

For Immediate Release
October 24, 2007

Carl Linnaeus' Own Copy of his Epoch-Making Work *Systema Naturae* To be on View at The New York Botanical Garden

November 8–10, 2007

In a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, one of the most famous books in science, Carl Linnaeus' personal copy of *Systema Naturae* will tour the United States for a week in early November as part of a year-long celebration around the world. Annotated in the author's own hand, the book will be on public view at the LuEsther T. Mertz Library at The New York Botanical Garden on November 8–10, 2007.

Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), the great Swedish naturalist, is being celebrated this year on the tercentenary of his birth. He is renowned for introducing to biology a classification system for all living things, which formed the basis for the hierarchical system of classification still in use today. *Systema Naturae* was the seminal work that formalized his thinking on hierarchical classification, which he later expanded by introducing a system of binominal nomenclature. Together, these two innovations facilitated and launched a global initiative to find and diagnose the entirety of life on Earth.

The United States tour of this book has been organized in close collaboration with the Consulate General of Sweden in New York and the Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, where the book is housed. This is a rare excursion for the book outside of Stockholm.

Preeminent biologist, entomologist, and author Dr. Edward O. Wilson comments, "The hierarchical system of classification of all known plants and animals first presented in *Systema Naturae* in 1735 was one of three decisively influential contributions by Linnaeus. Together with his binomial nomenclature system, which he introduced in 1753, and the initiative to find and diagnose the entirety of biodiversity around the world, Linnaeus launched the systematic exploration of the biosphere."

Dr. Robbin Moran, Curator at The New York Botanical Garden, adds, "Linnaeus' penchant for naming and describing the living world led to his being called the "second Adam," alluding to the biblical Adam who named all living things in the Garden of Eden."

Systema Naturae will be on view from 12–6 p.m. on Thursday, November 8; 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Friday, November 9; and 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Saturday, November 10.

E. O. Wilson Heads Tours and Lectures

To highlight the historic significance of *Systema Naturae*, several events are planned at the Botanical Garden. They begin on the evening of Thursday, November 8 with a lecture for patrons of the Garden by Dr. E. O. Wilson and Dr. Katarina Andreassen, Assistant Professor, Department of Systematic Botany, Uppsala University, Sweden and a leader in evolutionary biology.

There will be a public guided tour on Friday, November 9, at 2:30 p.m. to view *Systema Naturae* and to hear about the impact and influence Linnaeus has had on science. A tour of the *Plants of Japan in Illustrated Books and Prints* exhibition in the Library gallery will follow.

On Saturday, November 10, at 12 p.m. there will be a public lecture by Dr. Robbin Moran, a Linnaean scholar and a resident scientist at The New York Botanical Garden, and Dr. Gunnar Broberg, a professor in the Department of History of Science and Ideas at the University of Lund, Sweden.

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During the display of *Systema Naturae*, several other Linnaean documents from the extensive collections of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library will also be on public view in the Botanical Garden's library. Among them will be the splendid Baroque frontispiece for Linnaeus' folio *Hortus Cliffortianus* (*Garden of Clifford*, 1737). This richly allegorical artwork shows the crowned Goddess Cybele, or Mother Earth, at the center, surrounded by images representing Linnaeus' many accomplishments, including plants that he studied and a centigrade thermometer that he designed. Also on display will be a copy of Linnaeus' *Species Plantarum* (*The Species of Plants*), first published in 1753. It established the basis of plant nomenclature as it exists today.

About *Systema Naturae* and Linnaeus' Personal Copy

Systema Naturae, published in December 1735, revolutionized scientific thinking about plants, animals, and other living things.

The first edition of this book consists of only seven leaves in large folio (50 x 60 cm), including the three double-page tables of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms. By the time the 12th edition was published 33 years later, the last one edited by Linnaeus himself, the number of pages had increased to 2,374 pages bound in four octavo volumes.

There are only 43 known copies of the first edition, spread around the world. The most valuable copy of this famous book is the one preserved in the Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library at in Stockholm, which will be the one on view at the Botanical Garden. In 1977 it was discovered to be Linnaeus' own copy. On the title page he has written "Exemplar Auctoris" and inside the book there are a few corrections made in ink by his hand. One of them is found in the table of the animal kingdom, under Insecta, where Cancer (crayfish) has "pedes 12"—a misprint corrected by Linnaeus to "pedes 10" because the crayfish has only 10 feet. These notations by the author himself indicate that this is probably the complete manuscript upon which the final printing was based.

Linnaeus' copy is one of a few bound with the leaves folded so that it forms a tall and narrow volume, a format Linnaeus himself preferred because it was more convenient to handle. The author's copy also includes a very rare illustration by Georg Dionysius Ehret, one of the great flower-painters and illustrators of botanical books during the 18th century, which illustrates the 24 classes of Linnaeus' Sexual System for Plants, with all the stamina and pistils colored by hand. Ehret's plate, dated 1736, is extremely rare; only five copies are known. It has, however, been copied several times. In 1737 Linnaeus himself copied it to illustrate his *Genera Plantarum*.

About the LuEsther T. Mertz Library

The LuEsther T. Mertz Library is one of the world's largest and most important botanical and horticultural research libraries, with over one million accessioned items (books, journals, original art and illustrations, seed and nursery catalogs, architectural plans of glass houses, scientific reprints, and photographs) and over 4,500 linear feet of archival materials. The Library serves as both a research and a public library and as both a scholarly resource and a general plant information service. It offers a wide array of reference resources, print and electronic, and the help of an informed staff to anyone visiting the Library through the Internet or in person.

The New York Botanical Garden thanks the Consulate General of Sweden in New York and Hagströmer Medico-Historical Library, Stockholm for their partnership in this project.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday holidays. Closed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., except for December 7 and 24, 2007 (10 a.m.–3 p.m.) and January 14–March 10, 2008 (10 a.m.–5 p.m.) For more information, visit www.nybg.org or call 718.817.8700.

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

Media Contact: George Shakespear 718.817.8512 Images available