Knowledge is Power!!!
Black History Month Environmentalists

John James Audubon, famed wildlife artist and the inspiration behind the National Audubon Society, was born in 1785 in Haiti was the illustrator for “Birds of America”, an iconic anthology of more than 435 species of birds.

Lisa Perez Jackson was the first African American and fourth woman to hold the position of Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

Buffalo Soldiers in the U.S. Army were some of the first defenders of our national parks, serving as rangers in Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon. One of the most notable was Buffalo Soldier Capt. Charles Young, the third African American to graduate from West Point and the first African-American Superintendent of a national park.

Booker T. Washington led the Tuskegee Institute, which was an early site of innovation in agriculture and sustainability. This can especially be seen in the work of George Washington Carver, who taught methods of crop rotation to improve soil that had been depleted by cotton by rotating with crops like the peanut. The goal was to teach self-sufficiency to students across the region.

Dr. Robert Bullard is known as the father of the environmental justice movement, which is based on the belief that all people deserve equal environmental protection. His efforts began with Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management Inc., a case in which an African American community in Houston rallied against the establishment of a landfill in their neighborhood. He found that toxic waste sites were often placed within black communities in Houston.

Marvin Gaye’s song Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology) was a song of sorrow about the environment.

Dr. John Francis known as “Plantwalker” was an African American Environmentalist who boycotted motorized vehicles for 22 years, opting to walk everywhere instead.

Harriet Tubman in addition to leading hundreds of slaves to freedom on the Underground Railroad, she was also a nurse who looked to nature to find cures for major illnesses.

George Washington Carver the farmer, chemist inventor and humanitarian was a fan of composting, he advised students and farmers about composting, crop rotation and nutrition. He had a passion for sustainability.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. strove to raise awareness about urban environmental issues that impacted African American communities. At the time of his death, he was supporting a sanitation workers strike for environmental and economic justice.