

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910969768703321
Autore	Burt Edward H., Jr., <1948->
Titolo	Alexander Wilson : the Scot who founded American ornithology // Edward H. Burt, Jr., William E. Davis, Jr
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Cambridge, : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2013
ISBN	9780674073777 0674073770 9780674073739 0674073738
Edizione	[1st ed.]
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (464 p.)
Altri autori (Persone)	Davis William E., Jr., <1936->
Disciplina	598.092 B
Soggetti	Ornithologists - United States Ornithology - United States - History Birds - United States
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Description based upon print version of record.
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references (p. 429-432) and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface -- Chapter One. Themes in Wilson's Life and Writings -- Chapter Two. A Varied Life -- Chapter Three. Illustrating American Ornithology -- Chapter Four. Pioneer Ornithologist -- Chapter Five. Wilson's Legacy -- Appendix A. On the Shoulders of Giants: Wilson's Predecessors -- Appendix B. Wilson's Contemporaries and Correspondents -- Notes -- Selected Bibliography -- Acknowledgments -- Index
Sommario/riassunto	Audubon was not the father of American ornithology. That honorific belongs to Alexander Wilson, whose encyclopedic American Ornithology established a distinctive approach that emphasized the observation of live birds. In the first full-length study to reproduce all of Wilson's unpublished drawings for the nine-volume Ornithology, Edward Burt and William Davis illustrate Wilson's pioneering and, today, underappreciated achievement as the first ornithologist to describe the birds of the North American wilderness. Abandoning early ambitions to become a poet in the mold of his countryman Robert Burns, Wilson emigrated from Scotland to settle near Philadelphia,

where the botanist William Bartram encouraged his proclivity for art and natural history. Wilson traveled 12,000 miles on foot, on horseback, in a rowboat, and by stage and ship, establishing a network of observers along the way. He wrote hundreds of accounts of indigenous birds, discovered many new species, and sketched the behavior and ecology of each species he encountered. Drawing on their expertise in both science and art, Burt and Davis show how Wilson defied eighteenth-century conventions of biological illustration by striving for realistic depiction of birds in their native habitats. He drew them in poses meant to facilitate identification, making his work the model for modern field guides and an inspiration for Audubon, Spencer Fullerton Baird, and other naturalists who followed. On the bicentennial of his death, this beautifully illustrated volume is a fitting tribute to Alexander Wilson and his unique contributions to ornithology, ecology, and the study of animal behavior.

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