

THE SOCIETY FOR THE
HISTORY OF
NATURAL
HISTORY

History & Mystery



Notes and queries from newsletters
of The Society for the History of Natural History

**HISTORY
&
MYSTERY**

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from the newsletters of
The Society for the History of Natural History

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Cover images

Front: greater bird of paradise (*Paradisaea apoda*) (watercolour of a specimen in the Natural History Museum, Tring), and a head ornament collected in New Guinea during the voyage of HMS *Rattlesnake* in 1849 (watercolour of artefact in the British Museum); both painted 2004 © Rebecca Jewell.

Back: two of Charles Cowan's favourite Malayan butterflies, *Arhopala horsfieldii basiviridis* (left) and *Arhopala trogon* (right): original photograph © Simon Hok Kim Loong.

Mermaid from L. Renard, *Poissons, écrevisses et crabes ...* by courtesy of Professor T.W. Pietch.

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The first, includes the words “*and conchology*” in the title, while the second does not, and the Editor’s preface is different in the two versions. But the reason for the change must lie in the incomplete and inaccurate list of illustrations in the first state, where, for example, “*Ammonites varians*” is given as “*Ammonites, various*”, and “*Lepidodendron Sternbergii*” as “*Lepidodendron Stempligii*”. These are all corrected, and additions, made in the second state. The “*Analytical Summary*”, pages xiii–xvii, has likewise been corrected, as all the page references for chapters xvii–xx are wrong in the first state. The main text and illustrations are identical, but there are more differences in the index. Here we have “*Lepidodendron Steinbergii*” among many other misprints.

A clue to the dating of these two states comes from the printed advertisements. My copy of state one lists the scientific library as far as no. 8, this being no. 9. Both copies of the second state list the scientific library up to no. 19. As additional evidence, one is dated “*May 1853*” in a manuscript inscription.

J. C. Thackray

Graves’s *British ornithology* {series 2, 27 (*Archives of natural history* 13 (1): 98). 1986} I have in my possession a copy of the second edition of this book. The third and final volume, which is dated 1821 and is common to both the first and second editions, contains one additional leaf of text (without a plate) describing “*Falco Cyaneus (Foemina), Female Hen-Harrier or Ringtail*”. This particular copy was described in a leading London bookseller’s catalogue a few years ago as containing an additional leaf of text which was not present in other copies of the work known to them. Of five copies which I have recently examined, none had this additional text leaf.

Of interest and relevance is the preceding text and plate which relate to “*The Hen Harrier, Falco Cyaneus*”. The engraving, dated December 1815, is coloured to depict the male hen harrier in all other copies of this work, despite a text which reads “*The female or ringtail is the subject of the accompanying plate.*”

Is it possible that George Graves wished to correct this error by issuing an additional plate of the female hen harrier with the appropriate text?

Tom Nightingale

Encyclopaedia Londinensis {series 2, 33: 6–7. 1988}

In 1867 John Cassin drew attention to this English encyclopaedia, because it was shown to contain a large number of new scientific names of birds (*Proceedings of the Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia* 19: 212–221). During my present research relating to the birds described by François Levaillant at the beginning of the nineteenth century, I had reason to study this issue again. No progress had been made since Cassin. The work in 24 volumes (1795–1829) was entitled: *Encyclopaedia Londinensis; or, universal dictionary of arts, sciences, and literature ...* It was “*compiled, digested and arranged, by John Wilkes, of Milland House in the county of Sussex, Esq.*” Very little appears to be known about this John Wilkes, except that he lived in Milland and that he died in 1811. He was credited with the new scientific names, because it is not known who contributed to the various subject areas. *The Catalogue of the British Library* and the *National Union catalogue* both say the volumes 1–22 were edited by J. Jones and volumes 23 and 24 by G. Jones. My questions are as follows:

1. Who was John Wilkes of Milland House?
2. Who contributed the articles on ornithology, especially in the earlier volumes?

Kees Rookmaaker

DATES OF PUBLICATION

Dates of Buffon's *Histoire naturelle* {series 2, 2: 7–8. 1979}

The many editions of Buffon and Daubenton's *Histoire naturelle, générale et particulière* are an inexhaustible source of enjoyment for those who delight in bibliographic complexity. It is usually impossible to find a reference to some article in it without difficulty. The first complete edition appeared in Paris, volumes **I–XV**, between 1749 and 1767 and the supplements **I–VII** from 1774 to 1789 (Nissen no. 672). In the copies I have seen, volume **XI** is dated 1754 (MDCCLIV) on the title-page. This date seems incorrect in the first place because it means that volume **XI** was published out of order after volume **IV** (1753). An "Avant-propos" in volume **VI** (1756) discusses the dates of appearance of the first five parts but does not mention volume **XI**. Another reason for supposing the date 1754 to be wrong, I have implied in my paper in *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History* **9** (1): 35, note 3. I would be tempted to change the date of volume **XI** into 1764, but does anyone know where I could find proof for this conjecture?

Another aberrantly dated volume is supplement **V** of the "Nouvelle édition" published by J. H. Schneider in Amsterdam (Nissen no. 678). It is dated on the title-page 1785. This supplement includes for the first time a number of additions by the Leiden professor J. N. S. Allamand. Many (but not all) of these were copied in the Paris edition (just mentioned) in its supplement **VI** (1782). Buffon, in the accompanying remarks, writes three times about the date of the Amsterdam supplement **V**: "publiées à Amsterdam au commencement de cette année 1781" (p. 68); "publiées cette année 1781, dans un supplément à l'édition de Hollande de mes ouvrages" (p. 116) and "imprimée à Amsterdam cette année 1781" (p. 135). The date 1785 therefore seems inexplicable and the suggestion that it must have been published in instalments is unsubstantiated. Any comments on this would be welcome.

Kees Rookmaaker

The earlier history of Shaw & Sowerby's *Zoology of New Holland*, 1793–4 {series 2, 13: 13. 1982}

The bibliographical history of this scarce item of early Australiana has been sketched out by K. A. Hindwood (1968 Three early natural history books. *Australian zoologist* **14**: 251–256). He provides illustrations of the title-page and part issue labels. "The figures by James Sowerby F.L.S." and "Published by J. Sowerby, ..." were simply stated and accepted without any question. However, a hint of an earlier plan has come to light. Hindwood carefully transcribed the dates on the copyright line at the foot of each plate and for two, *Psittacus eximius* and *Merops phrygius*, states "n. d. (erased)". A glance at our copy shows the same erasure and as we have an imperfect second copy I looked there and found that the *Merops* plate was also scarred. But why? What was there to hide? Whilst cataloguing some loose prints I came across copies of both these plates (and only these plates) and found that they were unscathed. Their copyright line reads "London Published June 1st 1793, by F.P. Nodder & Co. No. 15 Brewer Street". Thus, two months before the earliest date recorded by Hindwood from copies he had seen we find that a different publisher was involved, and I have little doubt that he also drew and engraved the plates. Nodder had engraved the same species of *Psittacus* for Shaw's *Naturalist's miscellany*, volume **3**, plate 93, but in a different posture. Nodder did all the plates for that work over a number of years commencing in 1789. It appears that Shaw commissioned Nodder to do the *Zoology of New Holland* but there was a change in plan. Does anyone else have a copy of the unerased prints in their library? Perhaps bibliographers would care to note that Sowerby should not claim all the figures as his own!

Gavin Bridson