Thomas Pennant to George Paton, on natural history and publication plans

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Sir

I cannot sufficiently admire your communicative disposition, in so kindly sending the sketch of the curious fish taken on y^{r} coast. Instead of receiving yr apology for troubling me as you are pleased to style, accept my best thanks for the favor done me, & let me beg the continuance.

I am not clear that y^{r} fish is described: but must inform you it is of the genus which *Linnaeus* calls Esox & approaches the species of Garfish or sea needle; but differs from it in having several spurious fins between the dorsal & ventral fins & the tail. I do presume that y^{r} drawing is exact as to the mandibles of the jaws being of equal length; for in case the lower mandible was broken, & had been originally much longer than the upper, in that case it will prove the same with a new fish M^{r} Banks favored me with from Newfoundland. Be so good as to inform me of the above particular.

In respect to my American Zoology, it is my design to divide it into two works one to take in the animals of north America the other of south: they will differ widely in their productions & are besides to numerous to be treated of in one volume.[1] The size will be octavo to be illustrated with plates of the new or rare kinds. Any communications of that kind will be acceptable; & any whatever subjects I am favored with shall be safely restored. I shall be glad to hear that y^{r} friend gives you the history of each bird; for without that base descriptions make but dull work. You put an &c to y^{r} collection from Jamaica, pray does it comprehend any of the lesser beasts, especially the cane rat which I wish to see.

I am sorry y^{r} fish came a little too late for a work I am about to publish: viz. the conclusion of *my Br. Zool. illustrated*. but it will serve to adorn *my tour in Scotland* which I am very busy in transcribing.[2]Would you or any of y^{r} friends favor me with exact drawings of any uncommon animals they shd find a place there. Please to let me know if I am to return the drawing: & accept a few prints of *my next publication*.

I am Sir
y^{r} obliged
humble Servt

Thomas Pennant
Downing Jan. 1. 1771

Please to put y^{r} Letters under cover to,Sir Roger Mostyn Bart M.P.
At Mostyn
Flintshire

Pray do Letters come free to y^{r} office?

To George Paton

Custom House

Editorial Notes

[1] In the advertisement to his 1784 *Arctic Zoology*, Pennant explains that he abandoned his plans for an American Zoology after American independence, and instead worked the materials he had acquired into the current volume.

[2] The title page of Pennant's *British Zoology. Illustrated by Plates and Brief Explanations.* gives a publication date of 1770, reflecting the fact that it had already gone to press by the time Pennant wrote this letter on January 1st 1771.