



## John Ray

He is not a well-known man. And yet, his influence on the science of Biology is profound. John Ray was born in Black Notley, Essex England in the year of our Lord 1627<sup>1</sup>. His early interest in living organisms probably stemmed from his mother's natural and herbal remedies which she used to treat the sick in her village.

Ray's fascination with living things continued to grow as he received further education at a nearby Grammar School in Braintree, Essex<sup>2</sup>. This academic involvement enabled him to enroll in Trinity College, Cambridge<sup>3</sup> at the age of 16. There he studied Biology and Zoology. Upon graduation in 1651, he continued on at Trinity as a lecturer. Along the way, he was made a fellow of the Royal Society of England. He studied extensively the flora and fauna of the British Isles, along with the animals which he categorized into a systematic order, recognized today as a forerunner to modern Taxonomy<sup>4</sup>.

His first published work was on the plants around Cambridge (1660). A decade later he published a catalog of plants on the British Isles. His other written volumes include: a book on birds (1676), and a book on fish (1685); in 1693 he published a book on reptiles and mammals; *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of the Creation; Persuasive to a Holy Life*<sup>5</sup>.

John Ray's strong Christian faith aided his study of God's magnificent creation. Even though evolution as we now know it was not a prevailing view, there were still those who held to a compromised view of Origins and the Bible. Ray believed that his scientific work was not hindered<sup>6</sup> by his belief in a personal Creator who ordered the universe, plants and animals. He influenced the later work of Carolus Linnaeus<sup>7</sup> (1707-1778), a well-known taxonomist.

On his epitaph are founds these words:

*John Ray, Master of Arts. Once Fellow of Trinity College in Cambridge. Afterwards A member of the Royal Society in London: And to both of those learned bodies An illustrious Ornament. Hid in this narrow tomb, this marble span, Lies all that death could snatch from this great man. His body*

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i1/ray.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.strangescience.net/ray.htm>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.biologyreference.com/Ta-Va/Taxonomy-History-of.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.answersingenesis.org/creation/v21/i1/ray.asp#r4>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.biologyreference.com/Ta-Va/Taxonomy-History-of.htm>

*moulders in its native clay; While o'er wide worlds his Works their beams display As bright and everlasting as the day. To those just fame ascribes immortal breath, And in his Writings he outlives his death. Of every Science every part he knew, Read in all Arts divine and human too: Like Solomon (and Solomon alone we as a greater King of knowledge own) Our modern Sage dark Nature's Secrets read from the tall Cedar to the hyssop's bed: From the unwieldiest Beast of land or deep, To the least Insect that has power to creep. Nor did his artful labours only shew those plants which on the earth's wide surface grew, But piercing ev'n her darkest entrails through, All that was wise, all that was great he knew, And Nature's inmost gloom made clear to common view. From foreign stores his learning bright supplies, Exposing treasures hid from others' eyes, Loading his single mind to make his country wise.*

Through Ray's work in biology and zoology, we have made significant discoveries that have helped our society. They have advanced medicine, aided doctors in surgical procedures, and expanded man's understanding of the human and animal anatomy. John Ray is truly the father of Biology<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://books.google.com/books?d=ETusStE5O8YC&pg=PP1&ots=FfL8YlLcyf&dq=John20Ray&pg=PR7#v=onepage&q&f=false> - John Ray: Naturalist (C.E. Raven)