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A SHORT AND SUCCINCT HISTORY

OF THE

PRINCIPAL BIRDS NOTICED BY PLINY AND ARISTOTLE

FIRST PUBLISHED BY

DOCTOR WILLIAM TURNER,

1544.

EDITED,

WITH INTRODUCTION, TRANSLATION, NOTES, AND APPENDIX,

BY

A. H. EVANS, M.A.

CLARE COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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## PREFACE.

IN translating this treatise it has been thought advisable to adhere as closely as possible to the original text of Turner, though in many places a more modern style of phraseology would doubtless have better pleased the ear of the non-scientific reader.

Not a few difficult points of interpretation have arisen in the course of the work, and the Editor welcomes this opportunity of expressing his gratitude to Professor Newton and to Mr R. D. Archer-Hind of Trinity College for the invaluable help that he has received from them in elucidating the hard passages and in revising the proofs. The Editor's thanks are also due to the Syndics of the University Press for undertaking the present publication.

9, HARVEY ROAD,  
CAMBRIDGE.  
*July, 1903.*

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NOTE.

It may be remarked that the pages of Turner's work are not numbered in the original; but, for convenience of reference, the pagination is marked in the margin—the numbers being included in square brackets.

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## INTRODUCTION.

WILLIAM TURNER, author of the rare treatise here re-published, was a native of Morpeth in Northumberland and is supposed to have been the son of a tanner of that town. By the aid of Thomas, the first Lord Wentworth, he was enabled to enter Pembroke Hall in the University of Cambridge, where he graduated B.A. and was elected a fellow of his College in 1530. At Pembroke he became acquainted with Ridley (who instructed him in Greek) and Latimer, two of the most earnest advocates of the Reformed doctrines, which he himself, both then and afterwards, strenuously embraced; but there is no need to dwell upon his theological views or the polemical works in which they were set forth.

While at Cambridge Turner was a zealous student of botany, and in 1538 published a *Libellus de re herbaria*. About two years later he left this University for Oxford, and soon after suffered imprisonment for preaching without a licence. On his release he quitted England, and travelled by way of the Netherlands and Germany to Italy, attending the botanical lectures of Luca Ghini at Bologna, where, or at Ferrara, he took the degree of M.D.

Thereafter he proceeded to Switzerland, forming a close friendship with the great naturalist Conrad Gesner of Zurich, Professor of Medicine and Philosophy in the School of that city, who held him in high esteem, and with whom he afterwards kept up a correspondence. He seems to have been at Basel in 1543, but early in 1544 he was at Cullen (Cologne), where he published not only the present work—dedicated

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to Edward Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward the Sixth)—but also edited the *Dialogus de Avibus* of his friend Gybertus Longolius of Utrecht, who died the preceding year. He pursued his botanical studies in several parts of Germany, as well as in the Netherlands, including East Friesland, for he became physician to the Count of Emden, and visited the islands of Juist and Norderney lying off the coast of that province.

On the death of King Henry the Eighth he returned to England, becoming chaplain and physician to Lord Protector the Duke of Somerset; but he lived at Kew, where he established a botanic garden. He was, moreover, incorporated M.D. of Oxford, and was appointed a prebendary of York. In 1550 the Privy Council sent letters for his election as Provost of Oriel College in Oxford, but the post had been already filled, and a similar disappointment awaited him in regard to the Presidency of Magdalen College in the same University. He then applied to Sir William Cecil for leave to return to Germany, but was soon after consoled by being appointed Dean of Wells, and, having in 1551 published the first part of his *New Herbal*, was during the next year ordained priest by his old friend Ridley, then Bishop of London.

On the accession of Queen Mary Turner had to vacate his deanery, and betook himself for safety once more to the Continent, visiting Rome and several places in Germany and Switzerland. When Queen Elizabeth ascended the throne he returned to England, and recovered his deanery, to which was attached the rectory of Wedmore in Somersetshire; but in 1564 he was suspended for nonconformity and seems to have come to live in London. In 1557 he had addressed a letter on English Fishes to Gesner, which was included in that naturalist's *Historia Animalium*; and in 1562 he published the second part of his *Herbal*, which he dedicated to Lord Wentworth, the son of his original benefactor. On the 7th of July 1568 Turner died at his house in Crutched Friars in the City of London, and was buried in the church of St Olave, Hart Street.



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Turner married Jane, daughter of George Ander, Alderman of Cambridge, by whom he had issue Winifred, Peter and Elizabeth.

It must be understood that, his scientific work apart, nearly the whole of Turner's life was spent in religious controversy, and he published a considerable number of polemical works, the titles of which may be seen in the bibliography appended to the excellent 'Life' prefixed to Mr Jackson's facsimile reprint of the *Libellus de re herbaria*<sup>1</sup>, whence all the particulars above given are taken. Other lists of Turner's works may be found in Cooper's *Athenae Cantabrigienses* (I. pp. 257—259) and the *Dictionary of National Biography* (LVII. pp. 365, 366).

Turner's object in writing the present treatise is fully set forth in his 'Epistola Nuncupatoria' prefixed to it. While attempting to determine the principal kinds of birds named by Aristotle and Pliny, he has added notes from his own experience on some species which had come under his observation, and in so doing he has produced the first book on Birds which treats them in anything like a modern scientific spirit and not from the medical point of view adopted by nearly all his predecessors; nor is it too much to say that almost every page bears witness to a personal knowledge of the subject, which would be distinctly creditable even to a modern ornithologist.

This knowledge is especially evident in his account of the habits of the Hobby (p. 19), Hen-Harrier (p. 19), Water-Ousel (p. 23), Moor-Buzzard (p. 33), Osprey (p. 37), Godwit (p. 45), Wheatear (p. 53), Sandpiper (p. 57), Fieldfare (p. 59), Cuckoo (p. 69), Black-headed Gull (p. 77), Black Tern (p. 79), Swallows (p. 101), Cormorant (p. 111), Shrike (p. 119), Redbreast and Redstart (p. 157); while his keen eye for distinctions is shown in his descriptions of the Black Cock and Grey Hen (p. 43), Godwit (p. 45), Tree-Creeper (p. 53),

<sup>1</sup> *Libellus de re herbaria novus*, by William Turner, originally published in 1538, reprinted in facsimile, with notes, modern names, and a Life of the Author, by Benjamin Daydon Jackson, F.L.S. *Privately Printed*. London: 1877.

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Doves (p. 59), Lapwing (p. 77), Nutcracker (p. 95), Reed-Bunting (p. 103), Kites (p. 117), Bullfinch (p. 161) and others. He is most careful to tell us whether he observed the various species in England or abroad and their comparative abundance, and to note the breeding of the rarer species, such as the Spoonbill (p. 151), and Crane (p. 97) within our islands—that of the Crane being of special interest; the whole account of the Cuckoo (p. 69) is also most noticeable, as is that of the curious Walt-rapp (p. 95) of which Gesner writes as follows:

GESNER *De Corvo Sylvatico*<sup>1</sup> (p. 337).

AUIS, cuius hinc effigies habetur, à nostris nominatur uulgo ein *Waldrapp*; id est coruus sylvaticus...Sunt qui phalacrocoracem hanc auem interpretentur, quoniam & magnitudine & colore ferè coruum refert: & caluescit, ut uidi, cum adultior est. Turnerus Aristotelis coruum aquaticum & Plinij phalacrocoracem, & coruum sylvaticum nostrum auem unam esse arbitratur, tertium genus graculi. Coruus sylvaticus Helvetiorum, inquit, auis est corpore longo et ciconia paulò minore, cruribus breuibus, sed crassis: rostro rutilo, parum adunco (curuo) & sex pollices longo: alba in capite macula, & ea nuda, si bene memini....Sic ille.

Doubtless Turner's work is not free from errors, as in the case of the very old story of the breeding of the Bernicle-Goose (which, however, he was most loth to credit even when assured of its truth by an Irish Divine), in his confounding of the *Onocrotalus* with the *Ardea stellaris* and the Cornish with the Alpine Chough; yet these are but small blots on a very excellent treatise, which compares most favourably with other writings of his time.

It is quite evident from various passages that Turner was acquainted with Aristotle's works in the original Greek, and especially with his *History of Animals*; but he preferred quoting that author from the Latin translation of Theodorus

<sup>1</sup> Conradi Gesneri Tigurini medici & Philosophiæ professoris in Schola Tigurina Historiæ Animalium Liber III. qui est de Auium natura. Tiguri apud Christoph. Froschovervm, Anno M.D.LV.

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Gaza of Thessalonica, the most celebrated Scholar of his day, who, fleeing from the sack of Constantinople, played a conspicuous part in the rise of the "New Learning," and after a course of teaching in Rome, entered successively the service of the Popes Nicholas the Fifth and Sixtus the Fourth, eventually dying in poverty in Lucania about 1484.

Exact transcription of a text was considered by no means necessary in those days: consequently we find many observations and explanations inserted in the text of Aristotle and Pliny, which had no place in the original<sup>1</sup>.

Besides referring to Gesner, Turner mentions other learned men by name and occasionally quotes from their works; while his pages also inform us of many places that he visited.

The following excerpts from Gesner not only give instances of correspondence between him and Turner, but also shew that the former was accustomed to correct the latter from his wider knowledge of Ornithology.

*De Branta vel Bernicla... (p. 107).*

Idē [Turnerus] post librum suum de avibus publicatum, in epistola ad me data, Berniclas siue Brantas (inquit) ex putridis naus malis fungorum more nasci, minimè fabulosum esse doctorum & honestorum uirorum oculata fides mihi persuasit. Brantā anserem palustrem ualde refert: his tamen notis ab eo differt. Branta breuior est, à collo quod rubescit nonnihil, ad medium usq̄ uentrem, qui candicat, nigra est. anserum more segetes populatur. In Vuallia (quæ pars est Angliæ) in Hibernia & Scotia aues istæ adhuc rudes & implumes in littore, sed non sine forma certa & propria auis passim inueniuntur. Et rursus, Præter brantam aut berniclam est alia auis, quæ originem suam arbori refert acceptam. Arbores sunt in Scotia ad littus maris crescentes, è quibus prodeunt ueluti fungi parui, primum informes, postea paulatim integram auis formam acquirunt, perfectæ tandem magnitudinis illæ, rostro aliquantisper pendent, paulò post in aquam decidunt, & tum demum uiuunt. Hoc tot tantæq̄ integritatis uiri affirmauerunt ut credere audeam, & aliis credere suadeã. Hæc ille. Eliota Anglus &c...

<sup>1</sup> The precise references to Aristotle and Pliny are now supplied, from the texts of Aubert and Wimmer, and Sillig respectively.

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*Introduction**De Vulpansere* (p. 156).

Chenalopex (inquit Turnerus Anglus) ab ansere & uulpe nomen habet...

Et rursus in epistola ad me, Vulpanserem Angli vocât a Bergander, nidulatur in cuniculorû foueis more uulpium, anate maior, minor ansere, alis ruffis. Eliota Anglus...

*De Pygargo* (p. 199).

Pygargum (inquit Turnerus) literatores quidam ineptè trappum à Germanis dictum (tardam, uel bistardam) interpretantur. Sed pygargus Anglorum lingua, nisi fallar, ernam vocatur, an erne. Ego ernam audio dici genus aquilę quod apud Frisios ad Oceanum Germanicum per hyemem degat, colore nigro, quod cornices quædam ut ex escarum eius reliquijs uictitent sequantur. Pygargus est forte quam Anglicè dicimus ringetayle, Eliota. Sed Turnerus ringtalum Anglis dictum ab albo circulo caudam circumeunte, buteone minore, subbuteonem Aristotelis esse suspicatur. Quod si minor est buteone, non poterit esse pygargus.

*De Caprimulgo* (p. 235).

[Having quoted Turner] Idem postea in litteris ad me missis, caprimulgum se uidisse scribit prope Bonnam (Germaniæ ciuitatem ad ripam Rheni, supra Coloniam) ubi à uulgo appellatur *Naghtrauen*, id est coruus nocturnus. Nos auis illius quæ Argëtinę vocatur *Nachtram*, corrupto forsân nomine, alibi *Nachtrap*, effigiem infrâ ponemus cum historia nycticoracis.

*De Carduele* (p. 235).

...Auis Aristoteli thraupis, *θραυπίς*, dicta à Gaza carduelis conuertitur: quod & Hermolao probatur. Turnero quidem non assenserim, qui chloridem nostram (*Grünling* uulgò vocant) thraupin esse conijcit.

*De Rala terrestri* (pp. 481—482).

...Perdix rustica vel rusticula Plinij (inquit Turnerus in epistola ad me) ab Anglis vocatur rala. Est autem rala duplex, altera cibum è ripis fluminum petit, altera degit in ericeto in locis syluestribus. Aquaticam illam Colonia diu alui, & male uolare deprehendi, & egregiè pugnacem. Rostrum & crura erât rubra, plumę multis maculis resperse.

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Montana verò illa & syluestris crura habet multò breuiora aquatili, & plumas undiq̄ magis cinereas, sed rubra interim crura habet & rostrum. auis utraq̄ apud nos regium epulum (real Itali regium vocant, Galli royal, & forte hinc ductum est ralæ vocabulū. à colore crurum forte erythropus fuerit) vocatur. Hæc ille.

*De Cinclo* (p. 592).

Turnerus cinclum auem Anglicè interpretatur a water swallow, (quasi dicas hirundinem aquaticam,) Germanicè *ein Steinbeisser*, (sed nostri aliam auē, coccothrausten nostrum, *Steinbeisser* appellant.) Auicula (inquit) quam ego cinclum esse puto, galerita paulo maior est, colore in tergo nigro, uentre albo, tibiis longis, & rostro neutiquam breui. Vêre circa ripas fluminum ualde clamosa est & querula, breues & crebros facit uolatus. ¶ Huic Turneri descriptioni cognata uideri potest merula aquatica nostra: magis uerò illa, quam circa Argentoratum *Lyssklicker* appellant: quam non similem modo Turneri cinclo, sed prorsus eandem esse conijcio, cuius figuram sequens pagina cõtinet.

*De Motacilla quam nostri albam cognominant* (p. 593).

Turnerus in libro de Auibus Cnipológon Aristotelis (id est culicilegã interprete Gaza) hæc auem esse putat...[quotation]...Sed postea in epistola ad me, Culicilegam Aristotelis (inquit) in terra Bergensi uidi, tota cinerei ferè coloris est, & speciem habet pici Martij, illa uerò quam culicilegam esse putabã, est uariola nisi fallor.

*De Nycticorace* (pp. 602—604).

TURNERUS in litteris ad me missis caprimulgum auem se uidisse scribit prope Bonnam (Germaniæ ciuitatem ad ripam Rheni, supra Coloniam,) ubi à uulgo appellatur *Naghtrauen*, id est coruus nocturnus. Nos in præcedente pagina effigiem adiecimus auis quæ circa Argentoratum, ut audio *Nachtram*, alibi *Nachtrab* nominatur. quæ tamen neq̄ caprimulgus neq̄ nycticorax mihi uidetur. [The figure is of the Night-Heron, unmistakably.]

*De Onocratalo* (pp. 607—608).

Onocrotalus Machliniensis, quæ *Vogelhain* à Brabantis uocatur, quinquaginta annis, ut ipsi ferunt, Machliniæ uixit, cygno maior est. pennę foris albicant, in fundo uerò rubrum

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quiddam ostendunt. collum duas spithamas longum est, aut paulò longius, rostrum, quod rubrum habet, dodrantali longitudine est & quatuor uncias longius, & in fine hami propemodum more incuruum & uersus finem latius latiusq; proturbatur. crura anserinis similia, breuia, nimirum pro magnitudine tanti corporis: in pectore magnum habet ueluti sacculum protuberantem. Alis est longissimis, & ipsis in summa extremitate nigris, Guil. Turnerus in epistola ad me...

Bononiæ uisus est mihi onocrotalus (uerba sunt ex epistola Angli cuiusdam amici ad me) plumis cinereis tectus, cygno maior, palmipes, capite mergi, rostro quatuor palmas ferè longo, & in fine adunco, collo deplumi, amplissimo, ut anatem deuorare posset. Captam aiebāt in lacu Benaco...

Solis uicitat piscibus, & bis tantum anno bibit. Turnerus...Pisces præsertim anguillas audivissimè uorat botaurus auis, Turnerus. idem amicus quidam de onocrotalo ad me scripsit. ego onocrotalum quidem hoc facere non dubito: de botauo dubitari potest, præsertim cum multi etiã non indocti cum onocrotalo eum confundant.

*De Perdice* (p. 644).

...Quæ Aristoteles & Ouidius de perdice scribunt, omnia nostræ perdis uulgari conueniunt, nempe uolandi nidulandi, ratio, astutia, circa prolem sollicitudo, corporis grauitas, & uocis stridor, à quo etiam nomen accepisse uidetur, Turnerus in epistola ad nos.

The 'Avium præcipuarum...Historia' was reprinted by Dr George Thackeray, Provost of King's College, Cambridge, in 1823; but the reprint is as rare as, if not rarer than, the original. Two copies are in the Library of King's College.

The following is a list of the Birds determined by Turner.

ALAUDIDÆ. <i>Alauda arvensis</i> .	ALCEDINIDÆ. <i>Alcedo ispida</i> .
Lerk or Laverock. German	Kynges fischer. <i>G. Eissvogel</i> ,
<i>Lerch</i> , p. 80.	pp. 18—22.
<i>A. arborea</i> . Wodlerck, p. 80.	[Turner recognised two kinds
<i>A. sp.?</i> Wilde Lerc or Heth	of Kingfishers described by
Lerk. <i>G. Heid Lerch</i> , p. 80.	Aristotle and Pliny, but
<i>Galerita cristata</i> . [No English	does not state what they
name.] <i>G. Copeva</i> , p. 80.	are].

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- CORVIDÆ. *Corvus corax*. Raven. G. *Rabe*, p. 64.  
*C. cornix*. Winter Crow, p. 64.  
*C. corone*. Crow. G. *Krae*, *Kraeg*, p. 64.  
*C. frugilegus*. [No English name], p. 64.  
*C. monedula*. Caddo, Chogh, Ka. G. *Döl*, Sax. *Älke*, p. 92.  
*Garrulus glandarius*. Jay. G. *Mercolphus*, p. 144.  
*Nucifraga caryocatactes*. [No English name.] G. *Nousbrecher*, p. 94.  
*Pica rustica*. Py, Piot. G. *Elster, Atzel*, pp. 142, 144.  
*Pyrrhocorax graculus*. Cornish Choghe. G. *Bergdöl*, p. 90. [Confounded with *P. alpinus*.]
- CUCULIDÆ. *Cuculus canorus*. Cuckow, or Gouke. G. *Kukkuck*, p. 66.
- CYPSELIDÆ. *Cypselus apus*. Chirche Martnette. Rok Martinette. G. Kirch Swalbe, pp. 100, 102.  
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*Falco æsalon*. Merlin. G. *Smerl*, p. 16.

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