

ancestors or sister taxa?

A. BENOCCI & G. MANGANELLI: Early research on anatomy and mating of land slugs and snails: Francesco Redi's (1684) *Osservazioni*.

J. M. CAMARASA & N. IBÁÑEZ: Joan Salvador and James Petiver: the last years (1715-1718) of their scientific correspondence.

M. DeARCE: *The natural history review* (1854-1865).

H. FUNK: Towards bibliographical accuracy: a clarification of some obscure references in Linnaeus's *Musa cliffortiana* (1736).

N. P. HELLSTRÖM: Darwin and the Tree of Life: the roots of the evolutionary tree.

A. R. KABAT: Richard Frederick Deckert (1878-1971), Florida naturalist and natural history artist.

P. G. MOORE: The supply of marine biological specimens (principally animals) for teaching and research in Great Britain from the nineteenth century until today.

A. PÉQUIGNOT: The rhinoceros of King Louis XV (1770-1793) and its horns.

C. D. PRESTON & P. H. OSWALD: A copy of John Ray's Cambridge catalogue (1660) presented by the author to Peter Courthope.

R. B. WILLIAMS: The editions, issues, states and dates of William Henry Harvey's *A manual of the British algae*.

E. Charles Nelson
Honorary Editor

7. Special Publications

The following SHNH special publications are now available online at EUP at <http://www.eupublishing.com/loi/anh>
History in the service of systematics (1981)
Contributions to the history of North American natural history (1983)
From Linnaeus to Darwin: commentaries on the history of biology and geology (1985).

Society Events News

8. SHNH in the media

SHNH members have been featuring in the media in recent months. Here are some of the highlights.

8.1 The mail route of Wallace's Ternate Essay

Wyhe, J. Van, Rookmaaker, L.C., 2012. A new theory to explain the receipt of Wallace's Ternate Essay by Darwin in 1858. *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* **105** (1): 249-252.

In early 1858 Alfred Russel Wallace drafted an essay to explain evolution by natural selection in the Moluccas and mailed it to Charles Darwin. For many years it was believed that the Ternate essay left the island in March on the monthly mail steamer and arrived at Down House on 18 June 1858. Darwin immediately wrote to Charles Lyell, as requested by Wallace, forwarding the essay.

This sequence was cast in doubt after the discovery of a letter written by Wallace to Frederick Bates which left on the March mail steamer with postmarks showing its arrival in Leicester on 3 June 1858. Darwin has been accused of keeping the essay secret for a fortnight enabling him to revise elements of his theory of evolution. This paper reveals for the first time that Wallace in fact must have sent the Ternate essay on the mail steamer of April 1858. At that time, the Moluccas were served by a monthly mail (and limited passenger) service by steamers operated by the company of Cores de Vries, which followed an anti-clockwise route from Surabaya to Makassar, Timor, Banda, Ambon, Ternate, Manado, Makassar and back to Surabaya. There it connected to services to Batavia and for mail destined to Europe, on to Singapore.

We have traced the route of the mail from Ternate and the United Kingdom and ascertained dates of all the intermediate stops and transfers: Surabaya, Batavia, Singapore, Port de Galle, Suez, Alexandria, Southampton and London. There is an uninterrupted series of connections which shows that the letter should have been delivered at Down House on 18 June – just as Darwin claimed. Darwin is thus vindicated from accusations of deceit. Wallace's Ternate essay and extracts from Darwin's manuscripts were read at a meeting of the Linnean Society of London on 1 July 1858, now appreciated as a milestone in the history of science.

John van Wyhe
Kees Rookmaaker

The paper can be downloaded free at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1095-8312.2011.01808.x/pdf>

8.2 Plankton story goes wild

P. G. Moore, 2011. The background to the proposition that plankton be used as food in the United Kingdom during the Second World War. *Archives of natural history* 38 (2): 287–299). In last October's *Archives of natural history* I wrote-up an account of the story behind Professor Alister Hardy's wartime trials concerning the possibility of exploiting marine zooplankton for human food production in the west of Scotland during the Second World War.

That story was picked-up by *Scotland on Sunday* (and, I think also, by the *Scottish Daily Mail*) in December 2011, if somewhat inappropriately illustrated in the case of the former with a picture of phytoplankton. More recently, I was contacted by a news agency in Bournemouth, apparently one that had been approached by a war magazine for

details of my article (which magazine, I know not).

That seemed to spark a feeding frenzy among journalists and on 23 February 2012, articles on the subject suddenly appeared in *The Times*, *The Telegraph*, *The Sun*, *The Mirror* and the *Daily Mail* as well as featuring in online media news feeds. Apparently, although I never heard it myself, mention was also made of this research on the early-morning BBC Radio 4 Today programme that day. Somewhat bemused by this sudden interest in my work (never before have I had journalists breathing down my neck wanting details of my researches!), it caused me to wonder what it was that the world outside academia deemed as newsworthy. I suspect that 'quirky' has a lot to do with it.

It is exciting to witness such wide attention being paid to what we, in SHNH, have published. Can I encourage members, therefore, to come-up with other contributions that the outside world might consider interesting: to raise our profile and, hopefully, to enhance recruitment of new members? I did make sure that the Society for the History of Natural History got consistently 'plugged' whenever I could.

Geoff Moore

8.3 Bird Sense: What it's like to be a bird

Tim Birkhead, *Bird Sense: What it's like to be a bird* (2012) Bloomsbury. After decades of watching and studying birds, Tim Birkhead began to realise that there was much more going on in a bird's brain than they are given credit for. His aim in writing *Bird Sense* is to rectify our understanding of birds and to change the way we think about them. Published in February 2012, it has received rave reviews including



Newsletter

Diary

The natural history of the
Terra Nova expedition
SHNH Spring Meeting
and AGM

Scott Polar Research
Institute, Cambridge
Saturday 19 May 2012
See Item 9

The remarkable nature
of Edward Lear
Linnean Society, London
Thursday 27 September
See Item 10

Mark Catesby's third
centennial in
America-celebrating his
impact on our world
USA

4-9 November 2012
See Item 11

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