

NOW WE ARE KICKING ICHTHYOLOGY INTO HIGH GEAR

Peter Artedi (1705–1735) with excellent reason, is often called the *Father of Ichthyology*. [Apparently, the position of *Mother of Ichthyology* is still vacant...we are taking nominations].

As happens to so many of us, Artedi, who was originally destined for the church, early on came under the spell of the piscine world. Switching to medicine, and more particularly natural science, Artedi began a rather lonely existence at the University of Uppsala, an institution with almost no professors and few students in that subject. Thus, it was probably with great relief when, after 4 years, Artedi met the younger Carl Linnaeus, a newly arrived student with similar interests. The two young men had many interests in common and quickly formed a lifelong bond.

In 1834, Artedi traveled to London, where he continued to revise his still unpublished monograph. In 1835, before this massive work could be published, the nearly penniless Artedi moved to Amsterdam. Here he was hired to catalogue and describe the fishes in the collection of Albertus Seba, a wealthy merchant and pharmacist. Artedi, perhaps after a night's of partying hardy at Seba's house, apparently fell into a canal and drowned. Hearing the news, Linnaeus rushed to Amsterdam only to find that Artedi's landlord claimed the young man owed him money and refused to give up the manuscript of *Ichthyologia*. After a period of confusion and uncertainty, Linnaeus was able to ransom Artedi's manuscript. He then published the material in that manuscript, although arguably Linnaeus took much of the credit for that work.

It was at dear old Uppsala U that Artedi, recognizing that fish systematics was in a dismal state, began a massive revision of the classification of the fishes, a work that eventually became the seminal *Ichthyologia*. Suffice it to say that the underlying systematic concepts that Artedi developed (e.g., using such physical characters as gill rakers and lateral line scales to discriminate genera and species) have been used by biologists ever since. Ultimately, much of the classifications Artedi established, such as many of the genera names that we still enjoy (e.g., *Syngnathus*, *Clupea*, *Xiphias*, *Scomber*, and *Balistes*), remain unchanged to this day.

Oooh, we bet you want to know more about Artedi, Linnaeus, and his mysterious death. There is more of all of this in Ted Pietsch's, 2010, classic: *The Curious Death of Peter Artedi: A Mystery in the History of Science*.

Apparently as a memoriam to Artedi's watery demise, the Swedish astronomer Anders Celsius (1701–1744) penned this elegiac poem on the flyleaf of Linnaeus's copy of *Ichthyologia*. English botanist and zoologist George Shaw (1751–1813) added an English translation:

*Here lies poor Artedi, in foreign land pyx'd
Not a man nor a fish, but something betwixt,
Not a man, for his life among fishes he past,
Not a fish, for he perished by water at last.*