

A birdsong from 1623

By Johan Stiernhök

This edition of a birdsong, originally published in Danish in 1617 (now lost) and translated into Swedish 1623, was written by the Danish vicar Hieronymus Rasch and put into Swedish, probably by Johan Stiernhök, later to become a famous law historian. It is the first separate Swedish print on ornithology, albeit in a non-zoological and rather moralistic way. All in all, c. 60 birds are given brief characteristics mainly connected with classical virtues and vices. The social background, i.e. patron-client connections, publishing conditions, etc. are discussed in order to understand this rare print, of which only two existing copies are known.

Linnaeus and the Swedish plant names

By Mats Rydén

Carl Linnæus was not only a pioneer in the scientific naming of plants. He was also a dedicated recorder of Swedish plant names. In his *Flora Svecica* of 1755 there are some 900 provincial Swedish plant names, regional or local, for about half of the some 1,300 species of vascular and non-vascular plants as listed in the book. The lists given do not constitute a wholesale inventory. Many common or well-known plants are not provided with a provincial name. Only for eight of the 29 Swedish species of orchids known to Linnæus does he supply provincial names.

A precursor of Linnæus as a publisher of Swedish plant names (literary and popular) in his *Speculum botanicum* of 1638 and 1659, was Johannes Franckenius, Uppsala's and Sweden's first professor of botany. True to his systematic genius and search for order Linnæus also wanted to regularize the official Swedish plant nomenclature. To that end he suggests in his *Flora* more than 400 names as "Suecis"-names, i.e. names for Swedes, which he considered suitable for use in Floras and similar literature. Many of his suggestions, of which not a few were his own inventions, have lived on into present-day Floras. As a collector, regularizer and inventor of Swedish plant names Linnæus was followed by the great nineteenth-century botanist Elias Fries (1794–1878), who, unlike Linnæus, was also an etymologist, albeit a self-made one. He was fascinated by the historical and comparative study of language flourishing in his day. Fries' attitudes to plant names and plant name research are demonstrated in his *Botaniska utflygter* (1843–1864) and in his *Kritisk ordbok öfver svenska växtnamnen*, published after Fries' death by the Swedish Academy, of which Fries had been a member since 1847.

In the study of Swedish plant names there are, with tentative efforts in the seventeenth century, lines of continuity from Linnæus via Elias Fries to professional plant-name scholarship as initiated in the early twentieth century by primarily Bengt Hesselman, professor of Scandinavian Languages at Uppsala University between 1919 and 1940.

Bishop Gunnerus and Archiater Linnaeus—two twin-souls

By Per M. Jørgensen

In May 1761 Linnaeus got a long letter from the bishop of Nidaros (Trondheim) in Norway, Johan Ernst Gunnerus, who asked for assistance in the study of natural history in his diocese. Linnaeus, obviously impressed, replied only the following year, by inviting Gunnerus to cooperate and insuring him that it had been God's will right from the creation to save the study of natural history in these northern regions to Gunnerus. He further encouraged him to use his clergy in the work. This, actually, was Gunnerus's plan already as he in a pastoral letter of 1758/1759 (when he was made bishop there against his will) had imposed on the clergy that

natural studies of their parishes were part of their religious duties, and that he wanted specimens as documentation. It is quite obvious that the two men saw their tasks as a religious duty; that is why I regard them as twin souls. Linnaeus in another letter says that Gunnerus alone understands both books of the Lord: the Nature and the Bible. It is apparent that Linnaeus had great respect for Gunnerus, and in some cases, unprecedented in other correspondence, left to him to make the final decision on critical taxonomical matters. In one case, that of an *Arenaria*, Linnaeus even provided Gunnerus with a specimen of *Arenaria balearica*, so that he himself could make the comparison with his Norwegian plant, one Gunnerus eventually decided to describe as *Arenaria norvegica*, the name it still carries.

Since all, but one, of the 46 letters have survived, it is possible in detail to follow the development of their friendship, which evolved into an unusually personal one in the Linnaean context, so much so that Linnaeus grew very worried when he heard nothing from his learned friend during his long visitations in the harsh northernmost regions. Also the letters from two Norwegian students, Borchgrevink and Tønning, who Gunnerus had sent to Linnaeus, have been studied. They give unusual insight into the daily activities in the Linnaean household, most interestingly giving a positive opinion on Mrs. Sara Lisa Linnaea, who is infamous for the unfriendly way she treated foreign students. In this case she evidently enjoyed drinking coffee with the two Norwegian students at their lodging, and became so friendly with Borchgrevink that she commissioned him to buy Norwegian horses for her when he returned to his home in Røros. Actually it is the only known case in a Linnaean letter of Linnaeus sending greetings from his wife to someone (in a letter to Gunnerus of March 1767). These letters (now in the Gunnerus library, Trondheim) from the students have previously been neglected in Linnaean studies.

Autobiographical notes

By Anton Rolandsson Martin

Anton Rolandsson Martin's fame is connected with his visit to Spitzbergen (1758), and a year later to Norway and the Atlantic coast. His here transcribed and annotated autobiographical notes show both his background in Finland and as an extremely poor, ill-fated Linnaean traveller. We are allowed to follow closely in his footsteps, and listen to his anxieties especially connected with the amputation of one leg because of gangrene, we are also offered rare insights into a very special character, who never gave up believing in biometrics in the tradition from Santorio and natural history as it was preached by Linnaeus. His misogynic outbursts against an attending maid add to this "autobiography", perhaps written as an apology confronting death and the Good Lord.

"Snake do not bite with stings"

Johan Lindelius' essay on snakes 1683

By Johnny Strand & Ingvar Svanberg

In 1683 the Swedish student Johan Lindelius (1663–1712) published, as an appendix to the mathematical dissertation *De trigonometria* (Upsala), a small polemic tractate on misunderstandings about the viper. It contains some critical remarks on perceptions of snakes prevalent at the time: "Snakes do not bite with stings, as is generally believed, but with their fangs"; "Snakes cannot lose their stings, when they bite, as they have no stings"; "Serpents' tongues have no power of their own in superstition, love matters, bewitchment of eyes, fighting etc."; "It does not seem very probable that snakes have the power of lulling people to sleep"; "Serpents' meat can even check hunger"; "We are not willing to believe that snakes creep into people"; "When snakes curl up, like a wheel, they are not dangerous to people";

“Certain snakes give birth to their offspring by lying on eggs, others are viviparous”; “Snakes, cut to pieces, die before sunset”; “A snake has no venom in its tail, as people believe”; “Experience shows that snakes can live six months without food”; “If you are cautious, you can safely hold snakes with your bare hands”.

These claims reflect in a very concrete way the current ideas of snakes. In this Lindelius reveals 17th century learned and popular perceptions about the viper. It is therefore of interest for ethnobiologists, ethnologists and anyone else interested in cultural biology. The essay also includes a picture, made by Lindelius himself, of a viper. *A* shows the canine fangs with which it bites; *B* shows the glands from which the venomous liquid comes that infects the whole blood mass; *C* shows the tongue, generally called sting; and *D* shows the genitals through which also excrements are discharged.

Uses of whales' bones in the Faroe Islands

By Nicholas Redman & Ingvar Svanberg

In this article we explore the various recent uses of whale bones on the Faroe Islands. Pilot whales (*Globicephala melaena*) in particular have been hunted and meat and blubber as well as other parts of this species have been used, for instance stomachs for wool bags, buoys and containers; vertebrae for toys; skulls for walls; and other skeleton parts for fuel. Vertebrae of large whales have been used for chairs, while jaw bones have sometimes been set up as arches. Ribs were also used as boat rollers and benches. Most of these ways of exploiting whales have a long tradition dating back to prehistorical times in Europe, but were still known on the Faroes in the twentieth century and sometimes actually up to the present day.

Linnaeus and Darwin, a brief comparison

By Bengt Olle Bengtsson, Gunnar Broberg & Nils Uddenberg

In an informal way three professors in Lund, Bengt Olle Bengtsson, Nils Uddenberg and Gunnar Broberg discussed two jubilars, Carl Linnaeus and Charles Darwin. Attempts were made to characterize and differentiate them; Linnaeus was a young genius, Darwin the slow starter. Linnaeus had a great ego sometimes difficult to get along with, Darwin was a humble and gentle family man; Linnaeus was a newcomer, Darwin had been born into his position; Linnaeus wrote in a lapidarian style, Darwin was a narrator. Both were natural historians rather than biologists. While Linnaeus was a child in a declining warfaring nation, Darwin lived in an expanding colonial empire. These and more comparisons were tested—and the discussion goes on...