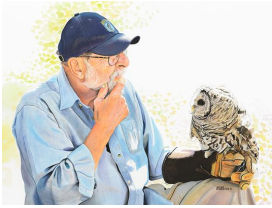


James Fiorentino's art exhibit premieres in Princeton

Staff Report, @MyCentralJersey 1:04 p.m. EDT September 21, 2016

The realistic paintings by James Fiorentino depict some of the state's most endangered and vulnerable species.



(Photo: Courtesy of the artist)

PRINCETON – D&R Greenway Land Trust is hosting the premier exhibition of Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey's "Rare Wildlife Revealed: The James Fiorentino Traveling Art Exhibition," on view now through Oct. 14.

The opening reception with the Hunterdon County-based artist will run from 5:30 to 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 30, at the DR&R Greenway Land Trust, 1 Preservation Place in Princeton.

Fiorentino will be joined by former New Jersey Governor Tom Kean, the evening's special guest, along with Conserve Wildlife Foundation field biologists who work to protect the wildlife featured in the show, and a live bird of prey.

The realistic paintings by Fiorentino depict some of the state's most endangered and vulnerable species, according to a Conserve Wildlife Foundation news release. During the premiere exhibit through October, sales of the original paintings, limited edition digital prints and an accompanying book with a forward by Kean, as well as wildlife merchandise, will benefit D&R Greenway Land Trust and Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey.

"Renowned as one of the best sports artists in the country, Jim's works hang in major museums," said Kean, who met the artist while serving as president of Drew University— Fiorentino was a student there in the 1990s, when his sports figures started receiving national attention. He was featured on ABC World News and in *The New York Times*. "In recent years he has turned to wildlife. Jim has created an amazing body of work," Kean added. "Many of the creatures he paints are endangered, and Jim celebrates their uniqueness and beauty."

READ: [James Fiorentino watercolors on display \(/story/entertainment/arts/2014/12/26/james-fiorentino-watercolors-display/20803503/\)](/story/entertainment/arts/2014/12/26/james-fiorentino-watercolors-display/20803503/)

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"Mr. Fiorentino's incredibly evocative artwork inspires viewers by putting a spotlight on these charismatic yet often overlooked wildlife species," Conserve Wildlife Foundation New Jersey Executive Director David Wheeler said. "His watercolor paintings truly bring wildlife to life. His art helps to educate and engage viewers about the precipitous declines that many of these species have suffered and helps us bring attention to the very tangible steps that people can take to save and strengthen these wildlife populations."

The exhibit is jointly organized by D&R Greenway and Conserve Wildlife Foundation New Jersey. Sales of the original paintings, limited edition digital prints and the accompanying book, as well as wildlife merchandise, will benefit D&R Greenway Land Trust and Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey. Gallery hours are Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; call ahead to confirm availability at [609-924-4646 \(tel:609-924-4646\)](tel:609-924-4646) or visit [www.drgreenway.org \(http://www.drgreenway.org/\)](http://www.drgreenway.org).

"The subject of disappearing New Jersey wildlife speaks directly to the work that we do to protect habitats," D&R Greenway President & CEO Linda Mead said. "As an admirer of James Fiorentino's artistic talent, I am thrilled that we were selected as the premiere venue for this exhibition." Conserve Wildlife Foundation New Jersey has been a long-time partner with D&R Greenway, exhibiting our *Species on the Edge* fifth-grade art and essay contest winners annually in D&R Greenway's Olivia Rainbow Gallery. This year, the fifth graders art will be exhibited simultaneously with the Fiorentino exhibit.

In 2014, Wheeler attended D&R Greenway's "Wild Creatures: Protecting Endangered Wildlife for 40 Years" exhibition and saw a bobcat and red-tailed hawk painted by Fiorentino. Wheeler invited Fiorentino to judge the Species on the Edge youth contest, and from there wheels began to spin about an exhibition.

Fiorentino, 39, started painting animals when he was 10. Kean's passion for nature inspired him to become a trustee for the Raptor Trust in Millington.

"We rehabilitate 4,000 wild birds a year and release about half that number," Fiorentino said. "These wild birds have had a tremendous influence on me. I enjoy getting close to birds of prey, and it brought me back to nature art." Before going back to his studio to paint the details, Fiorentino sketches the animals up close, sometimes holding them, taking in their details.

The Middlesex County native moved to Flemington with his wife 11 years ago. "I am awed by what we see in our own backyard: the (endangered)

Eastern box turtle, great horned owl, pileated woodpeckers, foxes, hawks and butterflies," he said. "It's an amazing backyard ecosystem." His two young sons enjoy being in nature, the oldest son joining his father to draw wildlife, especially butterflies

"Because of the 20,000 acres preserved by D&R Greenway, endangered wildlife who make their home in New Jersey will continue to have a supportive habitat," Fiorentino added.

"Rare Wildlife Revealed: The James Fiorentino Traveling Art Exhibition" is sponsored by Omni Distribution, LLC, Flying Fish Brewing Company, Merrill G. & Erita Hastings Foundation, Studio 7 Fine Art Gallery, and Somerset Patriots.

For more information on CWF, visit www.ConserveWildlifeNJ.org (<http://www.conservewildlifeni.org/>).

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