



### ***Pheucticus ludovicianus* - Rose-breasted Grosbeak**

I first became familiar with the Rose-breasted Grosbeak in my childhood home in Minnesota, in the far North of the United States. After a long, cold winter it was always a beautiful sight to see the first Grosbeaks to return in the early spring, when the days were warming up and the plants and trees were putting out their first green leaves. The males would sing beautifully all day long, eager to attract a mate and start the nesting cycle. Years later, when I lived in Panama and Colombia, I saw Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on their wintering grounds. But all the exotic, tropical birds got my attention there, and the grosbeaks, now silent, no longer seemed so exciting to me. This painting was made for a book on the common birds of the American Midwest.

I was born in St. Croix Falls, Wisconsin, and raised in Lanesboro, a small rural community located in the wooded river valleys of south-eastern Minnesota. My family includes many artists, and I developed an avid interest in nature, especially birds, in early childhood. This led to a pursuit of natural history illustration, which still continues. I graduated from the University of Minnesota and served in the military in the former Panama Canal Zone, where I was first introduced to tropical birds. After leaving Panama, I worked as a biological illustrator at the Universidad del Valle in Cali, Colombia. After Colombia, I continued free-lance illustration work in Costa Rica. I worked with Alexander Skutch, whom I had met in Panama, illustrating his books and the Guide to Birds of Costa Rica. In 1978 I moved to Los Angeles and worked for several years with the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology, and continued with various projects in Central America and Southeast Asia. During this period I illustrated field guides to Singapore, Wallacea (central Indonesia), and guides to Belize and Peru. My close association with Alexander Skutch since 1974 has led to my illustrating 18 of his books on ornithology and natural history.

**Dana Gardner**

<http://www.gardnerbirds.com>