

which accounts for the widespread misinterpretation of the exact number. Russell provided native names for most species but Latin ones for only a few. Thus many of the scientific names of species he first recognized are attributed to later authors who simply based their descriptions on Russell's accounts. For example, *Vipera russellii* was well described and figured by Russell in 1796, but was not named until 1797, by George Shaw and Frederick P. Nodder, who justly immortalized Russell in their choice of a Latin name. Besides his desire to distinguish the truly poisonous species which was the practical task given to him by the East India Company, Russell had a special interest in snakebite. He was also interested in the venom delivery apparatus and hood expansion in cobras, subjects on which he contributed a few papers to the Royal Society in London, of which he was elected a Fellow in 1777.

• *References*: "Memoir of the Life and Writings of Patrick Russell," anonymous, p. ix-xv. In P. Russell, *Continuation of an Account of Indian Serpents*, G. and W. Nicol, London, 1801[-1810]; "Patrick Russell," by G. S. Boulger, *Dict. Natl. Biogr.*, 17: 469-470, 1921. • *Portrait* (1794): Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. • *Signature*: British Museum (Nat. Hist.), courtesy Ann Datta.



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SHAW, George (1751-1813).

George Shaw, early English naturalist and prolific writer, was born on 10 December 1751 at Bierton, Buckinghamshire, where his father was a church vicar. He graduated from the University of Oxford (B.A. Magdalen College 1769; M.A. 1772), then was ordained a deacon and performed duty for several years. Later, however, he gave up church work to attend medical school at the University of Edinburgh for three years, before returning to Oxford where he was awarded a medical degree in 1787. He set up practice in London and promptly became a prominent member of the scientific establishment there, taking part in founding the Linnean Society (1788) and being elected Fellow of the Royal Society (1789). In 1791, he became Assistant Keeper of the natural history section of the old British Museum and succeeded E. W. Gray as Keeper in 1807, a position he held until his death, in London, on 22 July 1813.

Shaw was not a researcher or a museum man. His real interest lay in educating the public in science through lectures and encyclopedias, and he sought to use the British Museum for this purpose. But the museum's trustees refused his request to begin public lectures at the museum and rebuked him for dissecting and drawing museum specimens for use in his encyclopedias, yet Shaw's vision of a museum as an institution for public education was far ahead of its time. It is also true, however, that under Shaw's keepership the zoological collections reached their nadir.

Shaw never wrote anything on an exclusively herpetological topic, but "Amphibia"—in the Linnaean sense then including reptiles—were a natural part of the many comprehensive works that he produced. This, coupled with the early date at which he wrote and the fact that he used binomial nomenclature, resulted in his being the first

to apply proper Latin names to many reptiles and amphibians from throughout the world. Some of the commonest and best known species such as *Ambystoma mexicanum*, *Rana catesbeiana*, and *Vipera russellii*, which had been described previously by other authors, were named by him.

Shaw's work best known to herpetologists is the *Amphibia* section, in two parts (1802 [1801?]) with 140 plates, from his extensive series "General Zoology or Systematic Natural History." This was the first world review of amphibians and reptiles in English. Many other amphibians and reptiles were first described by Shaw in "Naturalist's Miscellany" (1789-1813), in collaboration with Frederick Nodder, in John White's "Journal of a Voyage to New South Wales" (1790), and in several additional works.

• *References*: "George Shaw (1751-1813)," by B. B. Woodward, *Dict. Natl. Biogr.*, 17: 1374, 1921; Gunther, 1980 (pp. 33-37). • *Portrait*: Courtesy British Museum (Bloomsbury). • *Signature* (1799): British Museum (Nat. Hist.), courtesy Ann Datta.

CUVIER, Georges (1769-1832).

The great French comparative anatomist and paleontologist Cuvier was born on 23 August 1769 in Montbéliard, then part of Württemberg but today in eastern France (he did not become a French citizen until 1793). His original given names were Jean-Léopold-Nicolas-Frédéric to which the name Dagobert was added later by his godfather, but following the early death of his oldest brother, Georges, he adopted that name, and has become generally known as