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# Science for gentlemanly breeders?: British acclimatisation revisited

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## Abstract

”Session: Playing by their own rules: marginality and heterodoxy in modern science (Ayako Sakurai, Takashi Ito, Akinobu Takabayashi, Akihisa Setoguchi)”

Much has been written on the comparative and global histories of acclimatisation in the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. In France, the acclimatisation movement thrived under the leadership of Isidore Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, who founded the Société zoologique d’acclimatation in 1854. By contrast, in Britain, acclimatisation appeared to be practiced only by a limited circle of gentleman menagerists, failing to evolve into a disciplinary science. The Acclimatisation Society of the United Kingdom (1860-4) was indeed castigated as a dining club of epicurean gentlemen. This paper, however, rethinks the trajectory of British acclimatisation by identifying its long-term development and contributions. A variety of breeding experiments began to be conducted with the foundation of the Zoological Society of London in 1826, and in the late 1850s the society tried to collect a breeding stock of Himalayan pheasants in its attempt to acclimatise them in the Scottish Highlands. In the late nineteenth century, acclimatisation remained to be spontaneous and leisurely practices of gentleman breeders. Expertise on nomenclature, breeding and the effect of climatic change on animal physiology was often provided by specialist zoologists such as Alfred Russel Wallace and Phillip Lutley Sclater, secretary of the Zoological Society, both of whom later published on the geographical distributions of animals. The study of acclimatisation involved investigating the relationships between the distribution of species and environmental condition: it was the legacy passed on to the emerging field of zoogeography.

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