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Leonard Jenyns

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### Observations in Natural History

Although devoted to his parish, Leonard Jenyns (1800–93) combined his clerical duties with keen research into natural history. Notably, he was offered the place on the *Beagle* that later went to Charles Darwin. His numerous works include *A Manual of British Vertebrate Animals* (1835) and *Observations in Meteorology* (1858), both of which are reissued in this series. First published in 1846, the present work was originally intended as a companion volume to Gilbert White's acclaimed *Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789), which Jenyns had copied out as a student at Eton. The product of two decades of meticulous observation of Jenyns' surroundings in eastern England, the text includes journal entries with careful records on a wide variety of wildlife, including quadrupeds, birds, reptiles, fish, insects and molluscs. Also featuring a detailed calendar of periodic phenomena, this work illuminates the rhythms and quirks of the natural world in England.

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# Observations in Natural History

*With an Introduction on Habits of Observing,  
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University Printing House, Cambridge, CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108069861](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108069861)

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This edition first published 1846

This digitally printed version 2014

ISBN 978-1-108-06986-1 Paperback

This book reproduces the text of the original edition. The content and language reflect the beliefs, practices and terminology of their time, and have not been updated.

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OBSERVATIONS  
IN  
NATURAL HISTORY:  
WITH AN INTRODUCTION ON  
HABITS OF OBSERVING,  
AS CONNECTED WITH THE STUDY OF THAT SCIENCE.  
ALSO A  
CALENDAR OF PERIODIC PHENOMENA  
IN  
NATURAL HISTORY;  
WITH REMARKS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCH REGISTERS.

BY THE REV. LEONARD JENYNS, MA., F.L.S., ETC.,  
VICAR OF SWAFFHAM BULBECK, CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

*Multa enim in modo rei, et circumstantiis ejus, nova sunt, quæ in genere ipso nova non sunt: qui autem ad observandum adjacet animum, ei, etiam in rebus quæ vulgares videntur, multa observatu digna occurrunt.—BACON.*

LONDON:  
JOHN VAN VOORST, PATERNOSTER ROW.

M,DCCC,XLVI.

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LONDON :

Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,  
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.



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## P R E F A C E .

THE author of the present work, when engaged a few years back in preparing notes for a new edition of White's Natural History of Selborne, soon found a larger stock of matter collected upon his hands than it was thought desirable to use on that occasion. This led to the idea of embodying a considerable proportion of this matter in a separate work, such as is now offered to the public. It further appeared to him that a work of this kind might take the place of the "Naturalist's Calendar" and "Observations in various branches of Natural History," extracted from White's papers after his death, and first given to the world in a separate volume, by Dr. Aikin; both which have generally been incorporated with the later editions of White's work, but were not included in the edition spoken of above. This omission was in consequence of an opinion, that the "Calendar," though useful to a certain extent, wanted that method and exactness which alone can give any permanent value to such Registers; while the "Observations" contained little of importance beyond what might be found in the Natural History of Selborne itself, or

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what, in the case of the above edition of that work, it was easy to transfer to it in the form of notes.

The present volume, therefore, may be considered as an original work, offered in lieu of a reprint of the old one by Dr. Aikin, though for the most part similar to this last in plan and arrangement. The "Observations," which occupy a large proportion of it, are of a miscellaneous kind, and relate to various branches of Natural History; but they are all arranged under independent heads, and the animals to which they refer are classified according to their respective places in the system: by this means they will admit of being readily referred to as occasion may require. Of these observations a few have been contributed to the author by some of his friends, who have kindly interested themselves in the subject, and to whom he here begs to express his thanks; but the great majority of them have been made by himself, and principally in the immediate neighbourhood of his own residence. At the same time they have been made at very different times, over a considerable number of years, as the dates which are annexed to many of them sufficiently shew; some going as far back as the day, when he was only just commencing observer, and yet warm with the ardour inspired by a first perusal of White's own work. Indeed, not unfrequently the observations relate to matters, which the author had been led to notice from what White himself had previously observed; or they are accompanied by remarks suggested entirely by what the latter had written upon the same subjects. This will account for the frequent allusions to White,

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as well as for a certain degree of similarity, which perhaps may be traced in some parts of the book to passages which occur in the Natural History of Selborne. It is not thought that this last circumstance will render the public less favourable to the undertaking; or that a work like the present will be the less welcomed from the fact of several other works, equally indebted for their origin to that of White's, having already appeared at different times. The works alluded to can scarcely be said to be altogether upon the same plan as this one; and if they had been, works of this kind can hardly be multiplied too much, so long as the observations they contain are trustworthy and original.

Neither is the value of such works necessarily limited by the degree of importance which may be attached to these observations. The author is aware that many of the observations here brought forward, have little in them that is either likely to attract the notice of the experienced naturalist, or calculated materially to promote the advancement of any department of the science of which they treat. Nevertheless, he conceives, that they may not be, on the whole, without interest; or unacceptable to such young persons as are likely to be readers of the Natural History of Selborne, to which work the present may be considered as a companion. He is disposed to hope that this volume may also have its influence in tending to increase the number of observers; that it may help to put those, who are much abroad, or who are otherwise favourably circumstanced in this respect, into the way of collecting,

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and entering in a daily journal, such little facts as may offer themselves to their notice, and which, under the guidance here afforded them, they may deem worthy of record.

It is especially with a view to this end, that the author has treated in a General Introduction to the work, of the value and advantage of those *habits of observing*, which are indispensable to the progress of all sciences, but especially of the science of Natural History, and which, at the same time, are the sources of so much delight and amusement to all true lovers of Nature. He need not here enter into details connected with this subject, which the reader will find in that Introduction stated at length. He may simply mention that, in addition to the remarks he has there offered on this head, he has drawn up a few rules, by attention to which, young naturalists may acquire the habit of *observing correctly*; from which also they may derive a few hints for carrying on their observations upon such a plan as would materially enhance the value of what they observe, as well as tend more surely to recompense them for the time and labour they had bestowed on such a purpose. For some of these hints, or for trains of thinking that have led up to them, the author himself has been indebted to certain parts of the admirable “Discourse on the study of Natural Philosophy,” by Sir John Herschel.

With respect to the “Calendar,” which forms the concluding portion of the present work, enough is stated in the Introduction to that particular part, to render any further explanation of it unnecessary.

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It may serve in some respects to take the place of White's: but it is rather offered as a specimen of the kind of Calendar, which it would be desirable to see kept in different localities, in order to determine (what science at the present day principally requires), the *mean* date of occurrence of the several periodic phenomena observed in such localities. With this view, as well as for the purpose of shewing the coincidences more clearly, the plan of it is somewhat different from, and, as the author is inclined to hope, an improvement upon, that of the one compiled from White's Manuscripts by Aikin. The Calendar itself is, confessedly, very imperfect; though, in respect of a considerable number of the entries contained in it, it may be regarded as a near approximation to the truth. Strictly speaking, also, it has no immediate reference to any other district, than that in which the author is resident, and in which the registered phenomena were severally observed: nevertheless, it may serve in a general way for all places in this country on or near the same parallel of latitude. In order to assist observers in comparing the dates of the periodic phenomena which they may notice in their own neighbourhood with those here given, as well as to facilitate the inquiries of persons generally, who may wish to know when any particular phenomenon takes place, there is annexed to the whole an Alphabetical Index having a reference to the *mean* date of occurrence in each particular case: any information that may be desired beyond this must be sought for in the Calendar itself. The author does not think it necessary to

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speak here of the utility of such Registers, as this point will be found amply discussed in the Introduction above alluded to.

In conclusion, it may be added, that though all the "Observations" which form the main part of this work are original, yet from the circumstance of their having been mostly made many years back, it has happened that similar ones, in some instances, have been since made by other persons. Where this has been the case, the observation has still been admitted; and a reference has been given in a note to those works (so far as they are known to the author) in which the observation already occurs, or in which there is anything connected with the particular fact to which it relates. The author has also transferred to the notes all the scientific names of the animals spoken of, (except where they have no English one generally received); as well as any matter of a more strictly scientific nature, which it was thought desirable to introduce, in further illustration of the particular subject under notice, but which was considered as not likely to be interesting to the general reader.

It was intended that this work, which was announced as in preparation a considerable time back, should have appeared before now, but the author found so much more labour in the arrangement of the Calendar than he at first anticipated, that his professional duties did not allow him the requisite leisure for getting the whole ready for publication sooner.

SWAFFHAM BULBECK,

*July 6, 1846.*

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