

The LIBRARY AT THE END OF THE WORLD

TASMANIA has been called the island at the end of the world and here you will find a rare gem in the book collection of the Royal Society of Tasmania.

Housed in the Morris Miller Library at the University of Tasmania, it is an extraordinary collection of old and valuable books including many of the most significant works on natural history ever published.

Some of the volumes are 400 years old. These scientifically important and exciting early natural history volumes contain illustrations that bring to life the extraordinary flora and fauna of the southern hemisphere.



Spotted-tailed Quoll, *Dasyurus maculatus*. Illustration from *The Library at the End of the World* to be published by the Royal Society of Tasmania.



The Tasmanian tiger, *Thylacinus cynocephalus*. Artwork by H.C. Richter for John Gould.

ASTONISHING ILLUSTRATIONS

Early European visitors to Australia were astounded by the plants and animals they saw. At a time when photographs and emails were not even dreamed of, the work of illustrators was vital in bringing Australia's unique flora and fauna to the attention of scientists and the public on the other side of the world.

The ability of an artist to draw precisely what was in front of them was crucial. Even then, sometimes the credibility of the drawings was doubted. After seeing drawings of exotic marine life such as brightly-coloured fish, molluscs and jellyfish by the expedition artist Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, famed French explorer Nicolas Baudin said that even with the evidence of pictures it was hard to believe that such creatures existed.

WOODCUTS AND WATERCOLOURS

Woodcuts, engravings and hand-coloured lithographs were used to illustrate early books. As time went by, technological advances in printing methods added to the information that could be expressed in the artworks.

For the original artwork the artists used anything from pencil, charcoal, pen and ink through to watercolour and sometimes oils. The drawings were then copied to be reproduced in print as woodcuts, engravings or lithographs, some of which were then hand-coloured using watercolours.

Some artists were able to observe subjects in the wild, while others did not have the opportunity to travel to the southern hemisphere and never saw live specimens of the plants or animals they were attempting to draw. They had to rely on descriptions by other observers, or seeing preserved or stuffed specimens. The animals they saw were so new and strange that some early depictions were almost unrecognisable.

SCIENCE MEETS ART

The Royal Society of Tasmania is publishing a special volume containing beautiful and rarely seen natural history illustrations with commentary from present-day scientists and art historians.

The work of the scientists to be featured in *The Library at the End of the World: Natural Science and its Illustrators* contributed greatly to the development of scientific understanding and to the theories of evolution and natural selection. This led to changes in scientific classification systems and aroused great interest overseas in Australia and its flora and fauna.

Some of the scientists, naturalists and natural history illustrators were well-known during their own lifetime, while very little is known about others. See what you can find out!



The Striated Pardalote, *Pardalotus striatus*, by Gould.

Things to explore:

Choose one of the following people. Find out where they were from, where they travelled, what their work is known for and whether they had a connection with Tasmania:

- Louisa Anne Meredith (1812–1895)

- Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817–1911)
- William Archer (1820–1874)
- Charles-Alexandre Lesueur (1778–1846)
- Elizabeth Gould (1804–1841)
- Henry Constantine Richter (1821–1902)
- Arthur Bartholomew (1834–1909)
- Which of those artists drew the thylacine that the Cascade Brewery label is based on?

ASK A SCIENTIST

There was great amazement when early European voyagers to Tasmania sent evidence of animals such as the thylacine and the quoll back to scientists on the other side of the world. As specimens of marsupials and monotremes collected from Australasia arrived in Europe, scientists struggled to fit them into existing classifications of the animal kingdom.

Things to explore:

- Why did the echidna and the platypus arouse special interest?

A FAMOUS FELON

William Buelow Gould was transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1827 for theft. This convicted felon was also a highly skilled botanical illustrator who painted hundreds of watercolours depicting Tasmanian plants.

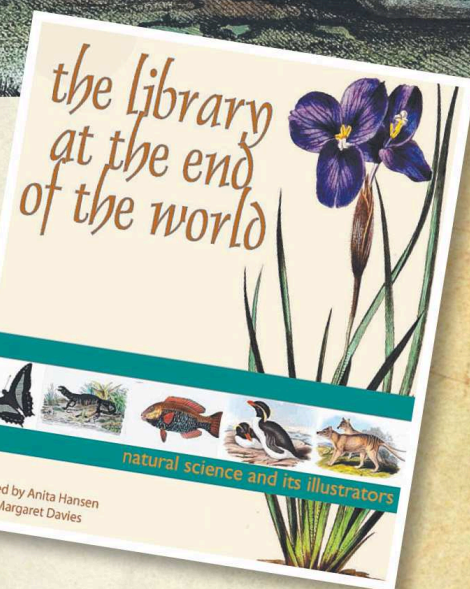
Two of his illustrations were published in a respected London journal — under the name of Dr J. Scott, to whom Gould had been assigned as a convict worker — while Gould was still serving his sentence. In 2011 Gould's *Sketchbook of Fishes* was inscribed in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register.

Things to explore:

- Where in Tasmania can you see some of William Buelow Gould's original works?
- What did Gould do after receiving his certificate of freedom in 1835?

WHAT DOES THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA DO?

The society's collections laid the foundations for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery as well as the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Today the society organises a variety of lectures, awards and publications. It provides a



forum for discovery, debate and discussion, particularly about topics relevant to Tasmania. Find out more: www.rst.org.au



Honey possum, *Tarsipes rostratus*, by Gould.



Common Vampire Bat, *Desmodus rotundus*.