

*Making the Pages Come Alive:
Four Centuries of Natural History in
Print*



Introduction



The field of natural history, the observation-based study of plants and animals in their environment, has its origins in the ancient Greco-Roman world, most notably in the pages of Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* completed between AD 77 and 79. However, humans have been recording their observations of nature in multiple ways since the first cave paintings portrayed animals and plants. During the middle ages artistic interpretations of the natural world could be found in sculpture, paintings, and folk crafts, while early scientific findings were recorded in the pages of illuminated manuscripts called herbals and bestiaries. As with all scholarly information of the period, the advent of print in the 15th

century provided natural history scholars, and their talented illustrators, a wider audience for their work and more accuracy in the dissemination of their findings.

The books showcased in this exhibit demonstrate the various ways that natural history subjects have been depicted in print from the 16th through the 19th centuries. The oldest book in the exhibit is a 1534 edition of Pliny's foundational work, while the most recent publication is Sherman Foote Denton's *Moths and Butterflies of the United States*, published in 1900, which is noted for the author's innovative method of illustration.

Whether it's an early woodcut engraving of an exotic animal, a famous bird illustration by John James Audubon, or the colorful flowers of *The Botanical Magazine*, the illustrations on these pages truly make nature come alive.

In addition to titles related to the pedagogy of natural history and to the connection between travel and the pursuit of natural history, this colorful exhibit features illustrations of a variety of species of the animal and plant kingdoms, including quadrupeds, insects, shells, birds, flowers, trees, and fungi. Since the beautiful books on display

can only be opened to one page at a time, we have included in our exhibit room a digital slideshow of additional images from these titles. This exhibit also provides the Miami University Libraries an opportunity to highlight a recent acquisition for the Walter Havighurst Special Collections, John Gould's *A Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains*. This elaborately illustrated folio volume was completed between 1830 and 1832 by John Gould (1804-1881), an English ornithologist and bird artist. Gould, originally a taxidermist, was appointed the first curator at the museum of the Zoological Society of London in 1827. In 1830, a collection of bird specimens from the Himalaya region, some previously unknown, were acquired for the Society and he began the task of describing them. Along with Nicholas



Aylward Vigors, who was responsible for the descriptive letterpress text, he compiled this impressive volume, the first of several similar works on birds from around the world. Though Gould produced the initial rough sketches for the work, his wife Elizabeth Gould (1804-1841) executed the final drawings and lithography for the illustrations. The lithographed plates were then hand-colored by Elizabeth Gould and others. The library's copy is a first edition, first issue, with the backgrounds of the plates uncolored.



Exhibited Works

Acheta Domestica (Miss L. M. Budgen). *Episodes of Insect Life*. London: Reeve, Benham, and Reeve, 1849-1851.

Aldrovandi, Ulisse and Bartolommeo Ambrosini. *Vlyssis Aldrouandi patricii Bononiensis De quadrupedib[us] digitatis viuiparis libri tres: et De quadrupedib[us] digitatis ouiparis libri duo*. Bonon. [i.e. Bologna]: Apud Nicolaum Tebaldinum, sumptibus M. Antonij Berniæ, 1645.

Acharius, Erik. *Lichenographiae svecicae prodromus*. Lincopiae: D.G. Björn, 1798.

Audubon, John James, John Woodhouse Audubon, and John T. Bowen. *The Birds of America: From Drawings Made in the United States and Their Territories*. New York: J.J. Audubon, 1840.

Audubon, John James, John Bachman, and John Woodhouse Audubon. *The Quadrupeds of North America*. New York: George R. Lockwood, 1849.

Bewick, Thomas. *History of British Birds*. Newcastle: Printed by Sol. Hodgson, for Beilby & Bewick; sold by them, and G.G. and J. Robinson, London, 1798.

Bulliard, Pierre. *Histoire des plantes vénéneuses et suspectes de la France*. Paris: De l'Imprimerie de Monsieur. Chez l'auteur ... Didot le jeune ... Barrois le jeune ... Belin, 1784.

Curtis, John. *British Entomology; Being Illustrations and Descriptions of the Genera of Insects Found in Great Britain and Ireland: Containing Coloured Figures from Nature of the Most Rare and Beautiful Species, and in Many Instances of the Plants Upon Which They Are Found*. London: Printed for the author, 1824-1839.

Curtis, William. *The Botanical Magazine, or, Flower-Garden Displayed: In Which the Most Ornamental Foreign Plants, Cultivated in the Open Ground, the Green-House, and the Stove, Are Accurately Represented in Their Natural Colours*. [London: Printed for W. Curtis by S. Couchman.], 1787-1800.



Denton, Sherman Foote. *As Nature Shows Them: Moths and Butterflies of the United States, East of the Rocky Mountains; with Over 400 Photographic Illustrations in the Text and Many Transfers of Species from Life*. Boston: B. Whidden, 1897-1900.

Gerard, John and Thomas Johnson. *The Herball, or, General Historie of Plantes*. London: Printed by Adam Islip, Joice Norton and Richard Whitakers, 1636. Revised 2nd edition.

Gosse, Philip Henry. *A History of the British Sea-Anemones and Corals*. London: Van Voorst, 1860.

Gould, John and N. A. Vigors. *A Century of Birds from the Himalaya Mountains*. London: [Published by the author], 1832.

Grew, Nehemiah and Louis Le Vasseur. *Anatomie des plantes qui contient une description exacte de leurs parties & de leurs usages, & qui fait voir comment elles se forment, & comment elles croissent*. Paris: Lambert Roulland, 1675.

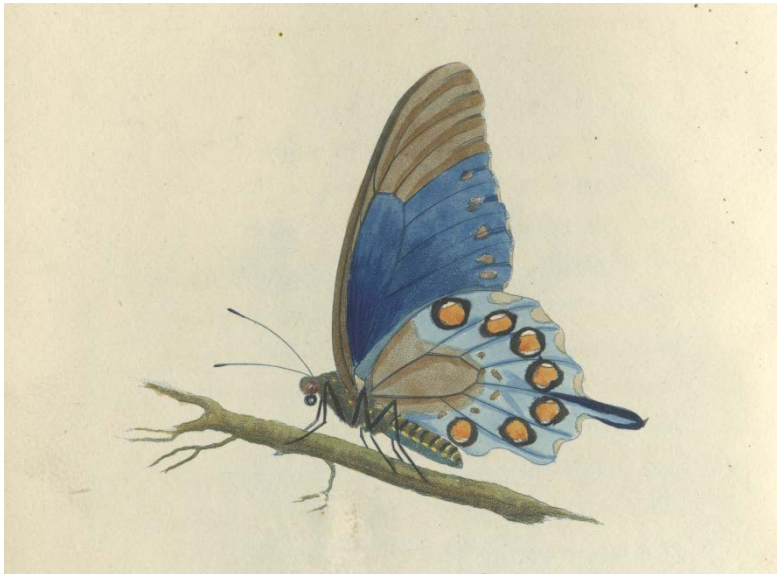
Hughes, Griffith. *The Natural History of Barbados. In Ten Books*. London: Printed for the author; and sold by most booksellers in Great Britain and Ireland, 1750.

Humphreys, Henry Noel. *The Butterfly Vivarium; Or, Insect Home: Being an Account of a New Method of Observing the Curious Metamorphoses of Some of the Most Beautiful of Our Native Insects. Comprising Also a Popular Description of the Habits and Instincts of Many of the Insects of the Various Classes Referred to; with Suggestions for the Successful Study of Entomology by Means of an Insect Vivarium*. London: W. Lay, 1858.

Jonstonus, Joannes. *De avibus, tabulis duabus et sexaginta ab ... Mathia Meriano aeri incisus ornatum ex scriptoribus tam antiquis, quam recentioribus ... conlectum et ob raritatem denuo imprimendum suscepit Franciscus Iosephus Ekebrecht bibliopola Heilbrunnensis*. [Heilbrunnae]: Typis Christiani de Lannoy, 1756.

Linné, Carl von. *Flora lapponica*. Amstelaedami [Amsterdam]: S. Schouten, 1737.

Macloc, J. *New, Complete, and Universal Natural History of Upwards of Four Hundred Animals, Including All the Most Remarkable Quadrupeds, Birds, Fishes, Reptiles, and Insects, in the Known World: Illustrative of Their Natures, Dispositions, Manners, Habits, &c.* London: Printed and sold by Dean and Munday, 1815.



Malpighi, Marcello. *Opera omnia: seu, Thesaurus locupletissimus botanico-medico-anatomicus, viginti quator tractatus complectens et in duos tomos distributus*. Lugduni Batavorum: Apud Petrum vander Aa, 1687. Editio novissima.

Mawe, John. *The Linnæan System of Conchology: Describing the Orders, Genera, and Species of Shells Arranged into Divisions and Families : with a View to Facilitate the Student's Attainment of the Science*. London: Printed for and sold by the author, and Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1823.



Mendes de Costa, Emanuel and Benjamin White. *Elements of Conchology, or, An Introduction to the Knowledge of Shells*. London: printed for B. White, 1776.

Michaux, François André, Thomas Nuttall, and J. Jay Smith. *The North American Sylva: Or, A Description of the Forest Trees of the United States, Canada and Nova Scotia. Considered Particularly with Respect to Their Use in the Arts and Their Introduction into Commerce. To Which Is Added a Description of the Most Useful of the European Forest Trees*. Philadelphia: Rice, Rutter, 1871.

Micheli, Pier Antonio. *Nova plantarum genera juxta Tournefortii methodum disposita: quibus plantæ MDCCC recensentur, scilicet fere MCCC nondum observatæ, reliquæ suis sedibus restitutæ, quarum vero figuram exhibere visum fuit, eæ ad DL æneis tabulis CVIII. graphice expressæ sunt, adnotationibus, atque observationibus, præcipue fungorum, mucorum, affiniumque plantarum stionem, ortum, & incrementum spectantibus, interdum adjunctis*. Florentiæ: Typis B. Paperinii, 1729.

The Natural History of Birds: From the Works of the Best Authors, Antient & Modern, Embellished with Numerous Plates Accurately Coloured from Nature. Bungay: Brightly & Childs, 1815.

Pennant, Thomas. *Arctic Zoology*. London: Printed by H. Hughs, 1784.

Pliny. *Historia natvræ di C. Plinio Secondo*. In Vineggia [Venice]: per Thomaso de Ternengo ditto Balarino, 1534.

Say, Thomas. *American Entomology, or Descriptions of the Insects of North America: Illustrated by Coloured Figures from Original Drawings Executed from Nature*. [Philadelphia]: S.A. Mitchell, for sale by A. Finley, 1824-1828.

Sowerby, James and James Edward Smith. *English Botany, or, Coloured Figures of British Plants, with Their Essential Characters, Synonyms, and Places of Growth: To Which Will Be Added, Occasional Remarks*. London: Printed for the author, by J. Davis, 1790-1813.

Venning, Mary Anne. *Rudiments of Conchology: Designed As a Familiar Introduction to the Science, for the Use of Young Persons, with Explanatory Plates, and References to the Collection of Shells in the British Museum*. London: Printed for Harvey and Darton, 1826.

Wakefield, Priscilla. *An Introduction to Botany in a Series of Familiar Letters, with Illustrative Engravings*. London: Printed for E. Newbery, ... Darton and Harvey, ... and Vernor and Hood, 1798. Second edition.



Exhibit curated by
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