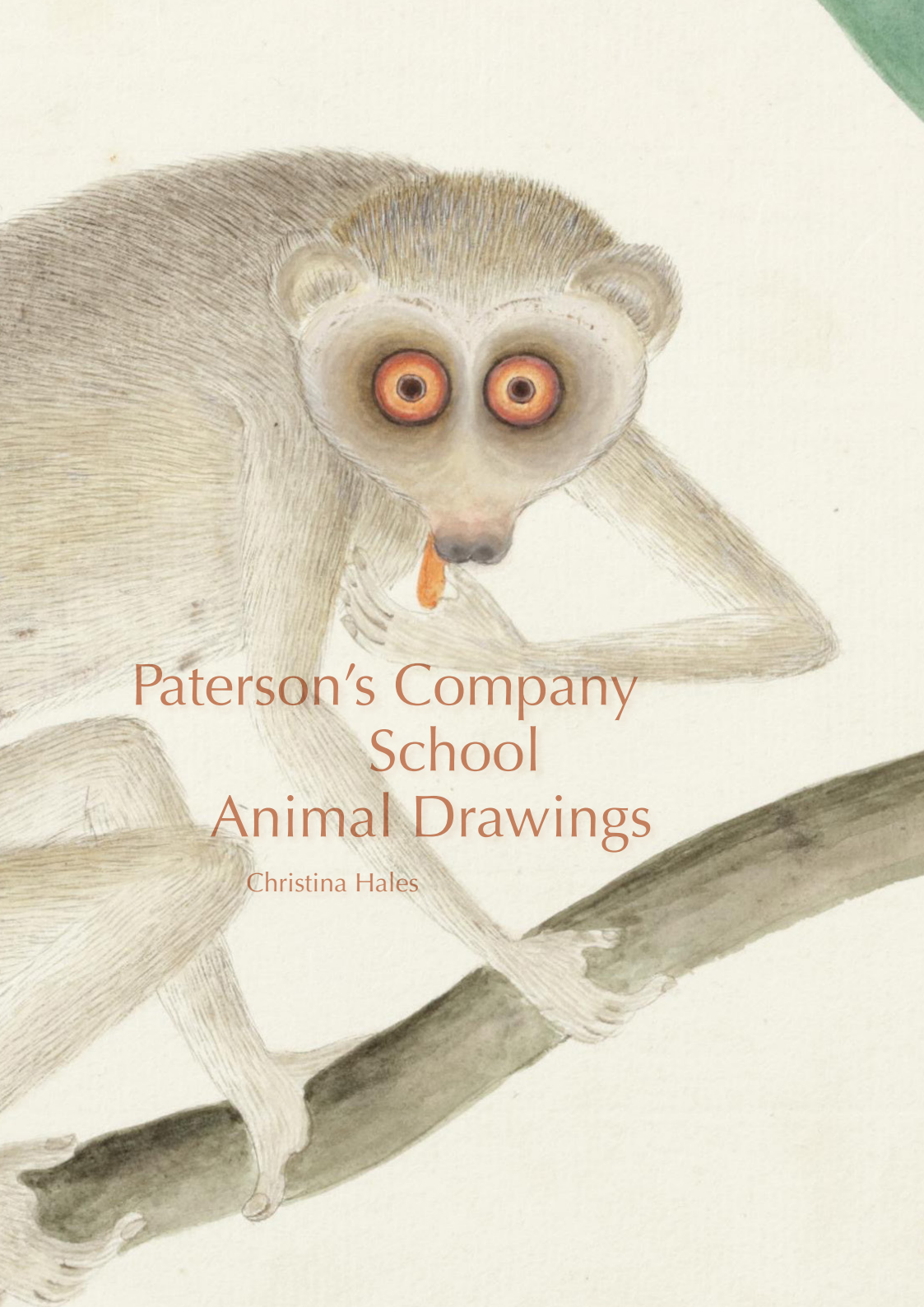


Paterson's Company School Animal Drawings

Christina Hales

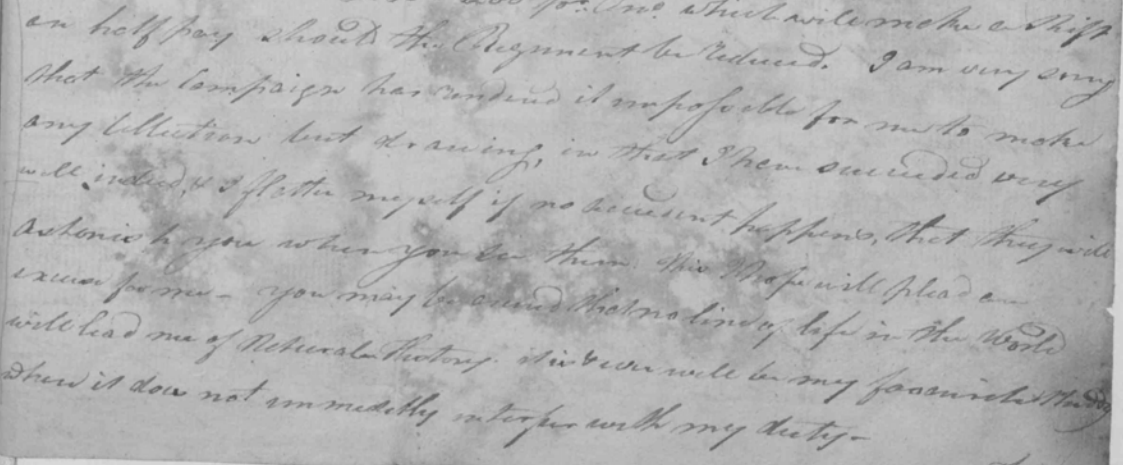
Paterson's Company School Animal Drawings

from India

Christina Hales



ZEBREGS&RÖELL



‘You may be assured that no line of life in the world will lead me off Natural History - it is, and ever will be, my favourite study.’

William Paterson, 1755-1810

By Christina Hales, independant researcher

Rising from humble origins, William Paterson’s life was marked by adventure, discovery and a passion for the natural world. He was patronised by Lady Strathmore (1749-1800) to botanise in South Africa, making four trips to the interior between 1777-1779. Subsequently, he traveled to India and fought in the Second Anglo-Mysore War (1780-1784). Arriving in Sydney in 1791, Paterson embarked upon his next adventure as Captain of the New South Wales Corps. He oversaw a new settlement founded at Port Dalrymple and was appointed Lieutenant Governor of New South Wales.[1] Situated in the lower Hunter Region of New South Wales, the town of Paterson was named in his honour. A fellow of the Royal Society and the Linnean Society, Paterson’s botanical endeavours are marked by the genus *Patersonia*, comprising 26 species.[2]

As a young man, Paterson seems to have apprenticed at the Chelsea Physic Garden in London, under his lifelong friend William Forsyth (1737-1804).[3] Paterson’s tenure saw the arrival of many hitherto unknown botanical specimens gathered by Sir Joseph Banks whilst on Captain Cook’s ship *Endeavour*.[4] Cultivating these extraordinary plants must have proved inspiring to the young gardener. In 1781, following his first international botanising adventure, Paterson joined the army as an ensign in the 98th regiment and travelled to India. En route he spent time on the island of Johanna (Anjouan) in the Indian Ocean, gathering specimens and undertaking his own amateur watercolour drawings.[5]

In 1782, Paterson arrived in Bombay (Mumbai) and wrote to Forsyth in London, noting that he would have *‘no great opportunity of making any collection as we are obliged to pay the greatest attention to our discipline as there are enemies on all sides’*.[6]

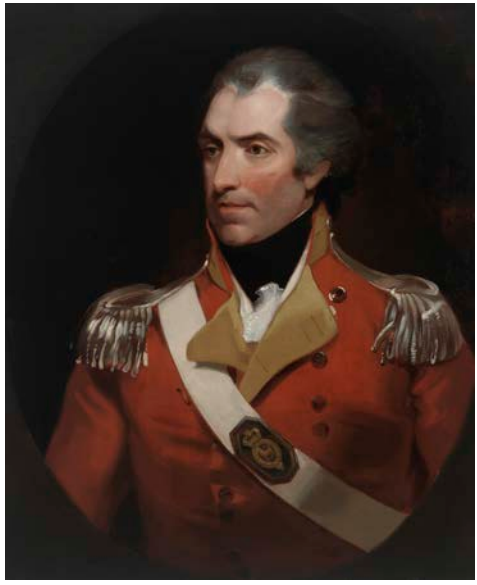
He then travelled eastward across the country to Madras (Chennai) and spent time aboard men-of War engaged with the French along the Coromandel Coast. By June he had travelled to Trincomalee in Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Upon returning to Madras in September, Paterson wrote to Forsyth and Sir Joseph Banks, enclosing a small number of specimens and his own drawing from Anjouan.[7]

In 1783 British forces were heavily engaged with Tipu Sultan (r.1782-1799) and his French allies. Paterson was involved in a number of campaigns, including the sieges of Caroor (Karur), and Darapooram, (Dharapuram) in Tamil Nadu. His superior, Lieutenant Colonel Fullarton was promoted to command the entire south Indian army, and he appointed Paterson as his secretary. Further campaigns ensued until negotiations were reached with the French and subsequently Tipu.[8] By December Paterson resided in a 'camp near Coimbatore,' Tamil Nadu. His letter to Forsyth is insightful;

'I am very sorry that the campaign has rendered it impossible for me to make any collection but drawings; in that I have succeeded very well indeed, and I flatter myself, if no accident happens, that they will astonish you when you see them.' [9]

Despite all of his military commitments, Paterson discloses that was able to collect a number of drawings which he seems exceptionally proud of. March 1784 saw the conclusion of the second Anglo-Mysore War. Paterson remained in India for a further nine months. On two occasions he suffered from liver complaints which prolonged his stay. It seems likely that he would have commissioned further drawings during this lengthy period.
Paterson wrote a final letter to Forsyth before his departure from India in December 1784;

'I may venture to say that should I have the good fortune of getting everything safe home, that such a collection was never yet brought into England, particularly the Gentoo (*Hindu*) architecture and some of the most famous buildings in India, also these of different gods & goddesses, both in drawing & in copper with some part of their history, and also a description of the world by the Bremmins (*Brahmins*) and also a tolerable collection of plants and birds...'[10]



Lieutenant-Colonel William Paterson in 1799.
After William Owen, State Library New South Wales.

Upon his return Paterson spent time in Scotland and married his wife, Elizabeth. He also stayed in London and visited Forsyth, who had been a founding member of the Society for Promoting Natural History. Paterson presented to the society regarding poisonous snakes and plants in South Africa.[11] His account of the 'electrical fish' from Anjouan, which he had drawn for Sir Joseph Banks, was presented by Banks to the Royal Society under Paterson's name. The paper was also published in the Societies' 'Transactions'[12]

In a letter to the naturalist Thomas Pennant (1726-1798), Paterson referenced some of his drawings; *'I was last night with the Royal & Antiques Society showing my drawings of the Indian buildings.'*[13] It would appear that Paterson was referring to the Society of Antiquaries of London, whose records confirm that in May 1787 'Captain Paterson exhibits 13 drawings of Choultree, Madura.'[14] By this time Paterson was also a member of the Asiatic Society, which was founded in Calcutta (Kolkata).[15]

British ornithologist John Latham describes seeing some of Paterson's drawings and utilising them for his book illustrations. However, there appears to be some confusion wherein South African birds are described as being from India. (The drawings may have been lent to Latham by Banks while Paterson was in India, hence the confusion). Notwithstanding, Paterson was certainly immersing himself in the company of the capital's greatest scholars and natural history institutions; this must have been a particularly exhilarating period in his life.[18]

1. For a detailed account of Paterson's life see: Brian Walsh. *William and Elizabeth Paterson- the Edge of Empire.* Brian Walsh, Australia, 2018.

2. https://powo.science.kew.org/taxon/urn:lsid:ipni.org:names:331257-2

3. Walsh, 2018, p.6.

4. Ibid quoting; Lindsay, Anne. *Seeds of Blood and Beauty*, 2005, pp.30-31.

5. See: An Account of a New Electrical Fish. In a Letter from Lieutenant William Paterson to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. P. R. S.". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, London. Vol. 76, 1786, pp.382-383.

6. Paterson to Forsyth, 9 January 1782, Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London.

7. Paterson to Banks, 25 September 1782, Banks papers, Series 27 State Library New South Wales.

8. For a detailed account of Paterson's military campaigns in India see Walsh, pp 33-44.

9. Paterson to Forsyth, 21 December 1783, Forsyth Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London

10. Paterson to Forsyth, 23 December 1784, Forsyth Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London.

11. The Linnean Society, London SPNH/6/2 and SPNH/2/1

12. "An Account of a New Electrical Fish. In a Letter from Lieutenant William Paterson to Sir Joseph Banks, Bart. P. R. S.". *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society,* London. Vol. 76, 1786, pp.382-383.

13. Paterson to Thomas Pennant, undated, inserted loose at the endpapers of the first English edition of the travels at the Cape of Anders Sparrman, library of Vergelegen Wines Ltd, Somerset West, South Africa. Forbes & Rourke 1980:24, 26

14. Society of Antiquaries of London, Minutes, 3 May, 1787. SAL/02/022/012.

15. Walsh, 2018, p.40

16. Latham, John. *Supplement to A General Synopsis of Birds*. London, 1787.

17. Banks lent Latham drawings from his own collections; see Pike, Douglas (ed). *Australian Dictionary of Biography, Vol II*, 1750-1880. Melbourne University Press, 1966. p.88

18. In late 1787 Paterson embarked upon a shorter trip to India with the 73rd Highland Regiment of Foot. The regiment travelled to Calcutta before serving in Bengal. Paterson returned to England in either late 1788 or early 1799. Walsh, 2018, p.40. (This period of Paterson's life has not been well documented.)

Right: Nicolas de Fer (1647-1720), L'Asie 1696, published Paris, 1724, collection Zebregs&Röell (inv.no. 69.23.21.6.14.01)


Mazanderan
Teberestan
Esterabath
Meichet
Balch
CASCAR.
Thibet
KARAKITAY
TURCHESTAN
Kaschan
Sablustan.
plaine de Sel
Candahar
Cabul
Kachemire
Siba.
Porena.
Kanduana
Gor.
Udesa
Voez.
Desert de Munzigistan.
Schiras
PERSE
Attok
Banchirck
Naugareut
Lahor
Multan
Bukar
Delhi
Jean Abad
Mevat.
Parta-Jaioumoula
Bando.
Eker Abadi
Aimere
Narvar
Patna.
Kirman.
Macran
Soret.
Raja Rana.
Raja Bargant.
Chitor
Golfe de l'Inde
Cap Jasques
Cap Razalgate
Mascate
Tchebe
Guz
Cambaye
Candis.
Talenganda.
Golfe de Cambaye
Surate
Daulet-abad
Aureng-abad
Golconde
Golfe
Bengale
Bombaye
Decan
Bider
Visapour
Pangel
Cariapatan
Royabullah
Cinga Rajapore
PRESQUISLE OCCIDENT
Bisnagar
Chatigan
Bengale
Arracan
Tenaserim
Malaca
MER DES INDES.
DE L'INDE, ou
DEÇA LE GANGE
Province de Gingi
Narsingue
Pulicate
Madrastapatan
St Thomé, et Meliapur
Pondicheri
Isle Precell
Isle de Lacha
Cochin
Negapatan
Jaffanapatan
Trinquemale
ISLE Candel DE CEYLAN
Batticalon
Isle Andemaon
Isle Cornicubar
Isle Porsa
Isle Nicubar
Canal de St George
Archipel des Maldives.
Maldives.
Composé de nouo. Isles et Rochers.
Isle Sode
Cercle de l'Equateur
Ligne Equinoctiale.

An Important Group of Seven Indian Natural History Studies Which Appear to be the Original Drawings of Lieutenant Governor William Paterson (1755-1810).

The following group of seven natural history drawings presents a diverse picture of Indian fauna. They include studies of; a slender loris, (*Loris sp.)*, a chameleon, (*Chamaeleo zeylanicus)*, a vine snake,*(Ahaetulla sp.)*, a flying fox, (*Pteropus medius)*, a ring-tailed lemur, *Lemur catta*, a golden oriole, (*Oriolus kundoo)* and a group of reptiles, insects and arachnids.[1] The works appear on laid J. Whatman paper only the lemur and the insectsgroup are laid on paper with the watermark of a Strasbourg Lily & pendant initials G.R. All seven pictures share the same provenance, having been acquired by inheritance by descendants of a military family and now held in a private collection in Edinburgh.

Within this collection, five drawings have an almost identical equivalent in 'Paterson Album 1' held in the Brenthurst Library, South Africa; namely the flying fox, golden oriole, snake, slender loris and chameleon. It is believed that the drawings in the three Brenthurst albums were acquired by Lieutenant William Paterson during his trips to South Africa and India.[2] Entitled *'Animals'*, Paterson Album 1 contains 118 drawings of people, scenery and animals.[3]

Four studies in the present group bear inscriptions which are of significant interest; all are prefixed with 'The' for example 'The Chameleon' implying the drawings formed part of a collection of Indian fauna.[4] Further details including a vernacular name, size and a place name indicate a taxonomic interest in recording specific details. Given that Paterson brought drawings home from India and was a keen naturalist it would befit him to compile a group of native animal studies, and record key information regarding them. The inscriptions also suggest that their author was present when the drawings were undertaken. This is evidenced in the comments on size and the mention of locations such as 'Syringham'. In accordance with all bar two drawings in the Brenthurst 'Paterson Album 1, these works do not bear a signature. However, the inscriptions do resemble Paterson's handwriting.[5]

Regarding painterly technique, the works are not entirely uniform; the ring-tailed lemur and slender loris may be the same hand. The same artist could also have painted the chameleon and flying fox and possibly the vine snake. The insects, reptile and arachnid group appear to be the work of another artist and this also seems to be the case for the golden oriole. As Paterson travelled across India over a number of years, he likely encountered multiple artists. Furthermore, the animals were probably met with in different locations, for example the ring-tailed lemur may have been seen in a menagerie, unlike more common and widely depicted native species.

Naturalists frequently had copies made of the drawings they commissioned to present as gifts, and in case they were damaged in transit.[6] Paterson experienced this first hand when many of the specimens he gathered on Johanna Island (Anjouan) were damaged in a ship's hold.[7] Notifying Banks that he was only able to send half of his specimens Paterson comments; *'I have taken the opportunity of sending my friend W Forsyth a duplicate of the same.'*[8] It seems likely that the present group represent the originals to the associated Brenthurst Paterson works. None of the directly comparable Brenthurst works bear inscriptions, whereas several drawings in the present group do. Furthermore, they appear to have been written in Paterson's handwriting at the time the drawings were undertaken.[9] It could be supposed that Paterson borrowed the present group to have them copied. However, given that some of the drawings are near identical, it seems likely they were undertaken by the same artist consecutively. As a keen naturalist one would also expect Paterson to copy the inscriptions and add these to any new duplicate works, whereas the comparable Brenthurst drawings bear no inscriptions. It is plausible therefore that Paterson may have commissioned the present set of drawings and requested a second set of some of them. Paterson's letters reveal that he collected natural history drawings while in India and that he was keen to present them to eminent men such a Sir Joseph Banks and William

Forsyth. While it cannot be definitively said that Paterson commissioned the present group, it appears highly likely that they were in his possession, and that the same artists were responsible for duplicating certain works for him.

The present group represents a wide variety of the species that must have astounded Paterson upon seeing them for the first time. In the absence of photography these drawings were crucial visual documents for naturalists. They informed taxonomy and laid the foundations for our present knowledge. Visually they form a closely observed, finely painted and richly diverse group of natural history drawings.

1. Two further drawings originally comprised this group; a spectacled cobra, *naja naja*, the most widely distributed cobra species in India and a sulphur crested cockatoo, *Cacatua galerita*. Although cockatoos are not native to India they frequently travelled abroad as pets. (In 1777 the Indian artist Shaikh Zain ud-Din painted one for Lady Impey while she resided in Calcutta.

2. See Forbes & Rourke 1980, chapter 3. The Brenthurst library holds a manuscript written by Paterson concerning his travels in South Africa.

3. Forbes & Rourke 1980, p.50

4. Regrettably the slender loris drawing has been cropped, rendering the inscription unintelligible.

5. It is possible that the only two drawings bearing Paterson's signature in Album 1 may have been the ones he undertook personally; both are relatively crude studies of fish (See Paterson Album 1, folios 95 & 98). They are comparable to a drawing of an 'electric fish' known to have been undertaken by Paterson. (See Comoros 'electric fish' RS-9953 The Royal Society, London.)

6. Paterson mentions his desire to collect drawings for Forsyth and animal drawings that he gave to other friends; Paterson to Forsyth, 14 January 1787, Forsyth Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London.

7. Paterson to Banks, 25th September 1782, Joseph Banks papers, Series 27 State Library New South Wales.

8. Paterson to Banks, 26th September 1782, Joseph Banks papers, Series 27 State Library New South Wales.

9. It should be noted that Paterson's handwriting was at times inconsistent and contained grammatical and spelling errors. This is likely a reflection of his rudimentary education. (See Forbes & Rourke, 1980. p.11).



A Study of a Slender Loris, *Loris* sp.
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink, *H. 24,3 x 39 cm*

A little smaller than a squirrel, these intriguing prosimians comprise the oldest group of primates. They are only found in Southern India and Sri Lanka and are categorized into four subspecies; in India, the Mysore slender loris, *Loris lydekkerianus* is grey-brown with teardrop-shaped circumocular patches.[1] The smaller Malabar slender loris, *Loris lydekkerianus malabaricus* has rufous fur and circular or semi-circular eye patches. Slender lorises are tree-dwelling nocturnal hunters whose large eyes and keen sense of smell enable them to detect insects, and other unsuspecting pray. Lacking a tail, they cannot achieve the acrobatic feats of other primates, however their agile frames move silently between branches and they are stealthy predators.[2]

The present work depicts a slender loris in a tree resembling *ficus religiosa*. The animal's hypnotic eyes capture the viewer's attention as it consumes an insect or piece of fruit. The fur is grey on the head and back with paler tones emerging below. The artist has paid attention to the overall form, proportions of the limbs and texture of the fur. The animal appears to combine the grey coat of the Mysore slender loris with the eye patch of the Malabar. This could suggest the artist may have worked from another image with the same anomalies. Given that Lorises are diminutive, shy, nocturnal creatures favouring tree canopies, it is unlikely that artists would have been particularly familiar with them.[3] If painted from life, the artist may have been obliged to work hastily as the animal moved, this may also account for the depiction of the fur and eyes.



"The eyes literally gleam like living coals in the dusk, and, being very close together and only separated by a pale streak, they make a peculiar impression." Brehm, 1895.



Right: Slender loris study in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1

Left: Present study of the Slender loris (detail).



A comparable slender loris study in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1 is virtually identical to the present work; both depict the creature in the same tree, they both adopt the same overall pose and hold a similar morsel to eat.[4] However, upon closer inspection one may observe that the present loris has a more well-defined nose than the Brenthurst study, particularly with regard to the shading of the nostrils. Furthermore, in the present work the loris' hand surrounds the object that it is eating, as though it had just put it into its mouth. By contrast, the Brenthurst loris' hand is offset and no longer bears a direct relationship with the item being consumed, or the animal's mouth. These subtle differences pose the question of whether the Brenthurst work may have been copied from the present study. This theory would explain the overall similarity between the two works while, allowing for minor errors during the copying process; such as the slight misplacement of a hand.

Two further drawings worthy of comparison appear in the Wellesley Collection.[5] A passionate naturalist, Marquess Wellesley was governor of Bengal (1798-1804) and founded the 'Institute for Promoting the Natural History

of India'. His diverse collections include a great number of drawings by Indian artists. Two depictions of slender lorises appear in volume 1 of Wellesley's Natural History Drawings manuscript; one holding a cricket, the other is walking. The European inscription reads *'Lemur gracilis, Madras.'* (During this period slender lorises were often referred to as sloths, lemurs and slender lemurs.) Marquess Wellesley first came to India in April 1798, reaching Madras that month. These drawings are likely somewhat later than the present and Brenthurst studies. Nonetheless, they provide an insight into the convention for depicting these characterful animals.

The drawing has been cropped along the lower margin rendering the inscription unintelligible.

1. I am indebted to Dr. Smitha D. Gnanaolivu, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, Primate Specialist Group for her comments upon the markings of the present species.

2. Smitha, Gnanaolivu et al. Habitat Composition and Preference by the Malabar Slender Loris (Loris lydekkerianus malabaricus) in the Western Ghats, India. *Forests*. 2025, 16 (6), 876.

3. Mewa Singh et al. A review of research on the distribution, ecology, behaviour, and conservation of the Slender Loris Loris lydekkerianus (Mammalia: Primates: Lorisidae) in India. *Journal of Threatened Taxa*. 2021.



Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 27



'The Mocock. This Animal is only to be found on the island of Madagascar. It is about twice the size of this picture.'

A Study of a Ring-Tailed Lemur, *Lemur catta*
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink*, H. 32 x 45,1 cm*

During the 17th century these attractive strepsirrhines (twisted nosed primates) left their native island of Madagascar aboard East India Company ships.[1] The Mughal emperor Jahangir (1569-1627) provided the earliest known description of a lemur in captivity. His menagerie of exotic animals included another Madagascan lemur; *Eulemur mongoz*, which he considered to be an extremely strange creature whose cry resembled an antelope fawn.[2]

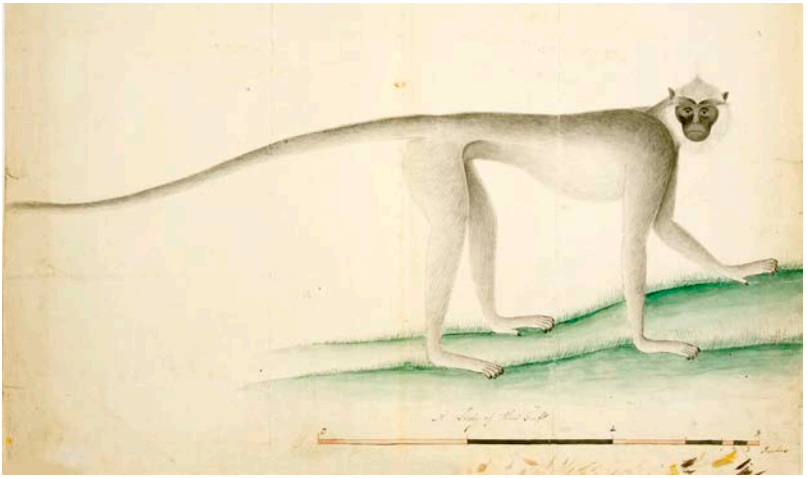
An 1802 painting of a ring-tailed lemur commissioned by Major-General Thomas Hardwicke (1756-1835) indicates that lemurs continued to reside in Indian menageries. The inscription reveals that the drawing was made from a living specimen in the menagerie of *Cawnpore* (Kanpur) resident.[3] The present study bears the inscription; '*The Mocock. This animal is only to be found on the island of Madagascar. It is about twice the size of this picture.*' This reveals that the author of the inscription knew where the animal was native to and that they had likely seen it in person. It is possible that the location for this drawing was an Indian menagerie, given that *lemur catta* already featured in menageries in the country by this time.
The ring-tailed lemur study in the Hardwicke collection varies stylistically to the present

image. However, a painting of an Indian tufted grey langur, *Semnopithecus priam* in the Brenthurst Paterson collection does warrant comparison (see bellow).[4] Both works depict the primates facing in the same direction with their heads turned toward the viewer. They both appear on parallel, gently undulating strips of grass with deeper shading at the top leading to tufted clumps. The writing by a European hand is also similar. The artist of the present lemur study has paid careful attention to the fur, demonstrating a sense of the colour variation and texture. The extremely finely painted tail appears with a flocculent, delicate transparency. The langur has been painted with similar attention to the fur and its colour variation. Although the rendering of the faces varies, presumably an artist from southern India would be more familiar with the highly commonplace langurs than an 'exotic' ring-tailed lemur residing in a menagerie.

A drawing of a slender loris appears in the present group (p. 8) and has a near identical match in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1.[5] The rendering of the fur is extremely similar in these works and the present study. Further similarities occur in all three drawings concerning the form, limbs and movement of the animals, and their vibrant, hypnotic eyes.

The present work appears on laid paper with the watermark of a Strasbourg Lily & pendant initials G.R.

1. E. S. Rogers and S. L. Canington. *Lemurs before Lemur: depictions of captive lemurs prior to Linnaeus*. The Royal Society, Vol 77, Issue 1, 25 August 2021. https://doi.org/10.1098/rsnr.2021.0039
2. W. M. Thackston (ed.) 1999, pp.133-134
3. Natural History Museum, London, 88 f HAR.
4. Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 26.
5. Ibid, folio 27



Indian tufted grey langur, *Semnopithecus priam* in the Brenthurst Paterson collection [4]



Top left; slender loris study in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1;

Top right; present study of a slender loris;

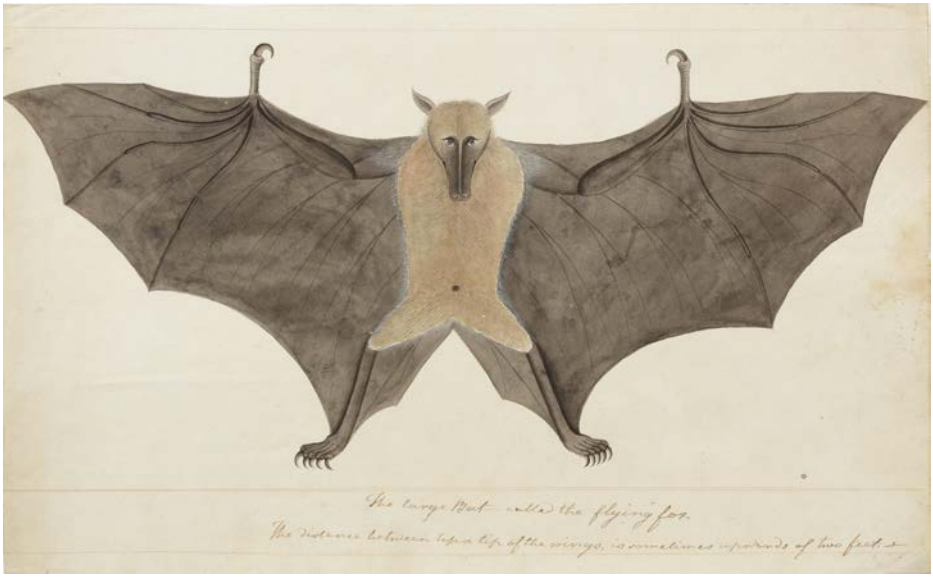
Left bottom; present study of a Ring-Tailed lemur;

Right bottom; Indian tufted grey langur, *Semnopithecus priam* in the Brenthurst Paterson collection [4]









A Study of a Female Flying Fox, Pteropus medius. (formerly P. giganteus).
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink, *H. 27,8 x 22,3 cm*

This extraordinary species cannot fail to astound with its great wingspan and tremendous presence. When Captain Charles Gold first encountered the great Indian fruit bat he commented;

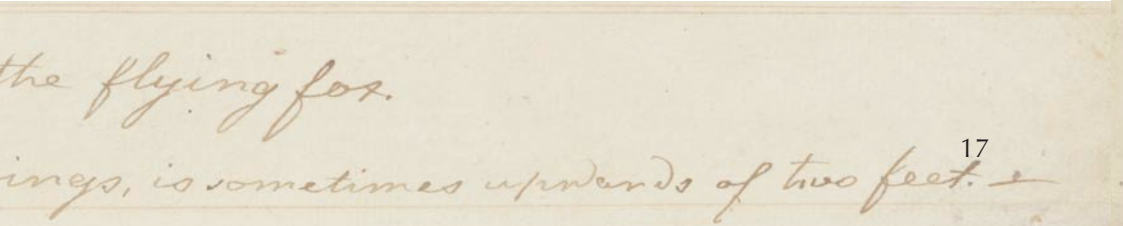
'On a first view of these singular animals, from the harpy-like appearance of their wings, the fancy naturally occurs that they have made their escape from the infernal regions. The Flying-fox, as it is termed by the British, from the similarity of its head, skin, and even smell, to the reddish fox, is found in the Mysore, in the Carnatic, and no doubt in the adjoining countries, as well as in the islands of the Indian Ocean.'[1]

The present work bears the following inscription which is appropriate for the species: '*The large Bat called the flying fox. The distance between tip & tip of the wings, is sometimes upwards of two feet.*'

Paterson Album 1 in the Brenthurst library contains two similar drawings of flying foxes depicting each sex They both appear to relate to the present work. In all three depictions the wings are fully extended and the heads face forwards. The faces are extremely similar with the eyes of the Brenthurst studies being fractionally more angular than the present work. The noses of the two females are also particularly similar. Regarding the fur, the brushwork is comparable with all three; demonstrating grey-white hues to illustrate the outline of the bodies. Presenting flying foxes in the manner of the three drawings cited may be seen in the work of Indian artist Bhawani Das, whose esteemed drawings contributed to the albums of Lady Impey (1749-1818) during her stay in Calcutta.[3]

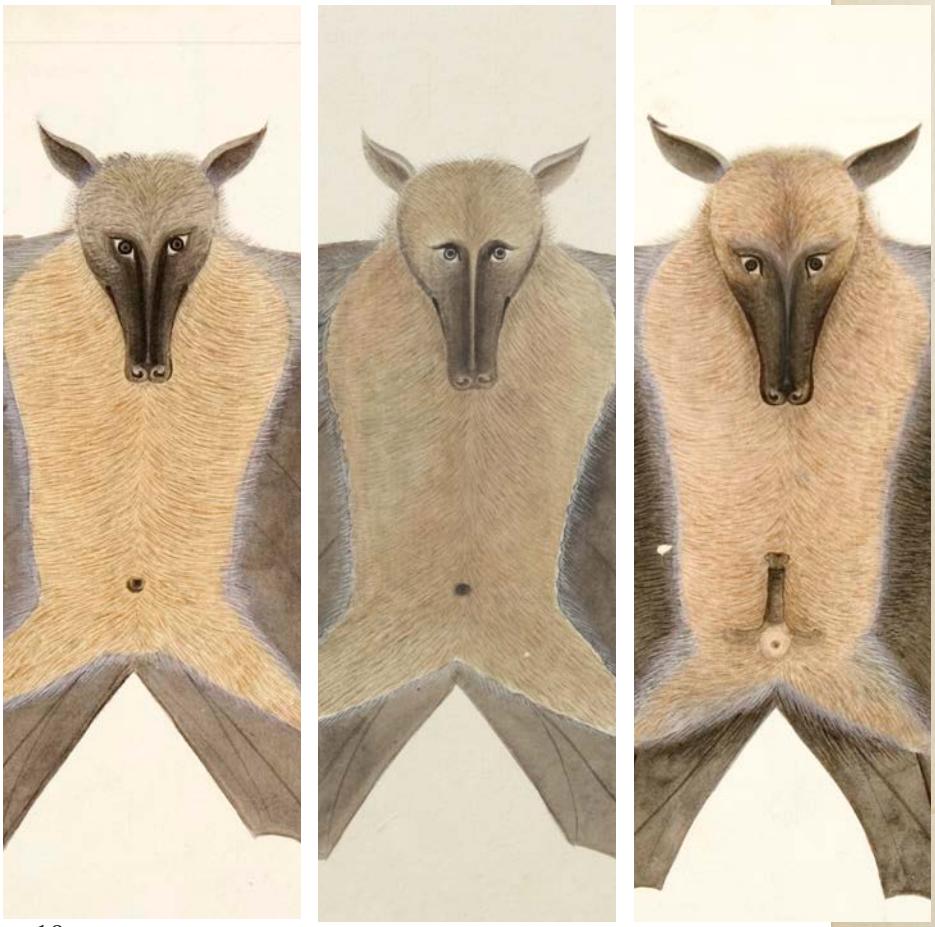


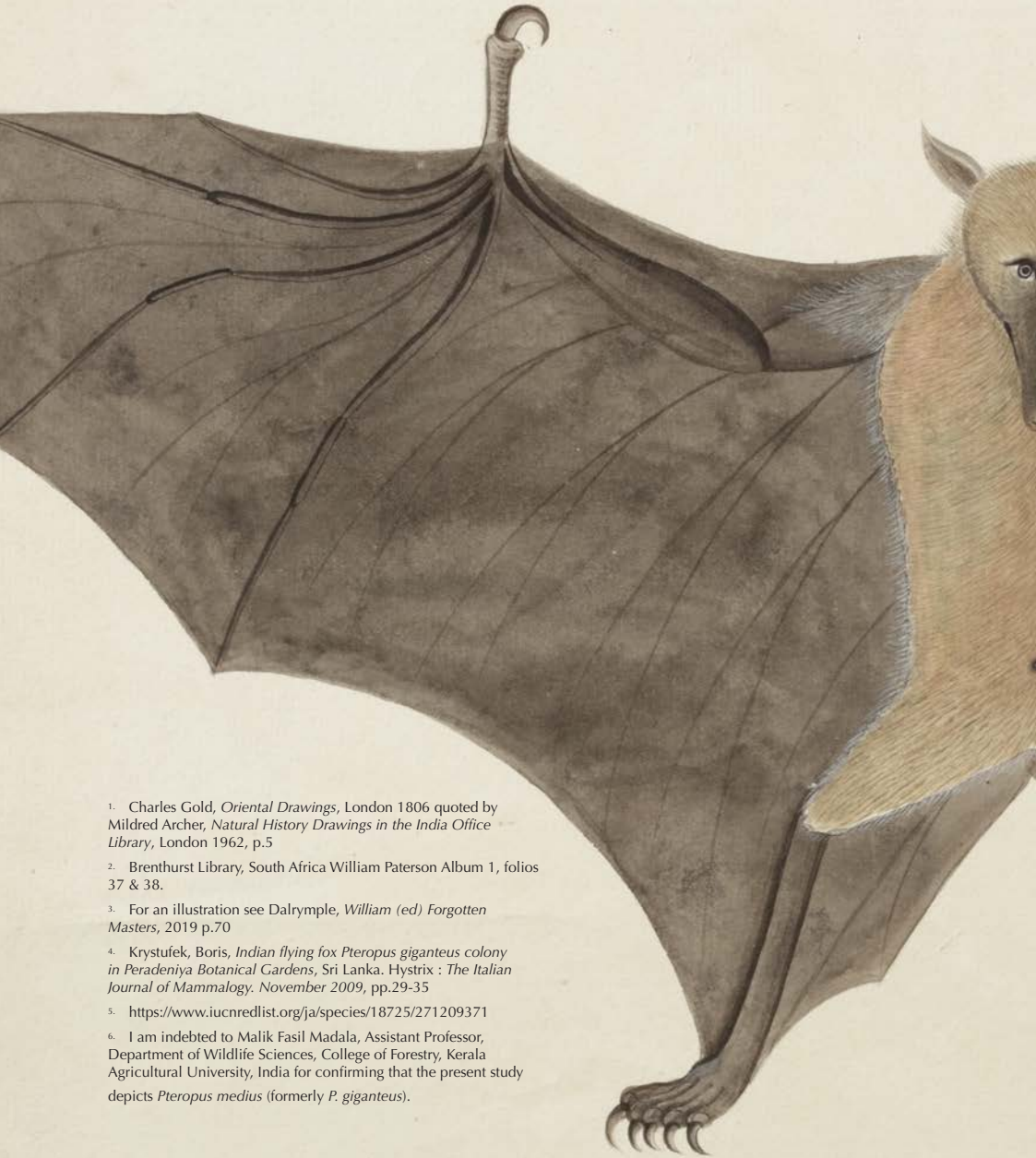
top; male, bottom: Female flying fox in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1 [2],



A widely distributed species, flying foxes occur throughout India. Gregarious by nature, they roost in large trees forming colonies that may range from one hundred to several thousand bats. They often display symbiotic relationships with the fauna in their environment. Presently numbers of flying foxes are decreasing and they appear on the IUCN red list as 'near threatened'. Given their symbiotic relationship to their habitat, works such as the current study are a prescient reminder of the delicate balance maintained by nature. As well as being captivating works of art and fascinating early scientific studies, these drawings may also invite us to reflect upon our role as the custodians of the world's fragile ecosystems.[6]

Left: female in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1, middle; right: male in Brenthurst Paterson Album 1.





1. Charles Gold, *Oriental Drawings*, London 1806 quoted by Mildred Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library*, London 1962, p.5

2. Brenthurst Library, South Africa William Paterson Album 1, folios 37 & 38.

3. For an illustration see Dalrymple, *William (ed) Forgotten Masters*, 2019 p.70

4. Krystufek, Boris, *Indian flying fox Pteropus giganteus colony in Peradeniya Botanical Gardens*, Sri Lanka. Hystrix : *The Italian Journal of Mammalogy. November 2009*, pp.29-35

5. https://www.iucnredlist.org/ja/species/18725/271209371

6. I am indebted to Malik Fasil Madala, Assistant Professor, Department of Wildlife Sciences, College of Forestry, Kerala Agricultural University, India for confirming that the present study depicts *Pteropus medius* (formerly *P. giganteus*).

The Lenght

The distance between tip



A Study of a group of Reptiles, Insects and Arachnids.
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink*, H. 42,2 x 32,2 cm*

From right to left: A study of: The Indian Russels viper - (*Daboia russelii*), Asian forrest scorpion- (*Heterometrus spinifer*), Spotted house gecko- (*Hemidactylus parvimaculatus),* Common house gecko - (*Hemidactylus frenatus*), The bronze grass skink - (*Eutropis macularia*), Giant asian mantis - (*Hierodula tenuidentata*), Violet carpenter bee - (*Xylocopa violacea*), Sun spider - (*Solifugae sp.*), Brown marmorated stink bug - (*Halyomorpha halys*).[1]

This study presents a diverse group of nine creatures including; a mantis, a lizard, two geckoes, a scorpion, a beetle, a carpenter bee, a snake, an arachnid and the head and mouth parts of another arachnid.
From right to left: The Indian Russels viper - (*Daboia russelii*), Asian forrest scorpion- (*Heterometrus spinifer*), Spotted house gecko- (*Hemidactylus parvimaculatus),* Common house gecko - (*Hemidactylus frenatus*), The bronze grass skink - (*Eutropis macularia*), Giant asian mantis - (*Hierodula tenuidentata*), Violet carpenter bee - (*Xylocopa violacea*), Sun spider - (*Solifugae sp.*), Brown marmorated stink bug - (*Halyomorpha halys*). They all appear to be native to India.
The intriguing depiction of an arachnid resembles a galeodid in the solifugae family. Known as sun spiders, camel spiders and wind scorpions, solifuges are arachnids, although they differ from spiders and scorpions.[2] They are unable to produce venom and possess neither fangs nor stings. Notwithstanding, proportionally their chelicerae (jaws) are likely the most sizeable in the animal kingdom.[3] These prehensile articles comprise two sets of pincers capable

of catching, lacerating and consuming prey.[4] Described as 'the cheetahs of the invertebrate world' sun spiders can run up to 16 km per hour and are the fastest land Invertebrates. Another remarkable feature of solifuges is an organ located at the tip of the pedipalps (second pair of forward appendages), which enables them to deploy suction to draw airborne insects towards them.[5] Galeodids occur in arid to semi-arid regions of northern Africa through Asia, including India. They are the only family to possess setae (hairs) on the claws, as seen on the present study.[6]

Unlike the majority of drawings in this group, the present study does not appear to have an associated work in the Brenthurst Paterson albums. However, the Brenthurst collection does contain a study depicting a centipede, a mantis and three beetles.[7] East India Company officers would typically commission these works in order to further their understanding of local fauna. Insects, reptiles and snakes were often depicted in groups on a single sheet of paper. Given the species depicted here differ greatly from the invertebrates and reptiles native to cold European climes, they must have proved infinitely fascinating.



1. I gratefully acknowledge Matthijs Zebregs and Dr. Janneke van der Loop for their assistance in determining the species.
2. Fred Punzo, The Biology of Camel-Spiders: Arachnida, *Solifugae*. United States, Springer US, 1998, p. 1.
3. T.L. Bird., R.A. Wharton, & L Prendini, Cheliceral morphology in Solifugae (Arachnida): primary homology, terminology, and character survey. *Bulletin of the American Museum of Natural History*, 2015. 394: pp.1–355.
4. Ibid
5. R.H. Willemart et al, A sticky situation: Solifugids (Arachnida, Solifugae) use adhesive organs on their pedipalps for prey capture. *Journal of Ethology*, 2011. 29 (1) pp.177-80.
6. I am indebted to Dr Tharina Bird, Ditsong National Museum of Natural History, Pretoria, South Africa for her association of the present arachnid with the family Galeodidae.
7. Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 118.







A Study of a Male Indian golden oriole, *(Oriolus kundoo)*
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink, *H. 29,4 x 22,3 cm,*

'It must be acknowledged, that some of our European naturalists have found excellent draftsmen among the natives, who have executed drawings of many specimens of natural history, with much neatness and accuracy. The laborious exactness with which they imitate every feather of a bird, or the smallest fibre on the leaf of a plant, renders them of valuable assistance in this department.'[1]

This vibrant study presents a male golden oriole in exceptionally fine detail. Precision brushstrokes demarcate individual barbs, while the feather veins are tinged with ochre hues.

The artist demonstrates their skill in capturing the bird's alert and wary demeanour; the keen eye on constant watch as the legs bend in anticipation of taking flight at any moment. The drawing suggests the hand of an experienced Indian artist, who confidently blends refined draughtsmanship with a tangible sense of the naturalistic.

Three species of golden orioles appear within the Oriolus genus; the Eurasian *Oriolus oriolus*, the Indian *Oriolus kundoo* and the African *Oriolus auratus*. Despite their overall similarity, the Indian golden oriole may be distinguished by elongated lores, or black stripes which extend beyond the eyes of the adult males. Commonly known as Mango-birds in India, their arrival heralds the ripening of the fruits in the north of the country. These arboreal birds are adept at concealing themselves in dense foliage, however their liquid whistles divulge their presence.[2]

The current image is virtually identical to a study of Oriolus kundoo depicted in Paterson Album 1, held in the Brenthurst Library (see page 29).[3] Stylistically, both works resemble drawings of this species depicted by Indian artists during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In manuscripts such as the Impey albums we see Indian artists demonstrate their exceptional talent for natural history drawings. As with the present work, they are marked by a greater sense of familiarity with their subject matter, rich colouration and refined draughtsmanship.[4] Presented as objects of scientific study, birds were often depicted on a plain background with minimal distractions. Both the current and Brenthurst oriole drawings adhere to this format.

1. William Tennant, *Indian Recreations; Consisting Chiefly of Strictures on the Domestic and Rural Economy of the Mahomedans and Hindoos, vol. 1.* London: C. Stewart, 1804, p.299.

2. Hugh Whistler, *Popular handbook of Indian Birds*. Gurney and Jackson; London; 1935, pp. 165-166.

3. Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 63. See also Vernon S Forbes and John Rourke, *Paterson's Cape Travels 1777 to 1779*. Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1980, plate 1, p.13.

4. See Black Hooded Oriole, Shaikh Zain ud-Din, 1778, Folio from a Series Commissioned by Lady Impey. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2018.53.6



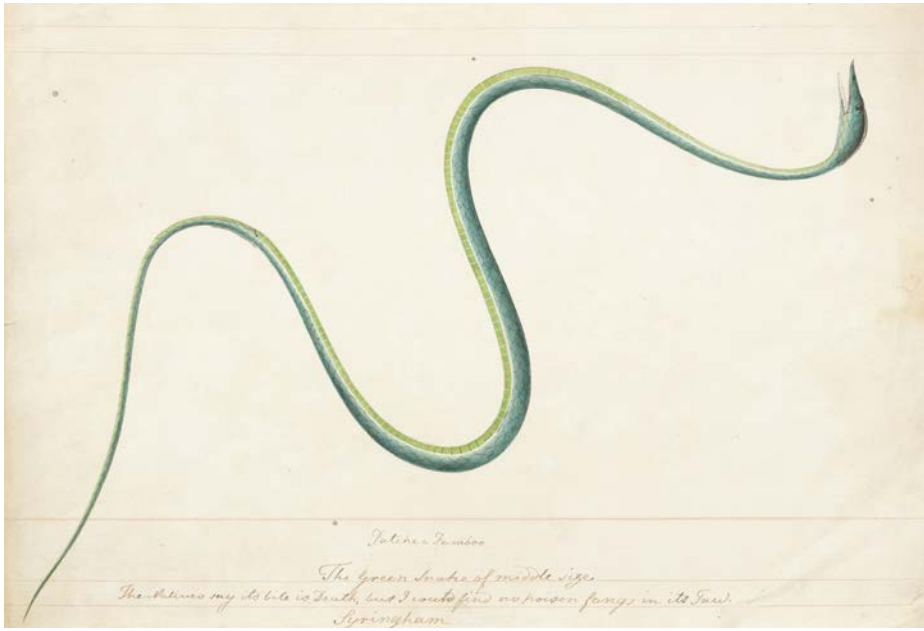
Brenthurst Library, South Africa.
William Paterson Album 1, folio 63.



A study of Oriolus kundoo depicted in Paterson Album 1 folio 63 [3]



Present Study of A Male Indian golden oriole, *Oriolus kundoo*



A Study of an Indian Vine Snake, *Ahaetulla* sp.
India, circa 1782-1788

Watercolour, pencil, ink, *H. 30.5 x W. 45 cm*

This insightful study depicts the sinuous emerald green vine snake, with its distinctive acuminate head and horizontal pupils. The inscription reads:

'*Patchee = pamboo. The green snake of middle size. The Natives say its bite is Death, but I could find no poison fangs in its Jaw.*'[1] [possibly 'I.S.'] *Syringham* [possible date].'[1]

The inscription is of particular interest as it indicates the local name for the snake and that it was either found or painted, or both, in 'Syringham'. This was an anglicized name for Srirangam, a river island in Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli), south India.[2] The island is famous for the impressive Sri Ranganathaswamy temple complex, dedicated to the Hindu deity Vishnu.

In March 1784 Paterson wrote to William Forsyth from Trichinopoly:

'*As there is at present nothing to do in the field I have come down from the army to this place in order to inform myself of the Gentoo [Hindu] Religion of Government which you will find a very curious subject and I have formed enough to get it safe home.*'[3]

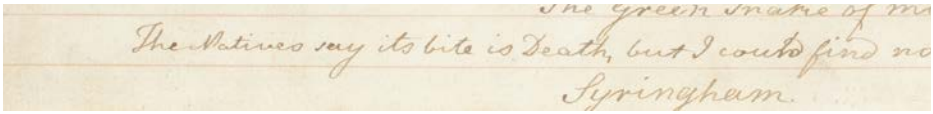
Paterson's December 1784 letter to William Forsyth references his interest in Hindu architecture, while also mentioning his drawings.

'*Should I have the good fortune of getting everything safe home, that such a collection was never yet brought into England, particularly the Gentoo [Hindu] architecture and some of the most famous buildings in India, also these of different gods & goddesses, both in drawing & in copper with some part of their history, and also a description of the world by the Bremmins [Brahmins] and also a tolerable collection of plants and birds...*'[4]

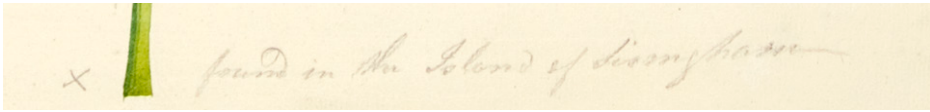
It appears that both letters reference Paterson's drawings relating to Hindu architecture which he intended on bringing back from India.

Two works in the Brenthurst Paterson albums provide further insight into what was clearly a notable trip for William Paterson to acquire a variety of drawings (see comparision below). Album 3 folio 47[5] (see pp. 38-39) depicts a study of a branch with the inscription '*found in the island of siringham.*' Album 2 folio 43[6] appears to depict *Barlerias prionitis*, another flowering plant and a male purple sunbird, *Cinnyris asiaticus*.[6] The inscription is almost identical to folio 47, although the island appears to be spelled '*seringham*.' The inscriptions are in pencil and notably both infer the same location. The reference to finding the specimens '*in*' as opposed to '*on*' the island alludes to Paterson's humble origins and lack of formal education. This is further evidenced in the divergent spellings.

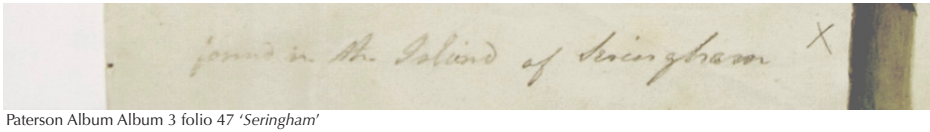
It is interesting to note that the present drawing also mentions '*Syringham*,' although the spelling differs and the inscription appears in ink. Given Paterson faced challenges with writing and spelling it is conceivable that he may have again written an unfamiliar



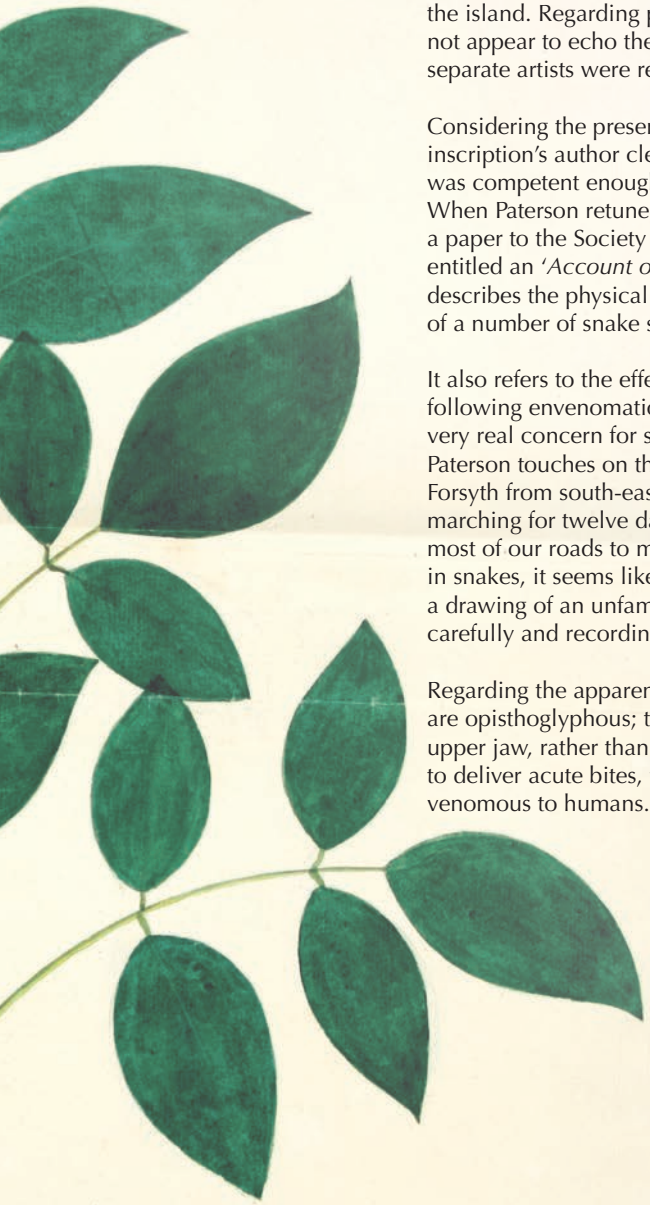
Present Study of A Vine snake. '*Seringham*'



Paterson Album 2 folio 43 'Seringham'



Paterson Album Album 3 folio 47 '*Seringham*'



place name differently. Furthermore, it seems likely the snake drawing and the two botanical studies were not undertaken on the same day, given their inscriptions are written in differing mediums. It is also possible that the works may have been undertaken on two separate visits to the island. Regarding painterly technique, the sunbird does not appear to echo the hand of the vine snake, inferring separate artists were responsible for the drawings.

Considering the present drawing, it is noteworthy that the inscription's author clearly had an interest in snakes and was competent enough to examine the creature's mouth. When Paterson retuned to London from India, he presented a paper to the Society for Promoting Natural History entitled an '*Account of the poisons in Africa*'. His paper describes the physical characteristics and venom potency of a number of snake species.

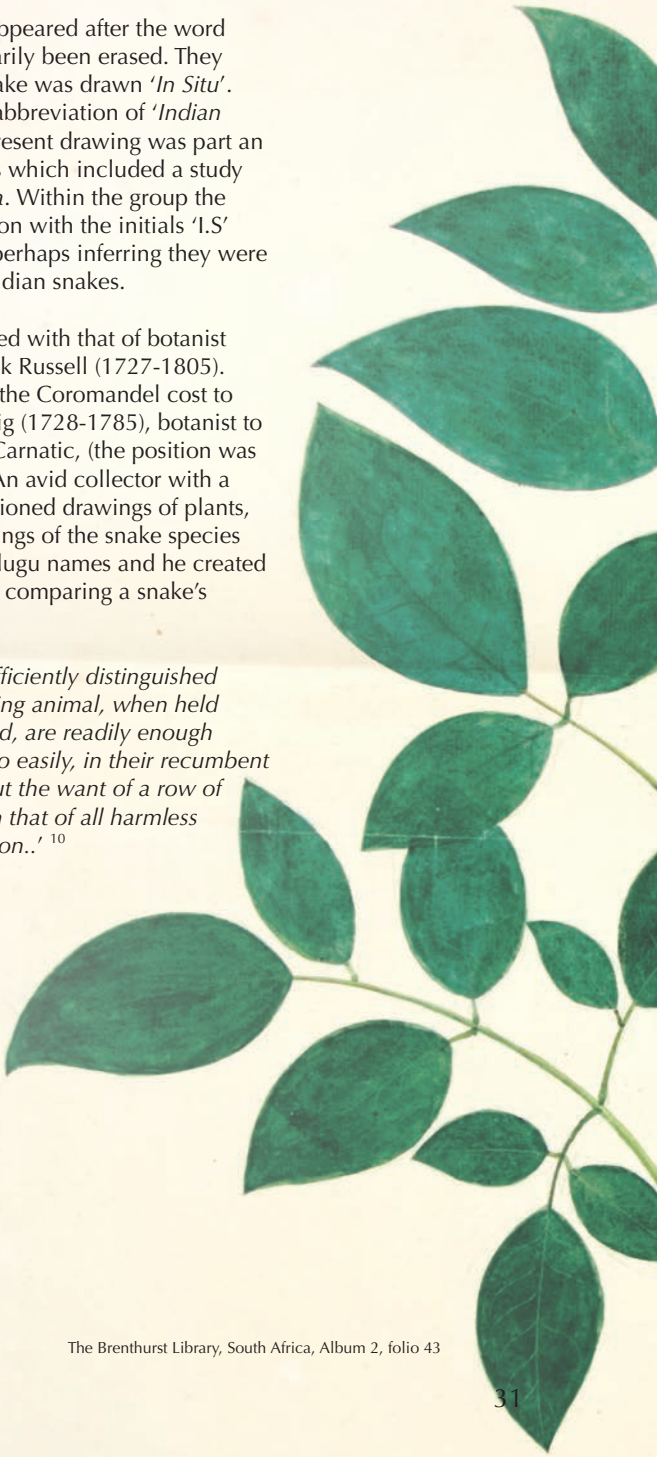
It also refers to the effectiveness of a pill taken by soldiers following envenomation.[7] Evidently snake bites were a very real concern for solders as they moved across country. Paterson touches on this in a letter written to William Forsyth from south-eastern India; he describes constantly marching for twelve days 'through a country where we had most of our roads to make.'[8] Given his particular interest in snakes, it seems likely that Paterson would commission a drawing of an unfamiliar specimen, before examining it carefully and recording his observations.

Regarding the apparent lack of '*poison fangs,*' Ahaetulla are opisthoglyphous; their fangs appear at the back of the upper jaw, rather than the front. As the snakes are unable to deliver acute bites, they are only considered to by mildly venomous to humans.[9]

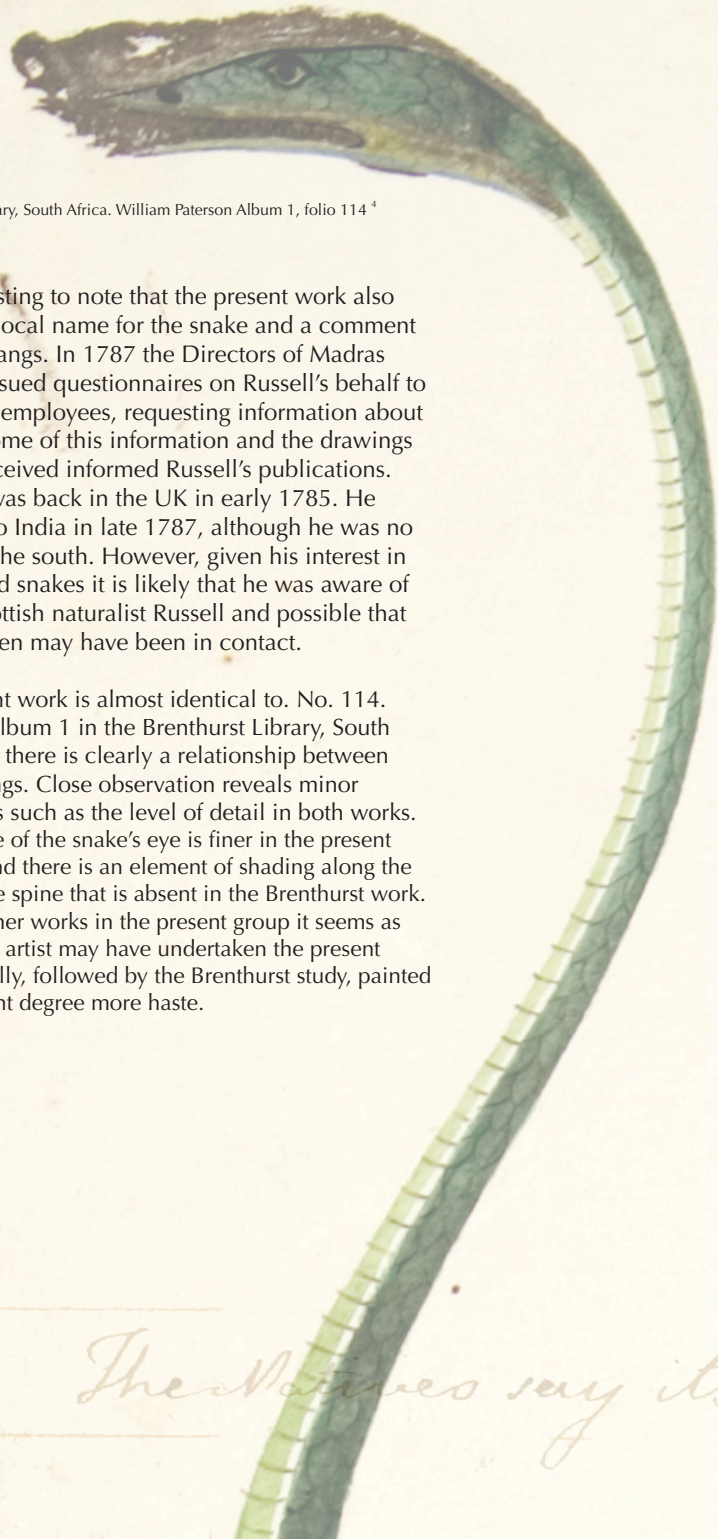
The initials 'I.S' seem to have appeared after the word '*Jaw,*' although they have primarily been erased. They may have indicated that the snake was drawn '*In Situ*'. They could also have been an abbreviation of '*Indian Snakes*.' It is notable that the present drawing was part an original group of nine drawings which included a study of a spectacled cobra, *naja naja*. Within the group the only works bearing an inscription with the initials 'I.S' were the two snake drawings, perhaps inferring they were intended for a larger study of Indian snakes.

Paterson's time in India coincided with that of botanist and notable herpetologist Patrick Russell (1727-1805). In 1781 Russell travelled along the Coromandel cost to meet with Johann Gerhard König (1728-1785), botanist to the East India Company in the Carnatic, (the position was appointed to Russell in 1785). An avid collector with a broad interest, Russell commissioned drawings of plants, reptiles and fish. Russell's drawings of the snake species were all inscribed with local Telugu names and he created a system of taxonomy based on comparing a snake's fangs;

'*The poisonous serpents are sufficiently distinguished by their fangs; which, in the living animal, when held properly by the neck, or irritated, are readily enough discerned; though not always so easily, in their recumbent state, or in the dead subject. But the want of a row of teeth in the upper jaw, found in that of all harmless serpents, serves also as a criterion..*' [10]



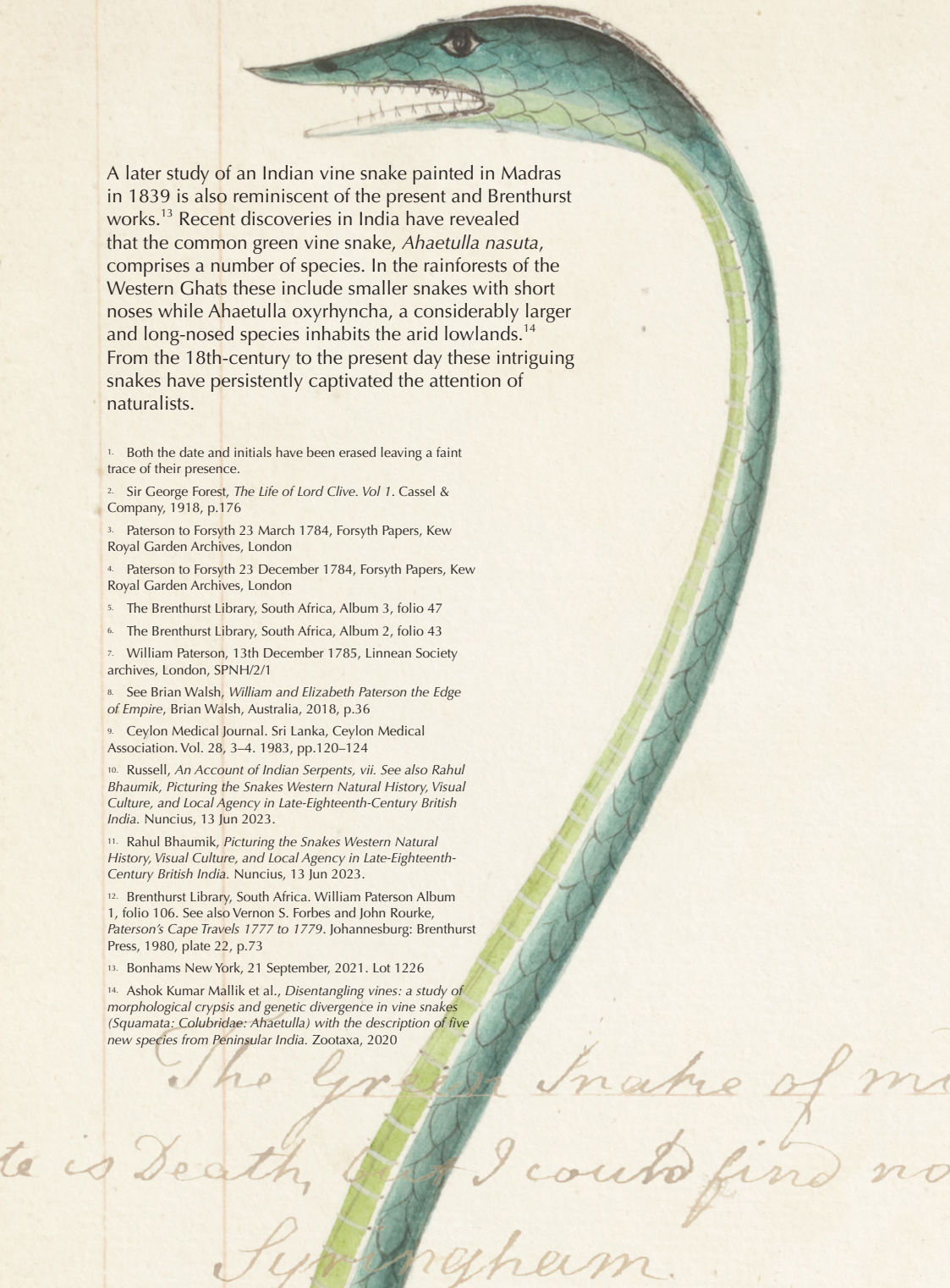
The Brenthurst Library, South Africa, Album 2, folio 43



Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 114 [4]

It is interesting to note that the present work also bears the local name for the snake and a comment about its fangs. In 1787 the Directors of Madras Council issued questionnaires on Russell's behalf to Company employees, requesting information about snakes. Some of this information and the drawings that he received informed Russell's publications. Paterson was back in the UK in early 1785. He returned to India in late 1787, although he was no longer in the south. However, given his interest in botany and snakes it is likely that he was aware of fellow Scottish naturalist Russell and possible that the two men may have been in contact.

The present work is almost identical to. No. 114. Paterson Album 1 in the Brenthurst Library, South Africa and there is clearly a relationship between the drawings. Close observation reveals minor differences such as the level of detail in both works. The outline of the snake's eye is finer in the present drawing and there is an element of shading along the ridge of the spine that is absent in the Brenthurst work. As with other works in the present group it seems as though the artist may have undertaken the present work initially, followed by the Brenthurst study, painted with a slight degree more haste.



A later study of an Indian vine snake painted in Madras in 1839 is also reminiscent of the present and Brenthurst works.[13] Recent discoveries in India have revealed that the common green vine snake, *Ahaetulla nasuta*, comprises a number of species. In the rainforests of the Western Ghats these include smaller snakes with short noses while Ahaetulla oxyrhyncha, a considerably larger and long-nosed species inhabits the arid lowlands.[14] From the 18th-century to the present day these intriguing snakes have persistently captivated the attention of naturalists.

1. Both the date and initials have been erased leaving a faint trace of their presence.

2. Sir George Forest, *The Life of Lord Clive. Vol 1*. Cassel & Company, 1918, p.176

3. Paterson to Forsyth 23 March 1784, Forsyth Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London

4. Paterson to Forsyth 23 December 1784, Forsyth Papers, Kew Royal Garden Archives, London

5. The Brenthurst Library, South Africa, Album 3, folio 47

6. The Brenthurst Library, South Africa, Album 2, folio 43

7. William Paterson, 13th December 1785, Linnean Society archives, London, SPNH/2/1

8. See Brian Walsh, *William and Elizabeth Paterson the Edge of Empire*, Brian Walsh, Australia, 2018, p.36

9. Ceylon Medical Journal. Sri Lanka, Ceylon Medical Association. Vol. 28, 3–4. 1983, pp.120–124

10. Russell, *An Account of Indian Serpents, vii. See also Rahul Bhaumik, Picturing the Snakes Western Natural History, Visual Culture, and Local Agency in Late-Eighteenth-Century British India*. Nuncius, 13 Jun 2023.

11. Rahul Bhaumik, *Picturing the Snakes Western Natural History, Visual Culture, and Local Agency in Late-Eighteenth-Century British India*. Nuncius, 13 Jun 2023.

12. Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 106. See also Vernon S. Forbes and John Rourke, *Paterson's Cape Travels 1777 to 1779*. Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1980, plate 22, p.73

13. Bonhams New York, 21 September, 2021. Lot 1226

14. Ashok Kumar Mallik et al., *Disentangling vines: a study of morphological crypsis and genetic divergence in vine snakes (Squamata: Colubridae: Ahaetulla) with the description of five new species from Peninsular India*. Zootaxa, 2020







Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 3, folio 47



A Study of a Female Indian Chameleon, *Chamaeleo zeylanicus*
India, circa 1782-1788
Watercolour, pencil, ink, *H. 32,7 x W. 45 cm*

Astounding technicolour dexterity, tongues which can accelerate from 0 to 60 miles per hour in a hundredth of a second, and eyes that can simultaneously look in different directions; the chameleon is a truly remarkable creature.

This vivid study depicts the Indian chameleon, *chamaeleo zeylanicus* clasping the branches of a scared fig tree, *ficus religiosa*.[1] The extraordinary head is crowned by a prominent casque, ornamented with a crest. Protruding laterally, a conical eye appears fixated as though the animal is moments away from devouring an insect. Comprising flat granular tubercles, the chameleon's emerald body is punctuated with dark green striations. Bifid clasping feet provide excellent grip while the sinuous prehensile tail acts as an additional limb. The lack of a tarsal spur on the feet indicates that the animal depicted is a female.

Chamaeleo zeylanicus is native to India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Diurnal and predominantly arboreal, they may be found in mangroves, forests, scrublands and gardens. Traversing vegetation with slow precision, they mimic the swaying of branches in their rocking and bobbing movements.[2]



A study of a Chameleon depicted in Paterson Album 1 folio 106 [2]

The present study is virtually identical to Paterson Album 1, folio 106 in the Brenthurst Library, although it has been executed with somewhat greater refinement.[3] This may be observed in the shading around the eye, and the tubercles along the ridge of the casque and spine. Furthermore, palmate venation is delicately illustrated on the leaves of the present work, however this is absent from the comparable Brenthurst drawing. One wonders whether the present study may have been completed initially and followed immediately by the Brenthurst work.

'The chameleon full size' is written in European handwriting resembling that of William Paterson at the bottom of the study.

1. Jayanta Kumar Mallick, Coastal Mangrove Herpetofauna: *An Ecological Study of the Greater Sundarbans*. United Kingdom, Ethics International Press Limited, 2025, p.382.

2. Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 106. See also Vernon S Forbes and John Rourke, *Paterson's Cape Travels 1777 to 1779*. Johannesburg: Brenthurst Press, 1980, plate 22, p.73.

3. Mark O'Shea, *Lizards of the World: A Guide to Every Family*. United Kingdom, Ivy Press, 2021, pp.178-179.



Brenthurst Library, South Africa. William Paterson Album 1, folio 106 [2]



Present Study of a Female Indian Chameleon

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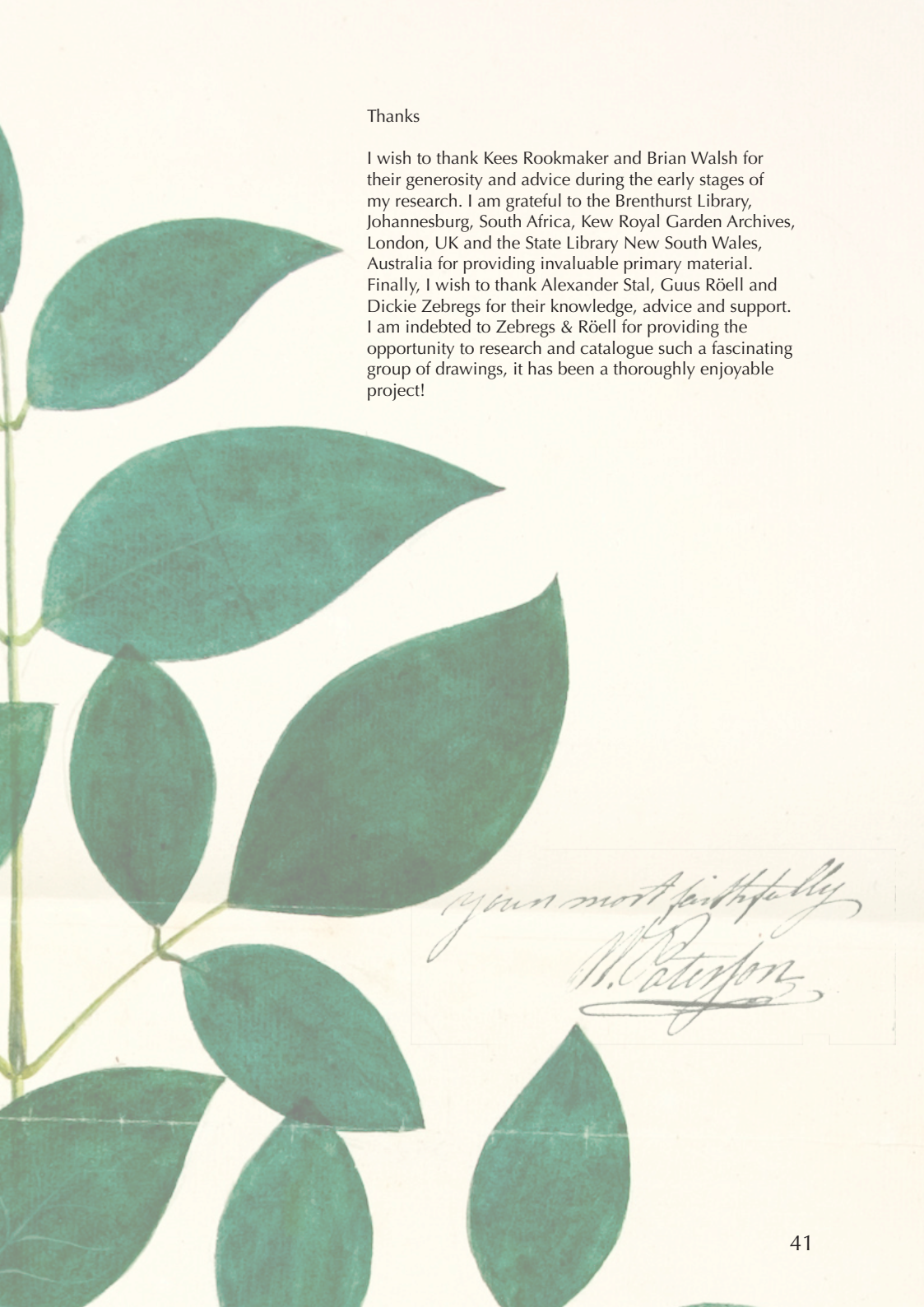
The British Library: Visual Arts. London, NHD Vol.1 184, 185.

The Brenthurst Library, Johannesburg, South Africa. William Paterson Albums 1, 2 and 3. (ART 144/1, Art 144/2, Art 144/3)

Sir Joseph Banks Papers, series 27. State Library New South Wales.

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