

[To Preserve Birds with Their Natural Plumage Unhurt] Dr. William James Almon

Date: 1770/03/21

Contributors

Contributor Role

Compiler

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Dr. William James Almon

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Capt. Davies R.A.

Publication Format

Manuscript

Type

Agriculture

Miscellaneous

Ingredients

alum

camphire

cinnamon

camphor

spirits

cotton

brass wire

ivory skewer

Places

Halifax

Nova Scotia

London

England

Source: Manuscript Notebook of Dr. William James Almon

Institution: Nova Scotia Archives | **Source Origin:** Almon Family Fonds | **Reference:** MG 1 / Microfilm Reel 10,045

Description

Instructions for taxidermy focusing specifically on preserving birds, pp. 73-74. Though Almon's source is uncertain, the excerpt is from a letter addressed to John Ellis from Capt. Davies read before the Royal Society and published in *A Manual of Useful Knowledge* compiled by William Pybus (Hull: William Rawson, 1810), pp. 132-33.

Transcription

Extract of a letter from Capt. Davies R. A. to John Ellis Esqr F. R. S. ____

“Let a bird, beast or any such like production of Nature be procured, and that has been well preserved in its death, either naturally or by shot, Let the Bird be open-ed from the upper part of the breast to the vent, with a sharp knife or a pair of scissors, the feathers of the Breast and belly being first carefully laid aside by the fingers, so as not to hinder the skin from being come at easily-- The skin must then be carefully loosened from all the fleshy parts of the breast, body, thighs and wings then cut out all the flesh from those parts, and take out also all the entrails and all the inside; then having got a composition of burnt alum, camphire, cinnamon of each equal parts well powdered, and mixt together strew some of this powder over the whole carcase, but salt is by no means to be used in this composition, as it will always drop, and make the plumage Nasty in moist weather, pour also in the body a small quantity of camphor dissolved in Sp. vin. rect. After that fill up the cavity, with fine cotton, or any other soft woolen substance, pouring some of the aforesaid spirit into the cotton or stuffing -- Open next the mouth, with a pair of scissors take away the tongue, the roof of the mouth, Eyes, brains, and inside of the head, fill that also with the same Composition; having procured Eyes as near the natural ones as possible (Beeds will be found the best) put them into the sockets by means of a pr. of pincers_ introduced at the mouth Fill the head quite full of cotton, pouring some of the Spirits down the throat with some of the powder, a small piece of brass wire, that has been heated in the fire to make it pliable may be put down the throat, having pass'd thro' one of the nostrils and fastened to the breast bone. Place the head in any altitude you please. Next fill up the body where the flesh has been taken away, with cotton and your

composition, and having a fine needle and silk,
sew

sew up the skin beginning at the breast; observing as you approach towards the vent, to stuff the skin as tight as it will bear [this will be easiest accomplished by means of a small piece of stick or ivory skewer,] till the whole is done. Then lay the Feathers of the breast and belly in their proper order--and your bird will be compleated. If you would chuse to put it in an attitude by introducing a small piece of the above mentioned wire through the sole of each foot, up the Leg & into the Pinion of each wing, it may be disposed of as you please. A solution of Merc. corros. subl. in water, rubbed gently over the feathers will prevent insects or other vermin from destroying then Plumage
Read before The Royal Society March 21.st 1770. -- Vol. LX

Annotations

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Title from the version published in A Manual of Useful Knowledge compiled by William Pybus (Hull: William Rawson, 1810), pp. 132-33.

To Preserve Birds with Their Natural Plumage Unhurt recipe from Early Modern Maritime Recipes:

<https://emmr.lib.unb.ca/recipes/199>