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Subject: PABIODIV: The Life, Art and Birding of David Sibley

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The Ned Smith Center of Nature and Art announce: The Life, Art and Birding of David Sibley
Exhibit on display from July 21 thru December 30, 2006

MILLERSBURG, PA - The art of David Allen Sibley, whose groundbreaking field guide changed the way people look at birds, comes to the Olewine Gallery of the Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art in Millersburg, Pa., beginning July 21 - the first retrospective of Sibley's life, and the largest exhibition of this internationally renowned artist's work ever mounted.

Sibley, 45, of Concord, Mass., is the author of several books, including the Sibley Guide to Birds, which has sold more than three-quarters of a million copies since it was published in 2000. Sibley's book has been widely hailed as the greatest advance in birding in generations.

The Life, Art and Birding of David Sibley, which runs through Dec. 30, features more than 75 of his original paintings, field sketches, ink drawings and scratchboards, few of which have ever been shown publicly. It traces Sibley's development as an artist from his childhood, banding birds with his ornithologist father in California, through the 1980s and '90s traveling from the Florida Keys to the remote Aleutian Islands, observing and sketching virtually every North American species as he developed his pioneering guide.

"This will be by far the largest and most comprehensive show of David Sibley's work ever presented," said Jerry Regan, executive director of the Ned Smith Center. "It's an extraordinary exhibit, showing not only the quality of a world-renowned artist, but the passion of one of our country's leading conservationists."

Among the exhibition's highlights, Regan said, are more than three dozen illustration plates from the famous guide. But also showcased are some of the exquisite ink drawings and scratchboards Sibley produced in the 1990s, as well as his more recent works, which include loose, impressionistic paintings in gouache, an opaque watercolor that has long been his favorite medium. Field sketches and early experiments with field guide design trace the almost 11 years Sibley spent refining his revolutionary ideas on bird identification.

"I'm very pleased to have the Ned Smith Center mounting this exhibit of my work," Sibley said. "I have always hoped that my work would help to connect people to the natural world around them, which is precisely what the Ned Smith Center does. I hope that the immediacy of seeing the original art and some of the preliminary sketches and paintings will help to give people a deeper appreciation of the birds and their world."

Sibley himself will be visiting the Ned Smith Center this fall for a special weekend of programs and events. Sibley will be the guest at a gala dinner Friday, Nov. 3, and the following day, Nov. 4, will be conducting a gallery talk about his work, teaching an art class and doing a book-signing.

The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art, located on 530 wooded acres two miles east of Millersburg, seeks to bridge the worlds of creativity and natural science through its programs, exhibitions and activities. For more information about the Center, including directions and hours, visit www.nedsmithcenter.org, or call (717) 692-3699.

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Editors: Digital photographs of Sibley in the field, and examples of his art, are available from the center. Call (717) 692-3699 or email Angie Zimmerman at angelat@epix.net.

FACTS ABOUT DAVID SIBLEY

--Born October 1961 in New York. Grew up helping his father, noted ornithologist Fred Sibley, band birds in California, where as a boy he first got the idea to create a new kind of field guide.

--Started to follow his father's career in ornithology, but dropped out of college after one year, becoming a "bird bum" of sorts - working as a hawk-counter in Cape May, N.J., a bander in Massachusetts, and leading birding tours all across the country - the perfect education for a birding whiz.

--After more than a decade of field work, Sibley spent six years refining the design and layout of his new field guide, then another five years meticulously painting more than 6,600 illustrations showing all 800 species of North American birds, at rest and in flight, and in every possible plumage.

--The Sibley Guide to Birds, published in 2000, was immediately hailed as a ground-breaking advance in bird identification. The New York Times wrote of it, "Once in a great while, a natural history book changes the way people look at the world." Plenty of people apparently agree - more than three-quarters of a million copies have been sold. Sibley has also published two regional field guides, a book on the basics of birding, a guide to bird behavior, and has illustrated many other books, including The Wind Masters and Hawks in Flight. (Art from all these books are included in the exhibition.)

--Sibley, 45, is married to biologist Joan Walsh; they live in Concord, Mass. with their two sons.

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