# Daniel Lysons to Thomas Pennant, 26 September 1767

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| **From:** | Daniel Lysons |
| **To:** | Thomas Pennant |
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Bath Sept: 26 1767

Dear Sir

In my last I gave you an account of the Salmon, I shall now proceed with the other Inhabitants of the Severn.

^2$^{d}$. The Shad is taken in the Severn in the same manner as the Salmon. It makes its entrance into the Severn ^& is taken in the months of may & June. A Shad never weighs more than 8 pounds, and rarely exceeds seven. Its most common size is 4 or 5$^{lb}$ but many weigh no more than two. The Shad makes its appearance in the Severn sooner or later as the weather is warm or cold, so that it sometimes comes in april, & is often retarded for some weeks in may.x ^x At Glocester a Shad is reckoned a very good fish & usually sells dearer than Salmon. As the shad leaves us it is succeeded by another in shape, & appearance very like it, but less. This is calld a Twaite.

^3. The Twaites weigh from two pounds to half a pound, and are taken in great numbers in the months of June and July. A large twaite differs from a small shad only in one or more round black spots on the sides. If there is only one of these spots it is always near the gill, but there are commonly three or four of them one under another,[1] whereas the Shad has more. This fish is taken in the Thames about the same time of the year, & calld at London a shad; but I believe the true shad is never taken in the Thames. The Twaite is a bad fish, the flesh being dry, & not in any degree equal in flavour to a shad. But the Twaites being at London called Shads the Londoners have ^a bad opinion of the true shad, & being in appearance so like the Twaite they can not think it a different fish.[2]

It is by no means a settled point whether the Shads or Twaites come into the severn to spawn. That the Salmon spawns upon the sands beyond shrewsbury is certain from the accounts I have received from people of that country who have seen them making their beds upon the shoals, as well as from the great number of Samblets which come down the river in the month of March. But then the old ones are taken in their return after spawning, greatly emaciated, and call'd old fish in opposition to those in Season which are calld new fish. The Shad is also in spawn when it enters the River, & in the month of July we have great numbers of Bleak, some of which are nearly as big as a small hering. Many people think these fish the spawn of the Shad because they are taken about Glocester only in the Months of July and august, & if I am not mistaken they come down, & not up the Severn. But on the other hand none of the old emaciated fish are taken in their return, which one should think would be the case did they spawn towards the head of the River.

^4. The Lamprey weighs about three pounds, & is taken ^chiefly in the months of March, April, & may. The sooner they are taken in the year the better they are, being much wasted & flabby as the warm weather approaches. They are taken in long nets in the same manner as the Salmon, & Shad, & together with them, & also in wheels laid in the bottom ^~~or sides~~ of the river. The Lamprey does not breed in the Severn, neither is there more than one Species of them.

^5 The Lampern is in shape like a Lamprey, but of the colour of an Eel, having a black back, and white belly, whereas the Lamprey is yellow, or brown, variegated with black lines upon the back. The Lamperns appear in January, ~~and~~ and continue untill the weather becomes warm, when they ^waste & leave the River. They are all when in season

about the size of a small Eel, weighing ab^out two ounces, & about 7 Inches long. They are never taken in nets, but in wheels fixed to the sides of the banks before the tide comes in. They are potted in the same manner as Lampreys, & by some people preferrd to them as being milder.

There is a fish in the Thames resembling the two last mentioned ^in shape & figure, but different from both in colour, & size. It is about the bigness of a goose quill ~~but differing~~ and of a green colour. It is found in shallow water about oxford under stones, and is I think calld a stone Eel, though of quite a different Species from an Eel. I am told that great quantities of Lamperns are taken about London, but that few are eat there, being chiefly bought up for baits in the Cod fishery.

^6 Elvers are certainly the spawn of Eels, & with great reason supposed to come from the great conger Eel, which is often found in the salt water of the Severn upon the Sands weighing 50lb. These elvers come from the salt water up the Severn in prodigious numbers, and are taken in a kind of seive made of hair cloth, & fixed to a long pole. A man standing on the bank, & drawing his net in the water by the side of the bank as far is he can reach, whilst the tide is in, takes some at every sweep, untill at last he shall, in the space of one tide, take as many as will fill a bushel. The Elvers usually preceed the Shad, & it is supposed that the Shads come up the River to prey upon them.

I have now given you the best answers I can to your enquiries, & hope they will be satisfactory. The waters agree with me very well, & I doubt not but I shall be perfectly well if I can possibly stay here a month. My Disorder is a constant purging which reduced me very much I was something better than I have been before I came here which was three days ago, & am still better since I have been here. There is not a great deal of Company here yet but indeed the Season is not begun the music comes to the pump Room on Monday next. M$^{r}$. Derrick has had great opposition but has overcome it & remains M. C. upon the same footing as formerly. Pray are the Miss Pennants[3] with you at Downing or in attendance at London. If with you I beg my Compliments to them and am

Yours sincerely

D. Lysons.

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*Stamp: (handstamp)* BATH

To Thomas Pennant Esq$^{r}$ at Downing near Holywell Flintshire

## Marginalia

*Endorsement (in Thomas Pennant's hand)*: answ$^{d}$ oct$^{r}$. 17$^{th}$.

*Marginalia in Thomas Pennant's hand*: M$^{r}$ Farrington has seen shads weigh 15lb.

*in pencil, in the hand of Cecilia, Countess of Denbigh*: Found in Tessin's Nat Hist

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## Editorial Notes

[1] The material in this paragraph up to this point is used almost verbatim in *British zoology* (2nd edn., 1768–70), III, p. 299. A note at the foot of the page acknowledges the debt to 'Doctor Lysons, of Gloucester, for his communications relating to this fish, as well as to several other articles relating to those of the Severn'.

[2] Ibid., p. 298, discusses the 'Thames shad' and 'the variety called near Gloucester the Twaite', clearly using the information provided by Lysons in this letter.

[3] Catherine and Sarah Pennant.