

The Animals, Plants, and Resources of the British Atlantic Colonies Images & Commentary, 1692-1760

Alligators fascinated European settlers and visitors in America — as did rattlesnakes, hummingbirds, raccoons, skunks, opossums, beaver, flying squirrels, bald eagles, buffalo, mosquitoes, dung beetles, palmetto trees, and a myriad of other native animals and plants. Of direct economic interest were the continent's natural resources of woods and minerals—lucrative stimulants to the colonial economy and, therefore, to the British empire. There are two groups of writings from which to find commentary on the plants, animals, metals, and other resources of British America: (1) "natural histories" published as organized collections of precisely drawn and annotated illustrations; and (2) casual commentary and drawings in travel journals, memoirs, almanacs, promotional works, sketchbooks, poems, and similar works. A sample from both groups is presented here. What draws the attention of European settlers and visitors as they discover the continent's unique resources? How do they respond?

■ A Swedish botanist, Peter Kalm travelled through the middle and northern colonies and into French Canada, compiling an extensive survey of the region's plants, animals, peoples, and cultures, always interwoven with his personal impressions.

The gnats which are very troublesome at night here are called mosquitoes. They are exactly like the gnats in Sweden, only somewhat smaller . . . In daytime or at night they come into the houses, and when the people have gone to bed they begin their disagreeable humming, approach nearer and nearer to the bed, and at last suck up as much blood that they can hardly fly away. When the weather has been cool for some days the mosquitoes disappear; but when it changes again, and especially after a rain, they gather frequently in such quantities about the homes that their numbers are legion. The chimneys of the English, which have no dampers for shutting them up, afford the gnats a free entrance into the houses. On sultry evenings they accompany the cattle in great swarms from the woods to the houses or to town, and when they are driven before the houses, the gnats fly in wherever they can. In the greatest heat of summer, they are so numerous in some places that the air seems to be full of them, especially near swamps and stagnant waters, such as the river Morris in New Jersey. The inhabitants therefore make a fire before their homes to expel these disagreeable guests by smoke. The old Swedes here said that gnats had formerly been much more numerous; that ever at present they swarmed in vast quantities on the seashore near the salt water, and that those which troubled us this autumn in Philadelphia were of a more venomous kind than they commonly used to be. This last quality appeared from the blisters, which were formed on the spots where the gnats had inserted their sting. In Sweden I never felt any other inconvenience from their sting than a little itching, while they sucked. But when they stung me here at night, my face was so disfigured by little red spots and blisters that I was almost ashamed to show myself.

—Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America* [1748-1751], English version, 1770.



Here are several species of squirrels. The ground squirrels, or *Sciurus striatus* L., are commonly kept in cages because they are very pretty: but they cannot be entirely tamed. The larger squirrels, or *Sciurus cinereus* L., frequently do a great deal of mischief in the plantations, but particularly destroy the corn, for they climb up the stalks, cut the ears in pieces and eat only the loose and sweet kernels inside. They sometimes come by hundreds upon a cornfield and then destroy the whole crop of a farmer in one night. In Maryland, therefore, everyone is obliged annually to fill four squirrels, and their heads are given to a local officer to prevent deceit. In other provinces everybody who kills squirrels receives twopence apiece for them from the public on delivering the heads. Their flesh is eaten and reckoned a dainty. The skins are sold, but are not much esteemed.

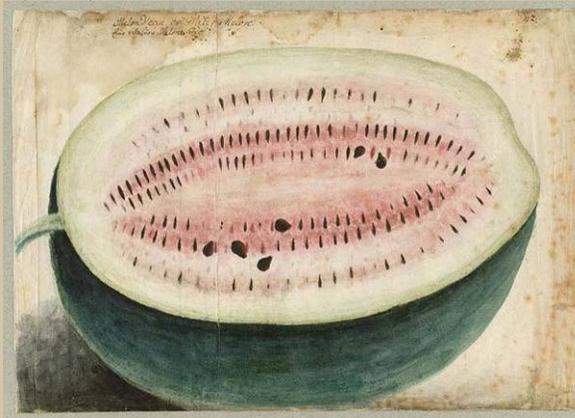
Peter Kalm Middle Colonies, 1749-1750

The *raccoon* which we [Swedes] call "Siupp" can in time be made so tame as to run about the streets like a domestic animal; but it is impossible to make it give up its habit of stealing. In the dark it creeps to the poultry and kills a whole flock in one night. Sugar and other sweet things must be carefully hidden from it, for if chests and boxes are not locked up, it gets into them, eats the sugar, and after plunging into molasses licks it off its paws. The women therefore have every day some complaint against it, and for this reason many people would rather forbear the diversion which this ape-like animal affords.

The *gray and flying squirrels* are so tamed by the boys that they sit on their shoulders and follow them everywhere.

Peter Kalm, *Travels in North America* (1748-1751),
English version of 1770



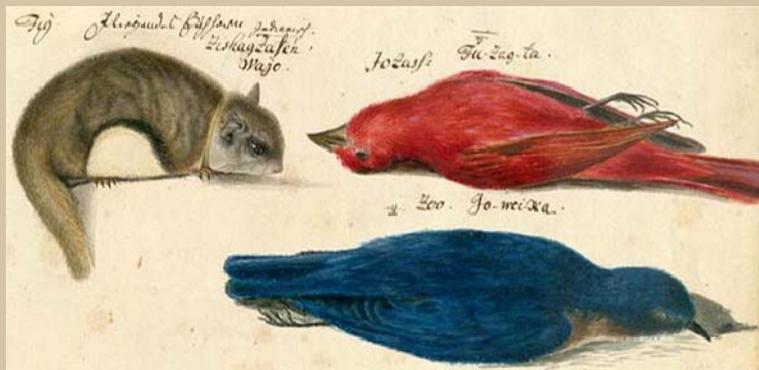


The watermelons are the best of all melons. They are as big or bigger than a gourd. . . The meat is white near the shell and red or lemon yellow near the seeds. The juice is agreeable, sweet and refreshing and quenches your thirst.



A sort of squash which ripens in June and lasts until mid-August. The big sort can be kept until winter time. It is inedible raw, must be cooked. . . Is prepared either like cauliflower, having nearly the same taste, or like stewed apples.

Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck, Georgia, sketchbook, 1736



Flying squirrel, Redbird [cardinal], Bluebird

Flying squirrel. If you want to catch you must cut down the branch on which it is sitting and then the tree itself. It will continue to run around the trunk and you will be able to catch it alive.

Alligator, a sort of crocodile.

(a, b) These two nuts, which are green inside and out, are found near the water and are swallowed by the alligators at the end of the fall, in addition to the nuts which grow on the pines, containing some special wood, and also fall to the ground in the fall. Then the alligator stops eating and lives through the winter only on these things. Whatever is not digested is spit out by the alligator the next spring, and until the next fall it lives on leaves.



■ In 1750 the German settler Rev. Johann Martin Bolzius (a cofounder of Ebenezer, Georgia, with Philip Georg Friedrich von Reck) published a pamphlet in Q&A format to entice more German emigrants to the Carolinas and Georgia. Several questions, including the first three, reveal Europeans' anxieties about poisonous animals and plants in America.

1st Question. Whether there is in Carolina much poisonous vermin, as, e.g., snakes, scorpions, Scolopendra [centipedes], tarantulas, and more of a similar kind, and whether their bite is deadly, etc.

Answer. In Carolina and Georgia there is poisonous vermin, such as snakes, a kind of large lizard, various kinds of poisonous spiders and crawling insects, also a furry worm, as long and wide as a finger, which hangs at times from the chestnut bushes; it may be a Scolopendra. But of scorpions and tarantulas nothing is known. Among the snakes the rattlesnakes, which have a rattle of thin horn at the tail and move very slowly, are the most poisonous; their bite causes death in a few minutes unless aid is given immediately. The bites of the other snakes are not deadly. One rarely hears that someone is bitten, and only one instance is known to me of a man who died of a rattlesnake's bite. The more the land is settled and cleared of trees and bushes, the more such vermin decrease. . . In the summer people near the sea and near rivers where rushes grow in abundance are much bothered by large humming insects, here called mosquitoes, also by very small flies

2nd Question. Whether there are there many poisonous trees, fruit, herbs, and plants, etc.

Answer. It may be that there are poisonous trees, fruit, herbs, and plants in Carolina and Georgia, but to me none are known except the nightshade, also known in Germany, which bears small black berries, which may however not be so poisonous as in Europe. . . .

3rd Question. Whether there are many wild carnivorous animals such as lions, panthers, tigers, bears, wolves, crocodiles, and similar ones, and whether they do much damage.

Answer. Neither in Carolina nor in Georgia are there lions, panthers, and tigers. What are called tigers are only lynxes, which do harm to the cattle, pigs, and fowl. There are plenty of bears and wolves. But they are very timid, and flee when they see a man. . . Crocodiles or, as they are called here, alligators, live in standing water and lakes, apart from the main rivers, where there are many trees, bushes, and rushes in a very large number, but they cannot be compared with the Egyptian crocodiles. People who like to bathe are said to have been pulled under water by the large crocodiles. They do harm to pigs, geese, ducks, and dogs that get too close to them. There is, by the way, no reason to be afraid of them. . . .

29th Question. Whether the well-known American buffalo or buffalo ox is tamed and can be used like our oxen, whose meat when it has been cut up resembles our beef, whose cow gives milk like our cows and whose milk is used for the same purpose, and the meat of whose calf is the same as our veal, and equally whether it is true that these animals are covered with a fine and valuable wool instead of with hair.

Answer. In our region there are no buffalo oxen and cows, but farther up, towards the southwest, they are frequent. Their hair (as I have seen from the hides) is not much better than that of bears or rough sheep wool, and I have never heard that one catches them alive, cuts them up, takes the milk from the cows, kill the calves. The meat is said to taste similar to other beef and to be very tough if from old oxen or cows.

___ Rev. Johann Martin Bolzius, *Reliable Answer to Some Submitted Questions Concerning the Land Carolina . . . Regard Is Also Paid at the Same Time to the Condition of the Colony of Georgia*, 1750.

- Another Q&A recruiting pamphlet was written by John Norris to encourage the emigration of impoverished and unemployed British to the Carolinas.

Simon Question [English farmer]. *What Sorts of wild Beasts have you, that is serviceable to Eat when a Man hath kill'd them?*

James Freeman, [Carolina planter]. Bears, Young or Old, if Fat, is much esteem'd by many Men, that the Flesh is almost comparable to Hog's or Swine's Flesh; Deer's Flesh is the same as here, but not so much esteem'd, because so common that few Planters, especially in the Out settlements, is not long without some in their Houses; for *Deer* is very plentiful in the Woods; and men are not hinder'd, as here, from killing them, or any other wild Creatures. We have store of *Rabbits*, which, in shape and bigness, are much like the *Hares* in *England*, but not in color; and *Squirrels* also, which are very good Meat. *Raccoon's* Flesh, tho' smaller than *Mutton*, hath much the same Taste, and is commonly kill'd with Dogs, which is a good Recreation: But *Wolves, Tigers, Foxes, Alligators, and Possums* are not Eaten, unless by Native *Indians*, who often use them at their Pleasure, to Eat as other Flesh. . . .

___ John Norris, *Profitable Advice for Rich And Poor in a Dialogue, or Discourse between James Freeman, a Carolina Planter, and Simon Question, a West-Country Farmer. Containing a Description, or true Relation, of South Carolina, 1712.*

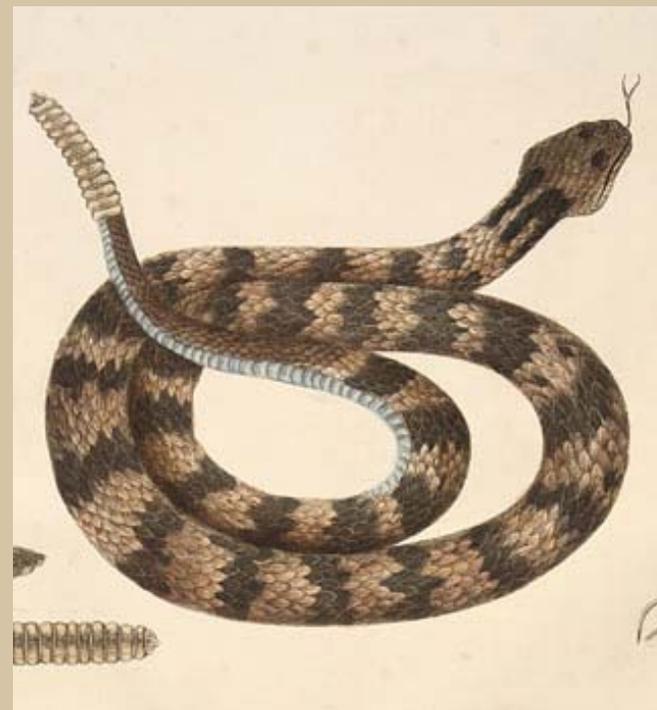
- Another publication for potential emigrants was written by Gottlieb Mittelberger, a German settler and organ-master who, while writing to discourage emigration, yet raved about the animals, plants, forests, and farmland he found in Pennsylvania.

. . . It is quite surprising how dense the forests are, and what beautiful, smooth, thick and tall trees they contain. There are many kinds of trees, mostly oaks, but they are not so fruitful as those in Germany. After these there are also beech-trees, but not many. Birch-trees are rarely found, but I saw some that were very tall and as thick as a thick oak-tree. I have already spoken of the poplars; they have soft wood which looks snow-white inside; there are many of them. Walnut-trees are exceedingly plentiful; this beautiful coffee-brown and hard wood is precious and useful, because all sorts of fine and elegant household furniture are made of it. When cut, a great deal of it is shipped to Holland, England, Ireland and other countries where it brings a high price. . . The greatest ornament of the forests are the beautiful and excellent cedar-trees; they grow mostly in the high mountains. This wood has a very strong odor, is as light as foam, and especially precious for organ-pipes; for the pipes made of said cedar-wood have a much finer and purer tone than those of tin, of which I have seen sufficient proofs. All houses in Philadelphia are roofed with shingles of cedar-wood. When a heavy rain pours down upon it, this wood sounds like a roof of copper or brass.

The most wonderful bird, not only in Pennsylvania, but perhaps in the whole world, is a small bird which is rarely seen [hummingbird]. This little bird is not quite so large as a May-bug, but only as large as a gold-bird. It glitters like gold, and sometimes it appears green, blue and red. Its beak is rather long, and as sharp as a needle; its feet are like fine wire. It sips only the honey from the flowers; hence it has the name of a sugar-bird. It builds its nest in the flowers in a garden; the nest is not larger than a cupping-glass, but there are generally 4 or 5 young ones in it. It moves its wings with indescribable swiftness, making a loud hissing with them. When it does not fly, one can hear it sing very softly and gracefully when one is fortunate enough to get quite near it. I will not say for how much this little bird is sometimes bought by great people. But they do not live long, as it is impossible to furnish them with their proper food.

One of the beauties of Pennsylvania are the fire-flies that fly about so plentifully by night in the summer time, that it seems as if it were snowing fire. Some years ago a newly arrived German man was badly scared by them; for as he was working in the field late one evening, and some fire-flies, which were totally unknown to him, were flying about him, our honest Hans was so frightened that he dropped everything and ran hastily home. As he came in fear and trembling to his family, he said: "O God, shield and protect us! How many fiery spirits fly about in this country! O God, would I were in Germany again!"

___ Gottlieb Mittelberger, *Journey to Pennsylvania in the Year 1750, and Return to Germany in the Year 1754, 1756.*



Mark Catesby Carolina, 1731-1743

Caprimulgus: The Goat-Sucker of Carolina: They are very numerous in Virginia and Carolina, and are called there East India Bats. In the evening they appear most, and especially in cloudy weather: before rain, the air is full of them, pursuing and dodging after Flies and Beetles.

Aquila Capite Albo: Bald Eagle: Tho' it is an Eagle of a small size, yet has great strength and spirit, preying on Pigs, Lambs, and Fawns.

Noctua Aurita Minor: The Little Owl: . . . feather'd and hairy down to the toes, armed with four semicircular black Talons.

Vipera Caudisona Americana: The Rattle-Snake: The largest I ever saw, was one about eight Feet in Length, weighing between eight and nine Pounds: This Monster was gliding into the House of Colonel Blake of Carolina, and had certainly taken his Abode there undiscovered, had not the Domestic Animals alarmed the Family with their repeated Outcries;

Mark Catesby, *The Natural History of Carolina, Florida, and the Bahama Islands*, London, 1731-1743

■ A Virginia planter summed up the best and worst of his home colony's climate.

. . . I believe it is as healthy a Country as any under Heaven; but the extraordinary pleasantness of the Weather and the goodness of the Fruit lead People into many Temptations. The clearness and brightness of the Sky add new vigor to their Spirits and perfectly remove all Splenetic and sullen Thoughts. Here they enjoy all the benefits of a warm Sun, and by their shady Groves are protected from its Inconvenience. Here all their Senses are entertain'd with an endless Succession of Native Pleasures. . . .

On the other side, all the Annoyances and Inconveniences of the Country may fairly be summed up under these three Heads: Thunder, Heat, and troublesome Vermin.

___Robert Beverley, Jr., *The History and Present State of Virginia*, 1705; revised and enlarged 1722.

■ Another Virginia planter led a team to survey the boundary between Virginia and North Carolina, a region that includes the Great Dismal Swamp.

Our hunters brought us four wild turkeys, which at that season began to be fat and very delicious, especially the hens. These birds seem to be of the bustard kind, and fly heavily. Some of them are exceedingly large, and weigh upwards of forty pounds; nay, some bold historians venture to say, upwards of fifty pounds. They run very fast, stretching forth their wings all the time, like the ostrich, by way of sails to quicken their speed. They roost commonly upon very high trees, standing near some river or creek, and are so stupefied at the sight of fire, that if you make a blaze in the night near the place where they roost, you may fire upon them several times successively, before they will dare to fly away. Their spurs are so sharp and strong that the Indians used formerly to point their arrows with them, though now they point them with a sharp white stone. In the spring the turkey-cocks begin to gobble, which is the language wherein they make love. . . .

I found near our camp some plants of that kind of rattle-snake root, called star-grass. The leaves shoot out circularly, and grow horizontally and near the ground. The root is in shape not unlike the rattle of that serpent, and is a strong antidote against the bite of it. It is very bitter, and where it meets with any poison, works by violent sweats, but where it meets with none, has no sensible operation but that of putting the spirits into a great hurry, and so of promoting perspiration. The rattle-snake has an utter antipathy to this plant, insomuch that if you smear your hands with the juice of it, you may handle the viper safely. Thus much I can say on my own experience, that once in July, when these snakes are in their greatest vigour, I besmeared a dog's nose with the powder of this root, and made him trample on a large snake several times, which, however, was so far from biting him, that it perfectly sickened at the dog's approach, and turned its head from him with the utmost aversion.

___William Byrd, *The History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina, Run in the Year 1728*, publ. 1841.

■ An English clergyman, Andrew Burnaby travelled throughout British America from Virginia to Massachusetts in the late 1750s.

There is a species of polecat in this part of America, which is commonly called a skunk. This animal, when pursued, or assailed by its enemy, ejects its urine; which emits such a fetid and insupportable stench, as almost to stifle and suffocate whatever is within the reach of it.

A very curious sight is frequently exhibited upon this and the other great rivers in Virginia, which for its novelty is exceedingly diverting to strangers. During the spring and summer months the fishing-hawk [osprey] is often seen hovering over the rivers, or resting on the wing without the least visible change of place for some minutes, then suddenly darting down and plunging into the water, from whence it seldom rises again without a rock fish, or some other considerable fish in its talons. It immediately shakes off the water like a mist, and makes the best of its way towards the woods. The bald-eagle, which is generally upon the watch, instantly pursues, and if it can overtake, endeavours to soar above it. The hawk growing solicitous for its own safety drops the fish, and the bald-eagle immediately stoops, and seldom fails to catch it in its pounces before it reaches the water.

___Rev. Andrew Burnaby, *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North-America. In the Years 1759 and 1760*, London: 1775.



John Lawson, Carolina, 1709

The Buffelo is a wild Beast of *America* which has a Bunch on his Back, as the Cattle of St. *Laurence* are said to have. He seldom appears amongst the *English* Inhabitants, his chief Haunt being in the Land of *Messiasippi*, which is, for the most part, a plain Country; yet I have known some kill'd on the Hilly Part of *Cape-Fair-River* [Cape Fear] River], they passing the Ledges of vast Mountains from the said *Messiasippie*, before they can come near us. I have eaten of their Meat, but do not think it so good as our Beef; yet the younger Calves are cry'd up for excellent Food, as very likely they may be. It is conjectured that these Buffelos, mixt in Breed with our tame Cattle, would much better the Breed for Largeness and Milk, which seems very probable. Of the wild Bull's Skin, Buff is made. The *Indians* cut the Skins into Quarters for the Ease of their Transportation, and make Beds to lie on. They spin the Hair into Garters, Girdles, Sashes, and the like, it being long and curled, and often of chesnut or red Colour. These Monsters are found to weigh (as I am informed by a Traveller of Credit) from 1600 to 2400 Weight.

The long, black Snake frequents the Land altogether, and is the nimblest Creature living. His Bite has no more Venom than a Prick with a Pin. He is the best Mouser that can be, for he leaves not one of that Vermin alive where he comes. He also kills the Rattle-Snake wheresoever he meets him by twisting his Head about the Neck of the Rattle-Snake and whipping him to Death with his Tail. This Whipster haunts the Dairies of careless Housewives, and never misses to skim the Milk clear of the Cream. He is an excellent Egg-Merchant, for he does not suck the Eggs, but swallows them whole (as all Snakes do). He will often swallow all the Eggs from under a Hen that sits, and coil himself under the Hen in the Nest, where sometimes the Housewife finds him. This Snake, for all his Agility, is so brittle that when he is pursued and gets his Head into the Hole of a Tree, if anybody gets hold of the other end, he will twist and break himself off in the middle. One of these Snakes, whose Neck is no thicker that a Woman's little Finger, will swallow a Squirrel; so much does that part stretch, in all these Creatures.

Tortois, vulgarly call'd Turtle; I have rank'd these among the Insects, because they lay Eggs, and I did not know well where to put them. Among us there are three sorts. The first is the green Turtle, which is not common, but is sometimes found on our Coast. The next is the Hawks-bill, which is common. These two sorts are extraordinary Meat. The third is Logger-Head, which Kind scarce anyone covets, except it be for the Eggs, which of this and all other Turtles are very good Food. None of these sorts of Creatures Eggs will ever admit the White to be harder than a Jelly; yet the Yolk, with boiling, becomes as hard as any other Egg.

John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina, Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country . . .*, London, 1709

The Possum is found no where but in *America*. He is the Wonder of all the Land-Animals, being the size of a Badger and near that Colour. The Male's Pizzle is placed retrograde; and in time of Coition, they differ from all other Animals, turning Tail to Tail, as Dog and Bitch when ty'd. The Female, doubtless, breeds her Young at her Teats, for I have seen them stick fast thereto when they have been no bigger than a small Rasberry, and seemingly inanimate. She has a Paunch, or false Belly, wherein she carries her Young after they are from those Teats, till they can shift for themselves. Their Food is Roots, Poultry, or wild Fruits. They have no Hair on their Tails, but a sort of a Scale, or hard Crust, as the Beavers have. If a Cat has nine lives this creature surely has nineteen; for if you



break every Bone in their Skin and mash their Skull, leaving them for Dead, you may come an hour after and they will be gone quite away, or perhaps you meet them creeping away. They are a very stupid Creature, utterly neglecting their Safety. They are most like Rats of anything. I have, for Necessity in the Wilderness, eaten of them. Their Flesh is very white and well tasted, but their ugly Tails put me out of Conceit with that Fare. They climb Trees, as the Raccoons do. Their Fur is not esteem'd nor used, save that the *Indians* spin it into Girdles and Garters.

John Lawson, *Carolina*, 1709

The Rattle-Snakes are found on all the Main[land] of *America*, that I ever had any Account of; being so call'd from the Rattle at the end of their Tails, which is a Connexion of jointed Coverings, of an excrementitious Matter, betwixt the Substance of a Nail and a Horn, though each *Tegmen* [i.e., scale] is very thin. Nature seems to have design'd these on purpose to give Warning of such an approaching Danger, as the venomous Bite of these Snakes is. Some of them grow to a very great Bigness, as six Foot in Length, their Middle being the Thickness of the Small of a lusty [large/strong] Man's Leg. We have an Account of much larger Serpents of this Kind, but I never met them yet, although I have seen and kill'd abundance in my time. . . Their Bite is venomous, if not speedily remedied; especially, if the Wound be in a Vein, Nerve, Tendon, or Sinew, when it is very difficult to cure. The *Indians* are the best Physicians for the Bite of these and all other venomous Creatures of this Country. There are four sorts of Snake-Roots already discover'd, which Knowledge came from the *Indians*, who have perform'd several great Cures. The Rattle-Snakes are accounted the peaceablest in the World, for they never attack anyone or injure them unless they are trod upon or molested. The most Danger of being bit by these Snakes is for those that survey Land in *Carolina*; yet I never heard of any Surveyor that was kill'd or hurt by them. I have myself gone over several of this Sort and others, yet it pleased God I never came to any harm.

They have the Power, or Art (I know not which to call it) to charm Squirrels, Hares, Partridges, or any such thing, in such a manner that they run directly into their Mouths. This I have seen by a Squirrel and one of these Rattle-Snakes; and other Snakes have, in some measure, the same Power. . . They cast their Skins every Year, and commonly abide near the Place where the old Skin lies. These call Skins are used in Physick [medicine], and the Rattles are reckon'd good to expedite the Birth. The Gall is made up into Pills, with Clay, and kept for Use, being given in Pestilential Fevers and the Small-Pox. It is accounted a noble Remedy, known to few, and held as a great *Arcanum*. This Snake has two Nostrils on each side of his Nose. Their Venom, I have Reason to believe, effects no Harm, any otherwise than when darted into the Wound by the Serpents' Teeth.

John Lawson, *A New Voyage to Carolina, Containing the Exact Description and Natural History of That Country . . .*, London, 1709

- These introductory lines from an eight-page poem, written by an amateur poet and published in 1692, laud the natural riches of Pennsylvania and reveal the settlers' awe of "things of a more stranger shape."

A Short Description of Pennsylvania, 1692, excerpts *

To all our Friends that do desire to know,
 What Country 'tis we live in, this will show.
 Attend to hear the Story I shall tell,
 No doubt but you will like this Country well.
 We that did leave our Country thought it strange,
 That ever we should make so good Exchange:
 I think 'tis hard for me for to express,
 How God provideth in a Wilderness.
 [*torn*]arge a wo[*torn*]
 [*torn*] Wolves, and Bears, and Pa[*torn*]
 Foxes, Raccoons, and Otters dwelleth here,
 Beside all these the Nimble footed Deer;
 The Hare so lightly runs for to escape;
 Yet here are things of a more stranger shape,
 The Female Possum, which I needs must tell ye,
 Is much admired with her double Belly;
 The Belly for her Meat, she hath beside
 Another where her Young Ones use to hide.
 O strange! 'tis hard, I think, for me to name
 The Multitudes of Beasts, both Wild and Tame:
 Beavers here are, whose Skins are soft as Silk,
 Horses to Ride on, Cows to give us Milk,
 Besides the Beasts, whose Nature is so Rude,
 To speak of them, I think I must Conclude.
 Also the Flocks of Fowl, and Birds, pray mind,
 The Swans, and Geese, and Turkeys in their kind,
 The Turkey-Buzzard, and Bald-Eagle high,
 Wild Ducks, which in great Companies do fly;
 More sorts of fowl here are, than I need [tell],
 Yet here are other things, which do excel.
 The Fields, most fruitful, yield such Crops of Wheat,
 And other things most excellent to eat.
 As Barley, Rye, and other sorts of Grain;
 In peace we plow, we sow, and reap again,
 Good Indian Corn, which is a larger breed,
 It doth our Cattle, Swine, and Horses feed,
 Buck-Wheat and Oats beside, good store of Reed,
 A plentiful Land, O plentiful indeed,
 For Plants, and Roots, and Herbs, we'll let them be,
 To name the Fruit that grows upon each Tree:

The fruit Trees do flourish, and are green,
 Where Apples, Peaches, Quinces, Plums are seen,
 With other Fruits, whose glittering Faces shine.
 The Grapes grow plenty on the fruitful Vine:
 Walnuts, Chestnuts, Hazelnuts appear,
 These things are plenty with us every Year.
 More things I can relate, for all is true,
 And yet not give the Country half his due.
 Also, here is of diverse sorts of Fish,
 So good, so pleasant as a man need wish,
 Within our Rivers, swimming to and fro.
 Great ones we catch, but small ones let them go.
 Here are most things than I can well express,
 Strange to be seen in such a Wilderness.
 By Day we work, at Night we rest in Peace,
 So that each Day our Substance doth increase:
 O blessed be his Name, who doth provide
 For you, and us, and all the World beside.
 . . .
 The Riches of this Land it is not known,
 What in the after Ages may be shown;
 My words are true, for here was lately found
 Some precious Metal underneath the Ground,
 The which some men did think was Silver Ore,
 Others said Copper, but some think 'tis more.
 They say there is a vein of Lead or Tin,
 Where choicer Metal lodgeth further in;
 So divers men have divers judgments spent,
 And so the matter lies in Argument.
 . . .
 We know no end of this great Tract of Land,
 Where divers sorts of Timber Trees doth stand,
 As mighty Oaks, also, here's Cedars tall,
 And other sorts, 'tis hard to name them all,
 The strong Hickory, Locust and lofty Pine,
 'Tis strange to see what Providence divine
 Hath in the World ordained for to be,
 Which those that live at home [Europe] do never see.

___ Richard Frame [perhaps a pseudonym], *A Short Description of Pennsylvania, Or, A Relation
 What Things Are Known, Enjoyed, and Like to Be Discovered in the Said Province, 1692.*

* Brackets used in the 1912 Myers edition to indicate assumed letters at line beginnings — the original pamphlet had been trimmed so closely for binding that the first letters of each line on the first page were cut off — have been omitted here.



British mapmaker Herman Moll placed an unusually large illustration in his 1731 map of British America (and part of French Canada). Depicting beavers constructing a dam (with Niagara Falls in the background), the inset includes this caption:

View of the Industry of the Beavers of Canada in making Dams to stop the Course of a Rivulet, in order to form a great Lake, about which they build their Habitations. To Effect this: they fell large Trees with their Teeth, in such a manner as to make them come Cross the Rivulet, to lay the foundation of the Dam; they make Mortar, work up, and finish the whole with great order and wonderful Dexterity. The Beavers have two Doors to their Lodges, one to the Water and the other the Land side, According to the French Accounts.

Herman Moll, *A New and Exact Map of the Dominions of the King of Great Britain on the Continent of North America*, 1731

■ Francis Louis Michel, a Swiss nobleman and geologist travelling through Virginia, noted in his diary the unique animals and plants he observed; in this case, the bull frog.

There are frogs in the water, which at night all together make a wonderful noise. Indeed, if one is not acquainted with it, it sounds as if the noise or sound was made by people. In the large waters of the wilderness there is a very large kind. When they call, their voice can be compared to the bellowing of an ox. It is not the same but as deep and audible as far. I saw one on the other side of the water at Manigkinton [Manikin Town], which was a foot long, with an awful head or mouth.* When he jumped into the water there was a splash as if one had thrown a pretty large stone into the water.

___ Francis Louis Michel, travel journal, 1701-1702.

■ Known as the “father of American botany,” John Bartram travelled from his home in Pennsylvania to New York and Lake Ontario in 1743, studying the flora and fauna along the way.

[July 6, 1743] At this place we were warned by a well known alarm to keep our distance from an enraged rattlesnake that had put himself into a coiled posture of defense, within a dozen yards of our path, but we punished his rage by striking him dead on the spot. He had been highly irritated by an Indian dog that barked eagerly at him, but was cunning enough to keep out of his reach, or nimble enough to avoid the snake when he sprung at him. We took notice that while provoked, he contracted the muscles of his scales so as to appear very bright and shining, but after the mortal stroke, his splendor became much diminished; this is likewise the case of many of our [European] snakes. . . .

[July 16, 1743] We began our journey up a little hill, steep and somewhat stony, and then through oak, chestnut, huckleberries, and honeysuckles, the land poor, sometimes white pine, spruce and laurel; thus far N[orth]. but at half an hour after seven N. E. through a great white pine, spruce swamp full of roots, and abundance of old trees lying on the ground, or leaning against live ones, they stood so thick that we concluded it almost impossible to shoot a man at 100 yards distant, let him stand ever so fair [i.e., still]. The straight bodies of these trees stood so thick, a bullet must hit one before it could fly 100 yards, in the most open part. . . .

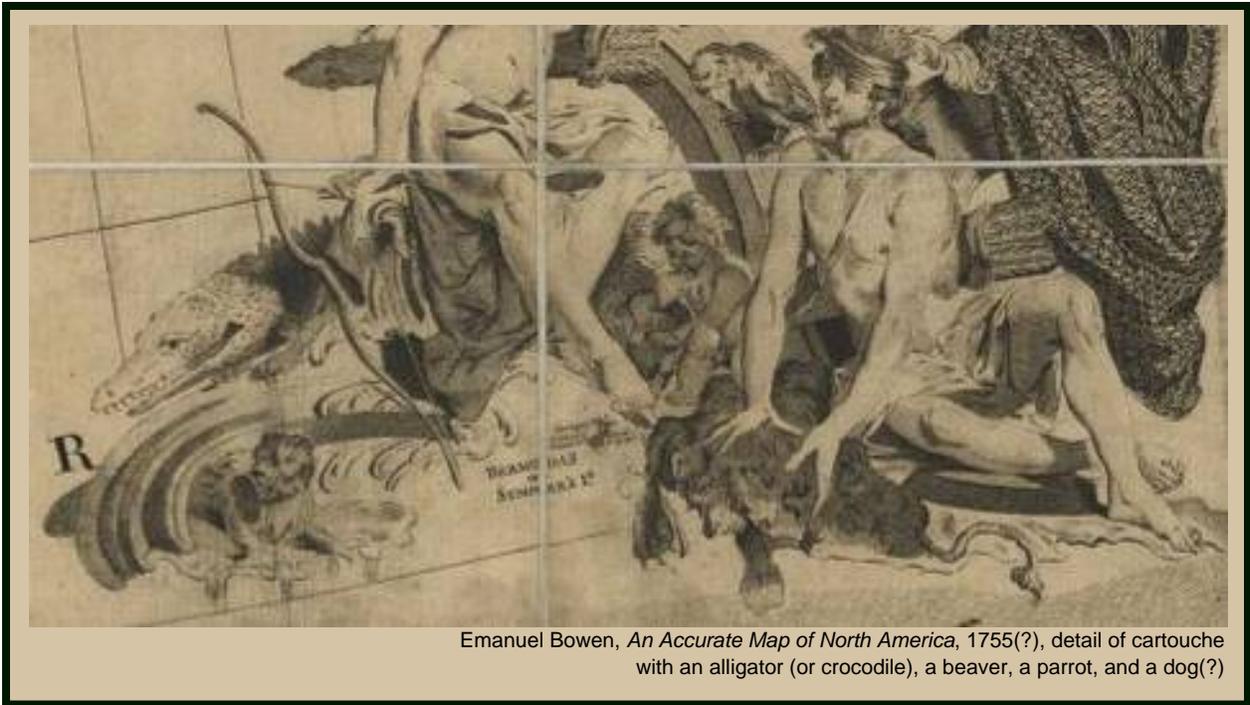
[July 17, 1743] A little before sunset, I walked out of town [Owagan] to regulate my journal, but the gnats [mosquitoes] were so troublesome I could not rest a minute. They bit my hands so cruelly I was forced to give over my purpose. These are so troublesome from sun-setting to sun-rising that we could not rest while we were eating our victuals without making several fires of wet leaves round us to keep them off. . . .

[July 20, 1743] [W]e enter'd a miserable thicket of spruce, opulus [shrub: viburnum], and dwarf yew, then over a branch of the Susquehannah [River; Pennsylvania], big enough to turn a mill, came to ground as good as that on the other side [of] the thicket, well clothed with tall timber of sugar birch, sugar maple, and elm. . . We observed the tops of the trees to be so close to one another for many miles together that there is no seeing which way the clouds drive, nor which way the wind sets; and it seems almost as if the sun had never shone on the ground since the creation.

[July 25, 1743] [I]t is evident from the face of the earth that the water of the lake Ontario is considerably diminished and has lost ground a great number of years, for the shores above a mile within land are abundantly more low, as well as of a looser texture than the soil beyond. Whether this effect is in common to all the waters on the earth . . . or whether it be not, at least in part, owing to the removal of some great obstruction, which by causing a fall in the river St. Lawrence might formerly pen the waters up to a greater height than now, or only to the gradual wearing away by the perpetual passage of the water over those falls that still subsist, or to a casual ruin of some part of one of them. I shall leave to the determination of a more able naturalist than myself.

___ John Bartram, *Observations on the Inhabitants, Climate, Soil, Rivers, Productions, Animals, and Other Matters Worthy of Notice Made by Mr. John Bartram, in His Travels from Pensilvania to Onondago, Oswego and the Lake Ontario, in Canada, 1751.*

* “This sounds incredible. But [Robert] Beverley in his *History [and Present State of Virginia, 1705]*, Book IV, p. 63, tells of a similar story. ‘Last year I found one of these bull-frogs near a Stream of fresh water, of so prodigious a Magnitude, that when I extended its Leggs, I found the distance betwixt them, to be seventeen Inches and a half. I am confident six French-Men might have made a comfortable meal of its Carcase.’ Editor’s note.



Emanuel Bowen, *An Accurate Map of North America*, 1755(?), detail of cartouche with an alligator (or crocodile), a beaver, a parrot, and a dog(?)

- Kalm: Peter Kalm's *Travels in North America: The English Version of 1770*, ed. Adolph B. Benson (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966, 2 vols.); copyright 1937, 1964, Hannah N. Benson; permission pending. Full text as digital images in American Journeys (Wisconsin Historical Society) at www.americanjourneys.org/aj-117a/index.asp and www.americanjourneys.org/aj-117b/index.asp; and in Early Canadiana Online at www.canadiana.org/cgi-bin/ECO/mtq?doc=11915.
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