



A wildlife artist has turned nature detective for one of her latest assignments, as Sue Bradley discovers.

WOODS, sea shores and fields are wildlife artist Jackie Garner's usual haunts, but for her latest assignment she has travelled back in time to explore dusty tombs and unlock some of the secrets of her ancient Egyptian counterparts.

The last resting places of pharaohs and other important people who lived thousands of years ago are adorned with carvings and paintings, many of which depict birds and animals.

Now Jackie is working with ornithologist John Wyatt to study the art of the ancient Egyptians and together they are writing a book showing paintings or carvings of wildlife found inside tombs along with true-to-life representations of the species that inspired them.

"Egyptian art has some of the most beautifully restrained, and some of the most outrageously flamboyant, images known to man," explains Jackie, who lives in Randwick.

"Their hieroglyphics were full of wildlife and animals and birds were the subjects of many carvings and paintings.

"Some of the tombs, such as at Beni Hasan, were covered with art – I'd still be there now if I was drawing everything I saw.

"The Egyptians deified a lot of birds and animals; in fact they deified anything they didn't understand or were afraid of, such as hippos or crocodiles, as in the crocodile god Sobek. They

even deified a centipede.

"Some of the art we saw in Egypt showed species we hadn't seen in ancient Egyptian art before – prior to that we only knew they had existed in ancient Egypt from bone or mummy records."

Studying Egyptian art in close detail has left Jackie with nothing but admiration for the people who devoted much of their lives to adorning ancient tombs.

"I had never thought of being inspired by other people's art before. It was entirely different and exciting," said Jackie.

"I love the way the Egyptians stylised things and often simplified them, reducing fussy details to just a few lines.

"They created these wonderful works of art using things like reed pens and brushes made from reeds and sticks.

"One of the things that surprised me is how the art styles changed over time."

The job of matching ancient Egyptian artwork to birds and animals found in the north of Africa today is no easy task, however.

The ancient Egyptian love of stylised images, along with restrictions in the range of colours available to them, has meant that Jackie and John have had to pool their combined knowledge to come up with the species they represent.

"Sometimes it was quite obvious but sometimes it was hard to tell what

Jackie will be taking part in the following events this autumn:

Sept 17 and 18 – Exhibiting at Midland Game Fair at Weston Park, Shropshire

Sept 27 - Oct 2 – Artist in Residence, Nature in Art, Twigworth

Oct 10-22 – Gloucestershire Society of Artists exhibition, Northgate St, Gloucester

Sept 10 – Drawing workshop at Cotswold Art Club

Oct 12 – Talk to Gloucestershire Society of Artists

Nov 12 and 13 – Drawing workshop at Nature in Art

something might be, especially if there was a lot of wear and tear.

"John and I might agree on a bird or animal's family but not its species; sometimes images had a number of attributes from different species.

"We also had to consider things like climate change, which pharaoh they were under at the time and the type of art associated with him as well as the pigments available to them at that time; the ancient Egyptians were the first people to manufacture paint – their blues and greens were artificial rather than being natural."

Jackie, who grew up in Rodborough, worked as an education officer at Nature in Art at Twigworth for 16 years. In 2005 she spent a month working on the Falkland Islands, where she was pecked by penguins and accosted by albatross, and it was a talk on her experiences to the Oxford RSPB that put her in contact with John, whose research had come to a halt because he was not able to get photographic references of everything he needed.

Jackie, who gives illustrated talks on her experiences, says life as an artist is never boring.

"This latest work is almost like being an art detective and that is really what I am loving about it."