



AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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NEW BOOK HIGHLIGHTS RARE SCIENTIFIC WORKS COLLECTION AT AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

***NATURAL HISTORIES: EXTRAORDINARY RARE BOOK SELECTIONS FROM THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY LIBRARY* FEATURES 40 ESSAYS ON ILLUSTRATED TOMES**

A new book released today introduces natural science and art lovers alike to a selection of seldom-seen and beautifully illustrated scientific tomes from the American Museum of Natural History's Rare Book Collection. *Natural Histories: Extraordinary Rare Book Selections from the American Museum of Natural History Library* (Sterling Signature) features 40 essays from Museum curators, scientists, and librarians that discuss each rare work's unique qualities and scientific contribution. The edition is packaged with 40 extraordinary, suitable-for-framing prints representing each essay.

"The research library has been part of the American Museum of Natural History since its founding in 1869," said Tom Baione, the Harold Boeschstein Director of Library Services at the Museum. "*Natural Histories* came about because we wanted to let people know about our rich rare book collection, which contains more than 14,000 volumes, and is used by researchers from around the world, and includes many unique and hard-to-find volumes."

The works featured in *Natural Histories* span from the 16th century to the early 20th century, with scientific disciplines ranging from anthropology to astronomy to zoology. The reproduced illustrations include a woodblock print of a "sea monkey" from German physician Conrad Gessner's *Historia Animalium*, lithographs of the eerie aye-aye lemur from Sir Richard Owen's *Monograph on the Aye-aye*, and Robert Hooke's engraved images of what were once startling microscopic views of familiar items and animals in *Micrographia*.

"In the days before photography and printing, original art was the only way to capture the likeness of organisms, people, and places, and therefore the only way to share this information with others," Baione said. "Printed reproductions of natural history art enabled many who'd never seen

an elephant, for instance, to try to begin to understand what an elephant looked like and how its unusual features might function.”

Accompanying the illustrations are essays from Museum scientists including Hayden Planetarium Director Neil deGrasse Tyson, paleontologist Niles Eldredge, Center for Biodiversity and Conservation Director Eleanor Sterling, and Museum curators, scientific associates, and librarians who are familiar with the works and have used them in the course of their research.

“While the digitized versions that are available online are excellent at conveying the content of these publications, one really has to view the volume in person to appreciate the illustration and the handiwork that went into creating these fantastic works,” Baione said. “I hope this collection of essays and plates will give readers a better understanding of the science behind these works and an appreciation of the art illuminating their pages.”

To watch a video about the release of *Natural Histories*, go to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HeaNfNfeXBc>

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY (AMNH.ORG)

The American Museum of Natural History, founded in 1869, is one of the world’s preeminent scientific, educational, and cultural institutions. The Museum encompasses 46 permanent exhibition halls, including the Rose Center for Earth and Space and the Hayden Planetarium, as well as galleries for temporary exhibitions. Five active research divisions and three cross-disciplinary centers support 200 scientists, whose work draws on a world-class permanent collection of more than 32 million specimens and artifacts, including specialized collections for frozen tissue and genomic and astrophysical data, as well as one of the largest natural history libraries in the Western Hemisphere. Through its Richard Gilder Graduate School, it is the only American museum authorized to grant the Ph.D. degree. In 2012, the Museum began offering a pilot Master of Arts in Teaching with a specialization in Earth science. Approximately 5 million visitors from around the world came to the Museum last year, and its exhibitions and Space Shows can be seen in venues on five continents. The Museum’s website and collection of apps for mobile devices extend its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs to millions more beyond its walls. Visit amnh.org for more information.

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