

Edward Lear



A merganser on the shore

Reference: 11183

Dimensions:

Height: 17.70 cm / 7 in

Width: 23 cm / 9 in

Signed l.c.: E. Lear, pencil with watercolour, pen and black ink and touches of gold

17.7 x 23 cm.; 7 x 9 inches

These charming, quirky drawings are characteristic early works by Lear, dating from the late 1820s or early 1830s when he was establishing himself as an ornithological artist. They relate to a group of drawings which Lear gave to Mrs Godfrey Wentworth, who supported his employment by the Zoological Society in 1831, and whom he credited with launching him as an artist. They are imaginary, fanciful subjects drawn with not a little humour, resembling the stylised watercolours of birds painted on late eighteenth century porcelain. Robert McCracken Peck has made the interesting suggestion that Lear and his sister Ann may have been thinking of approaching ceramics companies with them (see Robert McCracken Peck, *The Natural History of Edward Lear*, 2016, pp. 27-9).

KAREN TAYLOR

FINE ART

Two surviving family albums from the late 1820s, containing a mixture of similar natural history subjects by Edward Lear and his sisters Ann and Sarah, are in the collection of the Houghton Library, Harvard University (MS Typ 55.4 and 55.27).

Sir Edward Strachey was a man of letters and friend of Lear's, who wrote an introduction to Nonsense Songs in 1895. He lived at Sutton Court, Chew Magna in Somerset and was a neighbour of Lear's close friend Chichester Fortescue, the Liberal politician whom Lear first met in Rome in 1845.