical officer for Confederate troops in the field. He never resumed his scientific work after the war, partly because his personal papers and collections were largely destroyed when Charleston was ransacked by Federal troops, but in 1868 he was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences in recognition of his contributions to herpetology and ichthyology. He died on 8 September 1871, in his boyhood town of North Wrentham (now Norfolk), Massachusetts.

Holbrook's scientific reputation rests on his books "North American Herpetology" (first edition in four volumes, 1836-1840; second, five volumes, 1842, the latter edition reprinted 1976), "Southern Ichthyology" (1847), and "Ichthyology of South Carolina" (first edition, 1855[1857]; second, 1860). In herpetology, he published only one other title, a three-page list of the amphibians and reptiles of Georgia (1849; reprinted 1978). Despite this small number of titles, it was the massive scope of his books that secured his reputation. In his "Herpetology," which he began in the mid-1820s, he described and illustrated every American



*J. E. Holbrook*

species which, at that time, meant primarily east of the Mississippi River. These books provided the first great synthesis of information on the topic, and Holbrook carefully researched the literature to determine the correct scientific names to be used, thus making a major contribution to stabilizing the nomenclature. In addition, he described many new taxa, 24 of which are currently recognized and include some of the commonest American species, among them *Emydoidea blandingii*, *Farancia abacura*, *Storeria dekayi*, *Bufo americanus*, *Gastrophryne carolinensis*, and *Ambystoma talpoideum*, as well as the genera *Crotaphytus*, *Pituophis*, and *Scaphiopus*.

The outstanding feature of Holbrook's books, however, are the illustrations. Indeed, one could say that he was obsessed with providing the most scientifically-accurate and life-like drawings possible. For his "Herpetology" he employed at least 17 artists, among them J. Sera and J. H. Richard who were particularly outstanding. Holbrook also went to great effort to obtain living examples of each species—no easy task at the time—collecting them himself from as far away as Maine and Georgia or obtaining them from his closest colleagues (James E. DeKay, Jacob Green, Edward Hallowell, Richard Harlan, J. P. Kirtland, and D. Humphreys Storer) and other correspondents.

It is largely because of Holbrook's high standards for the drawings, however, that the bibliographic history of his books is so complicated. In the first edition, species were arranged haphazardly, essentially in the order that specimens were obtained and illustrated, but he was dissatisfied with