



SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF NATURAL HISTORY

Registered Charity in England and Wales No. 210355

**Report of the Trustees
and
Statement of Financial Activities
2025**

c/o The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, UK

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1. Legal Status

The Society for the History of Natural History was founded in 1936. The Society is a registered charity in England and Wales, no. 210355.

2. Registered Address

c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD.

3. Objectives and Activities

The Society is instituted for the historical and bibliographical study of all branches of natural history, including their social and cultural aspects, across all cultures.

The Society achieves its mission, and serves its membership, by:

- The publication of a journal, *Archives of Natural History*
- The circulation of a Newsletter to members
- Utilising electronic communication effectively to promote our interests and values
- Holding an Annual Conference and other meetings on relevant themes
- Funding relevant research as finances allow
- Encouraging younger scholars through the presentation of dedicated awards and prizes
- Giving a range of public awards to recognise scholarship, reward excellence and to promote the history of natural history to a wide constituency
- Partnering with relevant organisations to further our mission
- Monitoring and responding to new opportunities to further the Society's mission

Further details of each of these activities can be found elsewhere in this report.

4. Trustees (as of 31 December 2025)

The Trustees who served the charity during the year are as listed below.

Trustee	Role and Year of Appointment/Election
Mr Jack Ashby	President (2024)
Mr William Noblett	Vice President & Treasurer (2024)
Mr William Beharrell	Secretary (2025)
Professor Helen Cowie	Trustee without Portfolio (2024)
Dr Eleanor Larsson	Meetings Secretary (2025)
Dr Malgosia Nowak-Kemp	International Representatives Secretary (2024)
Ms Margaret Reilly	Book Reviews Editor (2024)
Ms Jeanne Robinson	Membership Secretary (2024)
Dr Anne Secord	Editor (2025)
Ms Elaine Shaughnessy	Newsletter and Website Editor (2024)
Mr Joshua Davies	Communications, Promotions, and Social Media Secretary (2025)
Dr Nathan Smith	Trustee without portfolio (2025)
Ms Joanne Hatton	Trustee without portfolio (2022)
Dr Geraldine Reid	Awards and Grants Secretary (2025);

In addition to the Trustees listed above, those who served and retired during the year are listed below:

Ms Joanne Hatton	Resigned 3 April 2025
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The trustees have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit, especially as it relates to the charitable purpose "the advancement of the arts, culture, heritage or science" specified in the Charities Act 2011.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Society for the History of Natural History requires the Trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the Society's financial activities during the year and of its financial position at the end of the year. In preparing financial statements giving a true and fair view, the Trustees should follow best practice and:

- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- state whether applicable accounting standards and statements of recommended practice have been followed, subject to any departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements

- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is appropriate to presume that the charity will not continue in operation.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy the financial position of the charity, and which enable them to ascertain the financial position of the charity and to ensure that the financial statements comply with applicable law and the Society's byelaws. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the Society and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

5. President's Report for 2025

2025 was a highly productive year for the Society, thanks as ever to the tireless efforts of trustees, to whom I would like to express our gratitude on behalf of our membership. The whole Council contributes a huge amount, but there are fundamental deliverables that require thoroughly concerted efforts to produce the tangible member benefits we enjoy, such as our brilliant events, fantastic journal, and wonderful awards, and for those we are particularly indebted to Elle Larsson our Meetings Secretary (and to Maggie Reilly along with Jeanne Robinson and Geoff Hancock for hosting us in Glasgow for the fantastic summer meeting); our Editor Anne Secord, along with Elaine Shaughnessy, Maggie Reilly and the whole editorial team – as well of course to all those who submitted and reviewed articles; and Geraldine Reid our Awards secretary, with the ongoing contributions of Helen Cowie.

Less visibly, the whole society wouldn't function without those that keep it running – our Treasurer Bill Noblet and Secretary Will Beharall. And one of the most important things we need for the Society to function is the community, so I'd like to particularly thank our Membership Secretary Jeanne Robinson; Josh Davies our new Communications Secretary and our International Representatives Secretary Malgosia Nowak-Kemp who manages to maintain that sense of community across the whole globe.

The recent pattern of activity for our meetings continued for 2025, beginning with our annual Early Career Researcher symposium in February, providing a platform for people at the start of their careers to share their work. This event is online to allow participation from colleagues across the world. Elle managed us through quite a tricky web-security breach with minimal disruption, and the nine speakers from four countries shared their fantastic research. The highlight of the SHNH year for me is the chance we have to get together in person at the Summer Meeting. This year we met in Glasgow in June, with another fascinating range of papers on the theme of A Sense of Nature. The programme of talks and tours attracted a fantastically engaged audience – with several first-timers, whom I hope will remain part of the SHNH community going forward. Finally, we met again online in July for our AGM and Awards Ceremony. Our Awards, like our events and publications show the range of interests of our members and the themes the Society aims to promote – from the history of the presentation and interpretation of nature, through visual cultures, media and publication; to the history of taxonomy and systematics; to bibliographic

and historical manuscript interpretations; to the cultures, practices and social histories of natural history, and who is typically represented in those histories. I would like to congratulate again our 2025 winners, Caroline Cornish, David Maberley, Malini Roy, Cam Sharp Jones, Cheryl Tipp and Theo Detweiler.

As ever, our journal, *Archives of Natural History*, represents the academic development of the society and our discipline as a whole, offering diverse perspectives on all aspects of the history of natural history – reflective of the vast range of topics that this field incorporates, and its continued development. Everyone on the SHNH Council is thoroughly grateful to the fantastic contributions our members make to our publications and events.

In particular, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Anne Secord who informed me of her intention to step down as Editor after the production of the April 2026 issue (ANH 53.1). Anne's commitment to the journal has been extraordinary – she has freely dedicated so much of her time over her tenure in the role – producing a publication that we as a society can truly be proud of, as can the tens of authors who have benefited from Anne's support and wisdom in bringing their work to life. Since her first issue in October 2021 (ANH 48.2), Anne oversaw the production of our commemorative 50th volume in 2023, and several exciting special issues and themes, working in partnership with likeminded societies and communities, thereby building the strength and reach of the journal and SHNH. Likewise, Elaine Shaughnessy has also let us know that she will be stepping down from the journal alongside Anne (I'm pleased to say, however, that she will be staying on Council in her role as Newsletter Editor/Website Secretary). In recent years, Elaine has been responsible for copyediting as well as serving as Associate Editor, but her work on *Archives* over the years has gone much further than this – including taking on responsibility for its overall production alongside Charles Nelson prior to Anne coming on board. I can say from my own experience as an *Archives* contributor, the care and attention that Elaine and Anne gave to their authors was unlike any other journal I have worked with, and I'm sure that everyone who has written for *Archives* will join me in thanking them both. Although they will be stepping down from these roles in 2026, I hope the membership will forgive me for including this vote of thanks in my 2025 report, since we will be handing over to a new Editorial team at the July AGM.

Moving onto exciting developments with our membership offer this year, SHNH Council has been working with Edinburgh University Press to widen the options available for members. First, in response to requests from some existing members, and with the hope of widening our membership overall, from October 2025 we launched online-only membership rates. This comes with all the other benefits of membership to the Society, but access to our journal would be online-only. Of course, the existing Print subscription option will remain in place for those who enjoy *Archives* in its beautifully produced, physical form. We see this as a significant opportunity to swell our membership, particularly worldwide – given the extra savings online-only subscriptions present to members, with prices starting at just £35.50. To that end, we would be extremely grateful if you could help us recruit a new batch of members by spreading the word about this new option.

Second, we have also added a “Supporter Rate” category. This is for people who would like an easy way to make an additional contribution to the Society. “Supporters” pay around £60 on top of traditional membership categories – all of which is passed on to the Society – and receive the same benefits, whilst helping with our finances. We know similar initiatives have been successful in other societies, and we would be extraordinarily grateful to any members who could afford to assist SHNH in delivering our core activities and member-benefits in this way. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank a previous SHNH medal-winner for a generous donation we received this year.

We hope that these developments, alongside the ongoing activities SHNH works to deliver, and the community we represent, are welcome and valued by our membership. As well as all the trustees who work so hard voluntarily on behalf of SHNH, I’d like to thank all members who contribute to making this such a warm and inclusive society.

Jack Ashby
President

6. Membership

Current Membership

Our 2025-2026 individual membership is slightly down overall, declining from 300 members in 2024-2025 to 290 individual members, this includes 8 honorary members.

New Recruits

Despite the slight reduction in membership overall, we have had 21 new membership subscriptions in the new membership year (from October 2025). These new members are predominantly UK (13 new members) and US (8 new members) with individual new members from Austria, Canada and China.

Geographical Breakdown of Membership

Our membership currently includes individual members from 22 countries – Argentina (1 member), Australia (7), Austria (3), Canada (5), China (3), Columbia (1), Czech Republic (1), Estonia (1), Germany (10), Hungary (1), Italy (5), Japan (6), Malaysia (1), The Netherlands (5), New Zealand (3), Poland (1), Portugal (1), Spain (4), Sweden (1), Switzerland (1), UK (185) and The USA (41).

Estonia and Portugal are additions since the 2024-2025 membership report. The majority of our individual members are UK (63%) or US (14%).

Online membership

Online only membership has risen notably since last year, rising from 34 to 50 members (11 % up to 19% of our membership).

Direct Debit Payments

43% of our members paid by direct debit this year, slightly down on 2024 and 2025, when it was 46% of our membership.

Other Enquiries and Duties

- Lists of non-UK members provided for Malgosia to share with the regional representatives.
- Up to date membership lists provided for Mail chimp.
- Membership status checks for awards/grants/discounts etc.
- Address changes for members.
- Guidance with access to Archive back issues quickly remedied with detailed instructions issued by EUP.
- Minor issues with online payment.
- Enquiries about the SHNH newsletter
- Queries about EU VAT charges (detailed further below)

VAT for EU Members

One member sort clarity regarding the VAT charges for European membership. We asked EUP for clarity on these charges to share with members – detailed below.

'The price differences between the UK and European rates are due to VAT, which applies differently to digital products sold into Europe than it does within the UK, where it is currently zero-rated. This increases the final European price of all online subscriptions and of the online component of the Print & Online subscriptions. Our invoices provide a full breakdown of the VAT amounts included in the subscription fees.'

'We employ a 'VAT-inclusive' pricing strategy for our print, digital and combined journal products. This absorbs tax fluctuations to maintain a stable subscription price for members in each pricing zone (UK, EU, ROW and North America). This is a standard practice for UK publishers.'

'As the VAT rates vary between countries (e.g., 17% in Luxembourg vs. 27% in Hungary), the Net value of each subscription varies after local tax is deducted.'

'The EU VAT rate is calculated annually as a weighted average that considers the number of subscribers/members in each country last year, and the VAT rates set for those countries.'

'We collect the VAT at the member's local rate at the point of sale, then remit it directly to the relevant European tax authorities.'

It was agreed by the SHNH Council that some explanation of these charges should be added to subscriptions pages and EUP agreed to add the following explanation:

"Digital subscriptions sold into Europe are subject to VAT at rates based on the local country of the individual subscriber, and this is reflected in European price of all Online subscriptions (and the online component of Print + Online subscriptions)."

Jeanne Robinson
Membership Secretary

7. Publications and Communications

7.1 Archives of Natural History Editor's Report

Volume 52 (parts 1 and 2) of *Archives of Natural History* was published in 2025. This volume contains 23 papers, 3 short notes and 29 open-access book reviews. The papers include two special sections: 'Historical herbaria and scientific exploration (1753–1810)' in the first issue and 'Libraries, archives and natural history' in the second issue. The special section on 'Libraries, archives and natural history' also appears as part of a virtual cross-journal issue, comprising these papers and articles from the journal *Library & Information History*. This cross-journal issue is freely available to SHNH members on Edinburgh University Press's website (<https://www.euppublishing.com/cjsf/anh-lih>).

Over the course of 2025, 57 papers were submitted to *Archives of Natural History*, 10 of which were rejected and 5 withdrawn. Of the accepted papers, 5 were revised versions of papers presented at the SHNH 2024 summer meeting 'The Palette of Nature'; these, together with other submitted papers that dealt with natural history and colour or for which colour images were essential, were selected for a special all-colour issue on natural history and colour to mark the 90th anniversary of the SHNH in 2026.

In 2025, I indicated my wish to step down as editor of *Archives of Natural History* at the 2026 AGM after having published the April 2026 issue.

Thanks as ever to the Associate Editors Elaine Charwat, Steph Holt, Staffan Müller-Wille, Nathan Smith, Ingvar Svanberg; Associate Editor and Copy Editor Elaine Shaughnessy; Book Reviews Editor Maggie Reilly and our publisher, Edinburgh

University Press. I also thank the members of the advisory board, both for their willingness to review papers on occasion and for suggesting reviewers. The hard work of the many reviewers who give generously of their time and expertise to assess submissions is also greatly appreciated.

Anne Secord
Editor

7.2 Book Reviews

29 reviews of 31 books were published in issue 52 of Archives – 16 books were reviewed in issue 52.1 (one double review) and 15 in 52.2. Courtesy copies of the published reviews were sent to the book publishers and the reviewers.

My ongoing thanks are due to the many people who make the reviews possible: to the reviewers who give their time and expertise and deliver copy on time; to the publishers for the notification and supply of the books; to the editorial team, the wider Council, the Advisory Board and members who suggest titles for review, help identify possible reviewers or write the reviews. The job would be impossible without their valued support.

Maggie Reilly
Book Reviews Editor

7.3 Communications, Promotion and Social Media

SHNH was delighted to welcome Josh Davis to the post of Communications, Promotion and Social Media Secretary in 2025 following his earlier co-option to Council in 2024. Josh has been keeping the Society's social media channels populated with information on our activities. Will Beharrell and Elaine Shaughnessy continue to run the JISCMail and Mailchimp accounts together with Elle Larsson, who has managed the communications relating to SHNH meetings and events. All work as a team to ensure that we keep our members, interested friends and colleagues up to date on all our news and activities.

Our SHNH Mail Chimp account continues to work extremely well, enabling quicker electronic communication with members for time-sensitive news and announcements including for our meetings and awards. This was used to great effect to announce the Early Career Researcher Conference 2025, invite members to the 'A Sense of Nature' meeting in Glasgow, a save the date for the 2025 AGM and AGM notices, arrangements for visits, and to announce the 2025 SHNH award winners and to invite nominations for the 2026 round.

Council supports the Society at other meetings they attend and institutions they are associated with including distributing leaflets and promoting the Society. We are most appreciative of NatSCA – the Natural Sciences Collection Association, who

invited SHNH to have a display table at their conference in Manchester, which Gina Douglas and Elaine Shaughnessy managed. Many thanks also to Society Members who promoted the Society at meetings of the British Naturalist's Association, EBHL – European Botanical and Horticultural Libraries Group and the Linnean Society of London, among others.

The team continue to promote the Society's activities via the website (www.shnh.org.uk) and Facebook accounts. The X (Twitter) account was closed and the Society now has a Bluesky account. A new poster was produced to advertise the Stearn Essay Prize 2025. Our email discussion list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/hist-nat-hist>) continues to be a great vehicle for sharing Society news and for fielding enquiries among members. Edinburgh University Press continue to be very supportive in the marketing and promotion of our journal *Archives of Natural History*, and make available leaflets and other promotional material for which we are most appreciative.

Elaine Shaughnessy
Newsletter and Website Editor

8. Meetings

SHNH Early Career Researcher Symposium (online, Thursday 20 February 2025)

The Early Career Researcher Symposium 2025 followed the successful inaugural event in 2023 and once again showcased the research into the history of natural history being done by doctoral and early careers researchers across the globe. There was a weaker response to the Call for Papers than the previous year and 9 were selected for the programme forming 3 panels. Registration opened on 6 January and 77 delegates registered in advance of the event. Attendee numbers were higher overall than in 2024 peaking at about 37, but they were pretty consistent throughout the day at between 30 and 37.

We secured media releases from speakers in advance of the event and recorded the talks on the day, which the Secretary (Will) kindly edited and made available via a dedicated playlist on the Society's YouTube Channel providing a nice legacy for the meeting: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7050j5beGdY&list=PLa_w7DC1KSfOOI35J3ZusaWnJpssz8x6i

Unfortunately, this event experienced a Zoom bomber at the beginning of the meeting which caused us to have to abort the initial meeting. The incident was reported to Zoom but no response was received. Once it became clear we had a malefactor in the 'room', the meeting was ended. We reset our SHNH Zoom password, set up a new meeting link which was distributed to most delegates and the new meeting was started. Attendees were admitted one by one to keep a close eye on what was happening and I am relieved to say the incident did not reoccur. Subsequent to the meeting we investigated the potential cause and believe we

identified the individual responsible (who was the only delegate not readmitted to the second meeting link) and every effort will be made going forward to ensure this individual is unable to disrupt any future meetings.

For the 2026 symposium we explored a potential partnership with the Linnean Society, which would include use of their Zoom webinar license, to avoid any future security issues for these meetings. It is not cost effective for SHNH to purchase this license for what is one online meeting per year.

I was very grateful to the Secretary (Will) and President (Jack) for their support in navigating through this incident, to our speakers in the first panel for being so flexible, and to our attendees for being so understanding. Once we had overcome this incident and secured the meeting, the day was enjoyable and once again a success.

Summer Meeting 2025. 'A Sense of Nature' (University of Glasgow and online, 19-20 June 2025)

This two-day international meeting explored the intersections of the senses – including sight (vision), sound (hearing), smell (olfaction), taste (gustation) and touch (tactile perception) – with the history of natural history. The CFP received 16 responses and 12 papers were selected and organised into 6 panels across the 2 days. We trialled having 2-paper instead of 3 paper panels and longer breaks which was received positively. We had 42 delegates register and attend the meeting – slightly less than the previous year but still a good number. With the assistance of colleagues at the University of Glasgow, we were also able to offer an online option and 7 delegates attended the 2 days online.

This was once again a great meeting. We had a fantastic selection of papers, lovely tours of Kelvin Hall Museum Stores Tour and GU Library Special Collections, and a really welcoming and friendly atmosphere. The feedback was incredibly positive and our ECR Bursary recipient, Josephine Koopman, submitted a lovely blog on the meeting which is on the website here: <https://shnh.org.uk/the-sense-of-nature-shnh-summer-meeting-june-2025-by-josephine-koopman/>.

The Treasurer also reported that the meeting made a small surplus. I extend a huge thanks to Maggie Reilly, Jeanne Robinson, Geoff Hancock and their colleagues for their role as the local organising committee, and to fellow council members for their support in the smooth running of the event across the two days.

AGM – Wednesday 16 July (online, via Zoom)

Following on from 2024, Council once again took the decision to separate the AGM from the annual Summer Meeting on the grounds that an online version enables greater participation from members across the globe and that it avoids preventing members at the Summer Meeting from networking over lunch with non-members of the Society. The AGM was held online via zoom and chaired by the President. 29

members registered for the AGM via Eventbrite. The official business of the AGM was followed by presentation of the Society's awards and short talks by our award winners Dr Caroline Cornish (President's Award), David J. Mabberley (Founders' Medal), Malini Roy, Cam Sharp Jones and Cheryl Tipp (SHNH Natural History Book Prize (John Thackray Medal)) and Theo Detweiler, (W. T. Stearn Student Essay Prize).

Discovering the Okapi (online seminar with Animal History Group, online 12 November 2025)

Utilising the Meetings Secretary's overlapping role as co-founder of the Animal History Group, SHNH shared the hosting of the November AHG seminar which was a talk with Dr Simon Pooley on his new book *Discovering the Okapi: Western Science, Indigenous Knowledge, and the Search for a Rainforest Enigma*. The talk was recorded and made available on the SHNH Youtube Channel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hx1Z2XiETA4&list=PLa_w7DC1KSfNwEaZZO4fn0OTIji3qBVoB, and has received over 220 views to date.

Future Meetings

Towards the end of 2025 I began putting plans in place for the ECR Symposium 2026 and the 2026 Summer Meeting. Held in partnership with the Zoological Society of London this three-day international meeting, held in SHNH's 90th year, will mark the bicentenary of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and delve into its history and impact on our knowledge of the natural world. The conference will take place 1-3rd July 2026.

The Call for Papers for the ECR meeting was released on 12 September 2025 and the Summer Meeting Call for Papers and Save the Date on 11 November 2025.

Hosting meetings really is a team effort, and I would like to thank my fellow Council members for their ongoing support and the various roles they take on in supporting meetings, particularly Secretary Will Beharrell for the video editing work and wonderful programmes he puts together for each meeting.

Elle Larsson
Meetings Secretary

9. Awards and Grants

The Society awarded prizes and grants in 2025 as follows.

The W. T. Stearn Student Essay Prize

Muhammad Ali Ozain (University College London) for 'The taxonomy of faith: gardens, flora, and the Islamicate imagination in Mughal India'.

The SHNH Book Prize (Thackray Medal)

Malini Roy, Cam Sharp Jones and Cheryl Tipp for *Animals. Art, Science and Sound* (British Library, 2023, ISBN 9780712354332).

The Founders' Medal

Awarded to David J. Mabberley, Director Emeritus, Botanic Gardens of Sydney, Emeritus Professor, University of Leiden, Emeritus Fellow, Wadham College, Oxford, Fellow of the National Botanic Garden of Wales.

The President's Award

Awarded to Caroline Cornish Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Small Research Fund

The Society awarded small research grants to Heather Pardoe and Muhammad Ali Ozain.

Honorary Membership

There were no honorary memberships awarded this year.

I would like to record my thanks to all Society members who have assisted in assessing nominations and applications, and in particular to Helen Cowie for chairing the student essay prize.

Geraldine Reid
Awards and Grants Secretary

10. International Representatives

The Society for the History of Natural History, the only international society devoted to the history of botany, zoology, geology, natural history collections, exploration, art and bibliography, draws its membership from several countries across the world. The Society's International Representatives (IR) are appointed to facilitate the flow of information between the Society and its overseas members, to promote the aims and objectives of the Society, and to encourage growth of the Society's membership in their region.

In 2025 the Society had 11 International Representatives. They were – in alphabetical order – Dr Elizabethann Boran (Ireland), Prof. Jiang Che (China), Prof. Christa Dorn (Central Europe), Dr Margarita Hernandez-Laille (Spain), Dr Justin Jansen (the Netherlands), Prof. John Matthew (South Asia, in particular India and Bangladesh), Leslie Overstreet (USA), Prof. Ayako Sekura (Japan), Dr Carlo Violani (Italy), Sergio Zagier (Argentina), and Prof. Alicja Zemanek (Poland).

Most of our international representatives are professionals, variously engaged in teaching, research or caring for collections of museum specimens and archives, spanning all fields of natural history. Others are deeply committed amateurs, who possess the knowledge, enthusiasm and commitment to contribute to the wellbeing of our Society. They are all well positioned to interact with people to stimulate interest in the history of natural history thanks to their publications, public speaking, and displays. From mounting exhibitions, through meetings and their research work they communicate with a wide audience of people and encourage interest in and thus the aims of the Society for the History of Natural History.

The Society's trustees and many members would like to take this opportunity to thank the International Representatives for their tireless advocacy for both the Society and our wider discipline in their own countries and communities. We are gratefully indebted to them for all their efforts in 2025.

Dr Malgosia Nowak-Kemp
International Representatives Secretary

Secretary's note: the Annual Report of the Trustees for 2024 stated that Sergio Zagier was no longer acting as the Society's International Representative to Argentina. This is incorrect, and we are pleased to amend the record here.

2025 International Representatives' Reports

Our new International representatives – Prof. Ayako Sekura and Prof. John Matthew presented an overview of the history of natural history endeavours in their respective regions.

Ayako Sakurai (Japan)

Ayako's first report is a brief but considerate overview regarding the Japanese history of zoological and botanical research, as she specialises in the history of natural history in nineteenth-century Europe. As such I shall include it in full so our members have a better understanding of the situation in Japan:

I. Institutions

Courses, lectures and seminars on history of natural history at universities are typically offered within departments of history or departments of history and philosophy of science. However, such educational programmes are available at only a very limited number of institutions. Notable examples include the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at the University of Tokyo, as well as the Faculty of Letters and the Graduate School of Letters at Kyoto University.

II. Organisations

Numerous Japanese organisations are devoted to the study of the history of natural history or other related fields. Specialist academic societies and research groups, as listed below, facilitate the exchange between researchers who share this interest. The following list of academic societies is presented in order of their establishment year:

1. History of Science Society of Japan (日本科学史学会)

<https://historyofscience.jp/english/>

Founded in 1941, this is the oldest and largest research organisation for historians of science. The society holds an annual general assembly and publishes two journals: the Japanese-language(科学史研究) (*Journal of History of Science, Japan*), which is released quarterly, and the international journal, *Historia Scientiarum*, which is published three times a year. While articles on the history of natural history appear in these journals, they do not constitute the majority of their content.

2. Biological Unit of the History of Science Society of Japan (日本科学史学会生物学史分科会)

https://www.ns.kogakuin.ac.jp/~ft12153/hisbio/frame_e.htm

Established as a special unit of the History of Science Society of Japan, this organisation has approximately 200 members, consisting of researchers interested in the history of biological sciences as well as zoology. It holds around six research meetings annually, in addition to symposia and summer schools. The society publishes a Japanese-language academic journal, (生物学誌研究) (*Japanese Journal of the History of Biology*), twice a year.

3. The Society for the History of Western Learning in Japan (洋学史学会)

<https://yogakushi.jp.org>

The academic society was established in 1991 to research the history of *Yogaku* (洋学) and *Rangaku* (蘭学). *Yogaku* refers to Western scholarship introduced to Japan from the Edo period to the early Meiji years, while *Rangaku* denotes academic knowledge and technology brought from the Netherlands during Japan's period of isolation. As natural history, along with medicine, constituted a substantial part of the knowledge imported to Japan during the Edo period, a significant portion of the scholarship presented at the society's meetings and published in its journal investigates topics related to the history of natural history. The society holds an annual meeting and symposium, in addition to three regular meetings each year. It also publishes the annual report, (洋学 : 洋学史学会研究年報) (*Annals of the Society for the History of Western Learning in Japan*).

4. Society for the Study of Human Animal Relations (人と動物の関係学会)

<http://hars.gr.jp>

Established in 1994, this interdisciplinary academic society is dedicated to the study of human-animal relations. While the history of natural history is not its main purpose, its members include researchers who specialise in the history of zoology. The society publishes the academic journal, (動物観研究) (*Study on Concepts Related to Animals/Thinking of Animals: Perception, Concept and Attitude/Japanese Journal of Human Animal Relations*), on a quarterly basis.

5. Japanese Association for the History of Geosciences (地質学史懇話会)

This organisation is a sub-unit of the UNESCO body INHIGEO (International Commission on the History of Geological Science), namely JAHIGEO (Japanese Association for the History of Geology). Established in 1994, it functions as a platform for those interested in the history of geology and has approximately 80 members. In addition to holding regular meetings for research presentations, it publishes two journals biannually: a Japanese-language bulletin, (地質学史懇話会会報) (*Japanese Association for the History of Geosciences Bulletin*), and an English-language newsletter.

<https://independent.academia.edu/JapaneseAssociationfortheHistoryofGeologyJahigeo>

6. Study Group for the History of Natural History (ナチュラルヒストリーの歴史研究会)

Founded in 1999, this study group facilitates the study of the history of natural history, biology, and geosciences. At its monthly meetings, members read and discuss recent works published in English.

III. Archives

Maintaining a specialized archive on the history of natural history, such as those at natural history museums in the UK or Europe, is unfortunately not a common practice among Japanese institutions. Consequently, the collection and preservation of records and documents remain a major challenge. This, however, does not imply that historical materials are scarce. Rather, they are often located in diverse locations, including local libraries, museums, universities, schools, and private homes. Hence, researchers are first required to identify the whereabouts of these materials, which presents a significant hurdle.

Report

Since the late 2010s, a large number of studies on the history of human-animal relations have been published, particularly by specialists in Japanese history. Regarding research outputs focusing on subjects outside Japan, there has been a notable increase in scholarly works since 2024. Most significantly, these include works on animal history by researchers of modern European history, such as Tomohiro Kaibara's (貝原伴寛) (猫を愛でる近代—啓蒙時代のペットとメディア) (*Le Grand sacre des chats: L'invention d'un animal de compagnie au siècle des Lumières*) (2024), and Takashi Ito's (伊東剛史) (近代イギリスの動物史—歴史学のアニマル・ターン) (*The Animal History of Modern Britain: Themes, Agents and Species*) (2025). The publication of the two works has been followed by a series of book talks and symposiums, which have excited interest in the "animal turn" among Japanese scholars of historical research. Consequently, interest in the history of natural history is also increasing.

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Ayako's report reviews several key books and exhibitions in Japan that exemplify a trend to demonstrate a sustained interest in the historical relationships between humans, animals, and nature (for a list of them, please contact IR Secretary). In the museum sector, the Osaka Museum of Natural History held a special exhibition titled 『貝に沼る — 日本の貝類学研究300年史— (Hooked on shells: 300 years of malacological research in Japan)』 (22 February to 6 May 2025). The exhibition addressed the 300-year history of malacological research in Japan, bringing together early illustrated books and historical specimens.

Another major exhibition relevant to the history of natural history was held at the University Museum of the University of Tokyo. The exhibition, 『FORMOSA—異端の植物学者 早田文藏 (FORMOSA: A heretical botanist, Buzō Hayata) 』 (24 April to 5 September 2025) focused on the life and work of the botanist Buzō Hayata (1874–1934), often described as an unorthodox figure in Japanese botany.

Taken together, these publications and exhibitions reveal a continued and multifaceted engagement with the history of natural history in Japan. They feature not only scientific achievements, but also the cultural, institutional, and epistemological processes through which knowledge of animals, plants, and nature has been produced, preserved, and reinterpreted.

John Mathew (South Asia, in particular India and Bangladesh)

Given that this was John's first report to the SHNH, he prepared some historical background of the history of natural history in India.

While the collecting for, and the maintenance of menageries was established during the suzerainty of the Mughal dynasty (1526-1857), a more focused angle to natural history was adopted under the British East India Company. This is when two institutions were established: the Botanical Garden in Calcutta (now Kolkata) by Robert Kyd (1746-1793), and the gubernatorial menagerie at Barrackpore by the Governor-General at the time, Lord Richard Wellesley (1760-1842). The first *Flora Indica* was prepared by William Roxburgh (1751-1815), Kyd's successor at the Calcutta Botanical Garden with volumes appearing in 1820 and 1824. The first descriptions of natural history appeared in *Asiatick Researches*, the journal associated with the Asiatic Society of Bengal, founded in 1784 by the judge of the Calcutta High Court, Sir William Jones (1746-1794). Collections of natural history specimens, botanical, zoological, and geological were largely curated by Roxburgh's replacement at the Calcutta Botanical Garden, the Danish botanist Nathaniel Wallich (1786-1854). These specimens, donated to the Asiatic Society of Bengal, became the Society's museum. Nearly two decades later, a professional curator from England would be recruited in 1840, Edward Blyth (1810-1873). During his sinecure, the section on Economic Geology would be split from the other sections of natural history, and placed in 1844 under the supervision of Henry Piddington (1797-1858), the originator of the word 'cyclone' for a particular kind of tropical storm. After the Mutiny of 1857, when the Crown took over control of British India, the collections of the Asiatic Society were given over to the government and the Indian Museum, still existing, came into being in 1866.

In 1841, *The Calcutta Journal of Natural History*, was started by a former honorary curator of the holdings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, John M'Clelland (1805-1883), although the publication would falter and cease to exist seven years later for want of funds.

Work on plants received a decided fillip with the appearance of a new Flora Indica (1855), this time authored by Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911) and Thomas Thomson (1817-1878). There was, however, no corresponding single or dually authored general work on animals. While works on particular groups of fauna were undertaken with great vigour in the mid nineteenth century, such as *The Reptiles of British India* (1864) by Albert Gunther (1830-1914), and *The Birds of India* (1862-64) and *The Mammals of India* (1867) by Thomas Caverhill Jerdon (1811-1872), it took a memorial, essentially a signed request, by a number of notable naturalists, including Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895), as well as the afore-mentioned Sir Joseph Hooker, to bring into commission from 1888, under the aegis of the Secretary of State for India, a series of handbooks that would swiftly become the most ambitious regional series on fauna anywhere in the world, *The Fauna of British India*, with 81 volumes, appeared over 61 years, with 33 authors, treating diversity that ranged from the Protozoa to the Mammalia.

In 1885, the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) came into being in the eponymous city (now renamed Mumbai) and remains India's oldest and still extant organisation devoted to the subject. The BNHS probably deserves a section completely on its own, given its remarkable service to the field, and some of the doyens of natural history associated with it, including the birdman of India, Sálim Ali (1896-1987). During the British Raj (both under the East India Company, which existed until 1858, and the British Crown in India, which took over the governance of India following the Great Indian Mutiny/Rebellion of 1857-58), a number of Surveys were instituted, including the Geological Survey of India (1851), the Botanical Survey of India (1890), and the Zoological Survey of India (1916), which continue to be the significant mediators of information on these respective subjects in the country.

In the postlude of independence, a number of institutions have arisen that deal with aspects of natural history, ecology and behaviour, celebrated among which are the Wildlife Institute of India (1982) in Dehra Dun, the Centre of Ecological Sciences (1983) at the Indian Institute of in Bangalore (now Bengaluru), and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (1992), also in Bangalore.

A poignant note on which to end is by remarking the passing of the noted conservationist of primates and small mammals, Dr Ajith Kumar, at the beginning of this month (March 2025), who was associated as a member of the faculty at the last of the institutions mentioned above and who died in harness while on field work in Panchmarhi in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh. He was one of a remarkable group of South Asian naturalists who have admirably extended the frontiers of knowledge of one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet.

Margarita Hernandez Laille (Spain)

To celebrate Darwin's birthday, readings from *The Origin of Species* took place in the National Natural Sciences Museum (MNCN) on the 12th of February 2025. The event was very successful and many people attended to hear Darwin's work. Margarita, as

the originator of the annual event, continues to be the organiser and reader of the event.

On the same day the annual 'Darwin and Wallace' drawing competition took place in the MNCN, and to end the Darwin's Day, a party to celebrate Darwin's birthday was held in the Museum the evening.

Following a successful start in 2024, another project named 'Scientists in Practice' took place. It is aimed at students of the 3rd year of public secondary education from disadvantaged areas to seek out and promote talent among these young students, provide them with the opportunity to participate in a programme of stays in research groups and laboratories, and awaken or increase their interest in science.

Leslie Overstreet (North America)

A rather challenging time in the Smithsonian still continues, due to the budgetary restraints and vacancies. However, the Libraries were working with the National Museum of Natural History on an exhibition about the American bison, part of SI's celebration of the U.S.'s 250th anniversary in 2026.

Leslie's most recent article, co-authored with Henrietta McBurney and Roger Gaskell, *A variant issue of Mark Catesby's Natural History of Carolina (volume 1, issued 1729-1732) given to John Bartram* that was published in the Archives of Natural was nominated for the Smithsonian's annual Secretary's Research Award; it's quite an honour, even though the article was not selected as the winner.

Alicja Zemanek (Poland)

At the beginning of 2025, the *Biographical dictionary of Polish botanists* was published by the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences (with the date of publication 2024). The Dictionary, edited by Piotr Köhler was the result of several years of work by 105 authors. It contains short biographies of over 2,500 people living in the Polish land from the Middle Ages to the 21st century, who published at least one work on plants. The dictionary, which covers 860 pages in hard cover, is beautifully produced and contains many portraits of botanists.

Christa Dorn (Central Europe)

Quite a number of museums were partially or fully closed for renovation, and many older exhibitions have been extended for budgetary and sustainability reasons. However, there were some noteworthy new exhibitions such as the one at the Berlin Museum of Natural History, focussing on the history and current reorganisation of the bird collection. The Liechtenstein Museum in Vienna had an interesting exhibit about the history, art and science of porcelain production. The Kunsthistorisches Museum prepared displays about the wax artist Daniel Neuberger (1621-1680):

Daniel Neuberger - The Art of Deception. Neuberger was a master at imitating different materials and surfaces with wax. The National Library in Vienna focused on the history of medicine with displays titled "Medicine through the ages - from antiquity to modern times". However, the main theme of the majority of natural history museums' displays in central Europe is climate change. The history of natural history has been pushed very much into the background. The target audience is also more likely to be schoolchildren and young adults.

One important event worth reporting is the introduction of a museum card that allows visits to all Austrian federal museums as well as the National Library. It is valid for one year from the date of purchase and allows visits to the museums as often as one likes. The price is currently €99.

Elizabethanne Boran (Ireland)

Elizabethanne reports on activities of the following organisations:

Dublin Naturalists' Field Club

The Field Club held the following activities during the year:

- a) A conference and exhibition on 25 October 2025 to mark the centenary of the founding of the Irish Naturalists' Journal.
- b) Botanical identification workshops on the first Saturday of each month were organised by Dr Declan Doogue.
- c) Regular field outings.
- d) The DNFC's WhatsApp group continues to grow exponentially and is a useful medium for communicating the DNFC's regular events to its members.

The Edward Worth Library, Dublin

In 2025 the theme of an annual exhibition was 'Birds at the Edward Worth Library', and this large online exhibition, with its accompanying exhibition of selected texts, was launched on 24 September 2025.

The Worth Library continues to make available previous large online exhibitions related to natural history:

- a) Botany at the Edward Worth Library: <https://botany.edwardworthlibrary.ie/>
- b) 'Reading the Book of Nature at the Edward Worth Library and the Zoological Museum, Trinity College Dublin', which marked the 500th anniversary of the birth of Ulisse Aldrovandi in 2022: <https://aldrovandi.edwardworthlibrary.ie/>

The Ellen Hutchins Festival

Sharing the story of Ireland's first female botanist and botanical artist, Ellen Hutchin (1785-1815), this website and festival offers a wide range of activities:

<https://ellenhutchins.com/>

The National Botanic Gardens (Glasnevin and Kilmacurragh)

The National Botanic Gardens launched their exhibition 'Stories from the Garden' on 20 September, running until 31 October 2025. Information about their collections and current projects is available here: <https://www.botanicgardens.ie/>. Staff offer daily guided tours.

The Natural History Museum of Ireland

The Natural History, Museum of Ireland, continued its extensive outreach programmes in 2025. These included:

a) Guides to NHM's collections : <https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Collections-Research/Natural-History-Collections/Collections-List>

b) A 3D online visit for those unable to visit the Museum:

<https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Natural-History/Visitor-Information/3D-Virtual-Visit>

c) A wide range of targeted activities for schools and teachers, families and adults:

<https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Natural-History/Engage-And-Learn>

including 'The Birdsong Challenge': <https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Natural-History/Engage-And-Learn/Museum-at-Home/Birdsong-Challenge>

d) Seasonal Nature Tours: [https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Country-Life/Engage-And-Learn/Schools-Educational-Visits/Primary/Workshops-\(1\)/06-21-NMI-Country-Life-Tours-Online](https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Country-Life/Engage-And-Learn/Schools-Educational-Visits/Primary/Workshops-(1)/06-21-NMI-Country-Life-Tours-Online)

Undoubtedly the NHM's highlight in 2025 was the opening of its innovative Dead Zoo Lab in the National Museum of Ireland at Collins Barracks. This large exhibition provides an exciting introduction to the NHM's collections while the Museum at Merrion Street is closed for refurbishment. Find out more about the 'Dead Zoo at Collins Barracks' here: <https://www.museum.ie/en-IE/Museums/Decorative-Arts-History/Exhibitions/Dead-Zoo-Lab>

Carlo Giovanni Violani (Italy)

Carlo reports on the nearly accidentally discovered collection of birds skins in a metal chest in the storage room of the Museo Zoologico dell'Università in Pisa a few years ago. They were donated by Dr Renzo Rosati who collected them in the Belgian Congo in 1909-1910. The collection contained several interesting taxa, some of which were still undescribed at the time of their collecting but now a paper published by the Società Toscana di Scienze Naturali gives a full list of the skins.

The curators and staff of the bird collections of the Museo Civico di Storia Naturale di Genova worked on identifying the type specimens described by T.Salvadori, L.M.d'Albertis and various authors, for the publication of a revised and improved Catalogue of the Bird types preserved in that Institution (about 300 taxa from New Guinea, Africa and Indonesia, ranging from sunbirds to cassowaries).

Sergio Zagier (Argentina)

The Argentine Museum of Natural History announced the discovery of a completely new fauna from around 75 million years ago. A team of 80 researchers from 22 institutions worked in Río Negro, Patagonia, where species associated with fresh water lived. From dinosaurs to fish and molluscs these were not known to have lived in the present dry area of the continent. At that geological time the local fauna was different from any prevailing in the rest of the world.

The "Illustrated Beagle Journal" was finally printed at the beginning of August 2025 and with the help of John van Wyhe and Darwin Online, Zagier & Urruty Publications was planning to issue a facsimile edition of Murray's 1890 "Journal of Researches". It will also include plates from Nelson's 1890 edition. These were the first richly illustrated books of Charles Darwin's narrative of his voyage around the world.

Justin Jansen (The Netherlands)

Due to his job as a civil engineer, Justin did not have had much spare time to visit museums and exhibitions in the Netherlands to report on, but for his research into Great Auks, Hawaiian passerines, Long-tailed Tits, and Slender-billed Curlews he visited many collection in the UK and Germany. There is an interest in the history of natural history in The Netherlands as his joint publication on the slender-billed curlew drew a lot of media attention, as well as his article in a popular magazine about Coenraad Jacob Temminck, the early ornithologist and first director of the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden.

Jiang Che (China)

On March 8th, the National Museum of Natural History opened a new temporary exhibition focusing on the discoveries and explorations of the Nihewan site. This site gained prominence in the 1920s thanks to the explorations of a French missionary.

On the publication front, Che can report a couple of notes. William Houghton's (1828–1895) "Country Walks of a Naturalist with his Children" was recently translated into Chinese and published in January 2025. Additionally, he would like to mention a publication the "Journal of Dialectics of Nature", China's leading journal on the history and philosophy of science. The journal has always shown a strong interest in articles on the history of natural history, and recently published a

collection of selected articles on that topic. The collection, titled "Frontiers in the Study of the History of Natural History", includes approximately 16 articles.

The most significant event was the annual Forum on Cultures of Natural History, which held its eighth meeting this year under the theme "Natural History and Ecotourism". The conference took place from 22 to 24 August in Kunming, Yunnan Province, in southwestern China. The conference featured nine thematic panels, covering a wide range of topics: textual scholarship in natural history; modern and contemporary Chinese natural history; Western natural history; natural history and tourism; natural history and education; natural history and traditional culture; natural history and local knowledge; history of natural history arts; and the aesthetics and creative industries of natural history.

Another development of potential relevance to the history of natural history is the initiative by the Chinese Society of Forestry to establish a new Committee on Scientific Illustration. Participating scholars and artists have emphasized the importance of China's indigenous traditions of botanical illustration. A preparatory online meeting for the committee was held on 21 August.

(1) November 3: At Che's invitation, Paolo De Troia from Rome University gave a lecture at Tsinghua University regarding the translation and dissemination of European falconry in Qing Dynasty China.

(2) November 8–9: The Annual Meeting of the Chinese Society for the History of Science and Technology (CSHST) was held at Guangxi Minzu University. The session on the History of Biology was attended by over a dozen participants, where we discussed several themes related to the history of natural history.

(3) December 2: The Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University hosted an online commemorative conference at the Harvard Center Shanghai to mark the centenary of Hu Hsen-Hsu receiving his doctoral degree from Harvard.

(4) December 6: The China Academy of Chinese Medical Sciences held a seminar titled "The Eastward Transmission of Materia Medica: Research on the Compilation History of Questions on Materia Medica" (本草东传：《质问本草》编研史研究). Several scholars from both China and Japan participated in this meeting.

(5) December 6–7: Fudan University convened the 5th Symposium on Chinese Intellectual History. This year's theme paid particular attention to the status of natural history knowledge within Chinese intellectual history. Dr. Duan Zhiqiang convened a few speakers focused on this topic. The meeting was highly productive, and we also discussed ideas regarding a future writing project on the history of knowledge.

(6) December 12: An online conference was held titled "China and Exotic Flora: The Journey of 'Sea Medicine', 'Foreign Medicine', and Western Medicine to China" (中华与奇珍异草：从海药、洋药至西药的来华历程). The conference primarily discussed issues regarding the transmission of Western medicines to East Asia over the past two thousand years (from early China to the 20th century).

11. Treasurer's Statement of Financial Activities

For the year ended 31st December 2025

	Total Funds 2024 £	Total Funds 2025 £
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Summer meeting receipts	3,679.72	5,722.00
EUP	11,863.11	10,198.02
Other incoming resources	44.29	933.39
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Total Incoming Resources	15,587.12	16,853.41
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Administration	11.85	22.00
Summer Meeting	3,573.58	5,075.94
<i>Archives of Natural History</i>	5,903.83	4,754.49
Awards and Prizes	767.29	1,944.38
Bank Charges	60.00	60.00
Council	604.53	298.40
Eventbrite	23.97	NIL
Google	23.49	24.99
Mailchimp	125.65	121.70
Medals and engraving	1,330.40	NIL
Website	2,342.34	1,335.17
ZOOM Subscription	155.88	155.88
	-----	-----
Total Resources Expended	14,922.81	13,792.95
Net Incoming Resources	664.31	3,060.46
Reconciliation of Funds		
Totals brought forward	15949.73	16,614.04
	664.31	3,060.46
Current Assets		
Cash at Bank	16614.04	19,674.50

Notes to the accounts follow overleaf.

Notes to the 2025 Accounts

1. Other incoming resources. Includes £38.39 interest and a very generous donation of £895.00.
2. Archives. The expenditure on Archives is as follows: editing £2988.36; proof-reading £720.00; index compilation £135.00; image permissions £104.40 and expenses of £806.73.
3. Awards and Prizes. Three awards from the Small Research Fund amounting to £1614.38 and £330 to the Stearn Essay winner.
4. Council. Entirely made up of travel to the one in-person meeting held during the year.

Reconciliation of funds. The first figure represents the opening balance, the second figure the yearly surplus, which in turn make up the total of our current assets.

W.A. Noblett
Treasurer