

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 7, 2009

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## THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES AND TEMPLE PRESS REVIVE RARE NATURAL HISTORY WORK IN NEW BOOK

PHILADELPHIA—The Academy of Natural Sciences today announced the revival of one of the world's rarest works on natural history, an early 19th-century nature magazine of which only 13 complete sets are known to exist.

George Perry's *Arcana or Museum of Nature* was published privately in London between 1810 and 1811. It was issued in monthly parts, each with one or two color plates. In it, Perry set out to fascinate his readers with the latest discoveries from the edges of the known world. The *Arcana*'s 21 parts featured 84 plates and eclectic text about animals, birds, fish, insects, shells, fossils, and a palm tree, as well as travelogues from Africa and China.

The Academy, the nation's oldest natural history museum, has teamed up with Temple University Press to reproduce the lavishly illustrated *Arcana* as a full-color, hardbound book, using state-of-the-art digital processes. A full collation and systematic review by Richard E. Petit, a leading authority on the history of natural science, brings the contents up to date and lays out the new scientific names Perry introduced in its pages, many of which have stood the test of time and remain in use today.

Most of the plates in *Arcana* are based on sketches made at private menageries in the heart of London. Among them are several Australian mammals, including the first published picture of a koala. Perry's gifted artists stayed mostly true to life, but took occasional liberties such as depicting a condor vulture bearing off a baby in its talons and a tiger leaping over a human skeleton. In the often florid text, Perry asserted his belief in the biblical flood, even while praising pioneer systematists such as Lamarck and Linnaeus.

Little is known of Perry other than that he was born in 1771 and became a stonemason and architect before moving to London following personal bankruptcy. In 1812, he published *Conchology*, a large book about shells, but then lapsed into such obscurity that not even the date of his death is recorded.

Printed on acid-free stock, this high-quality, hardbound book comprises 568 pages with 84 color plates. ISBN 978-1-4399-0195-3. *Perry's Arcana* is available for purchase in the Academy Shop.

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Founded in 1812, The Academy of Natural Sciences is the oldest natural science research institution and museum in the Americas. Our mission is the encouragement and cultivation of the sciences

The Academy is located at 1900 Benjamin Franklin Parkway and is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and until 5 p.m. on weekends. Admission is: \$12 for adults, \$10 for children ages 3-12, seniors, college students and military personnel, and free for children under 3. There is a \$2 fee for "Butterflies!"