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Publisher: Taylor & Francis
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Annals and Magazine of Natural History: Series 1

Publication details, including
instructions for authors and
subscription information:

[http://
www.tandfonline.com/loi/
tnah07](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tnah07)

On the fur seal of commerce

Robert Hamilton
Published online: 15 Mar
2010.

To cite this article: Robert Hamilton (1839) On the fur seal of
commerce, *Annals and Magazine of Natural History: Series 1*,
2:13, 478-479, DOI: [10.1080/00222933909512435](https://doi.org/10.1080/00222933909512435)

To link to this article: [http://
dx.doi.org/10.1080/00222933909512435](http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00222933909512435)

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and will be produced by the parent from the mouth in its own similitude. From the several details, Sir John remarked that it may be deduced, first, that two different modes of propagation carry on the race of *Actinia*; one whereby the embryo, a shapeless corpusculum, endowed with locomotion within the parent, is produced symmetrically by the mouth, but is then deprived of the power of motion, or nearly so; the other, whereby a fragment buds externally from the base, thus generating after the fashion of the *Hydra tuba*. Second, that the *Aplidium verrucosum*, a compound *Ascidia*, is originally an inert ovum, next an embryo endowed with an active locomotive faculty, and in the third stage is converted into an animal of a form absolutely different, riveted to one spot. Third, that the Zoophytes of certain genera pass through intermediate stages towards perfection, of which that stage exhibiting them endowed with the faculty of locomotion is not the first.

Dr. Trail then made a verbal communication concerning the traces of the (so-named) *Cheirotherium* occurring in the New r Red Sandstone in Cheshire, near Liverpool, illustrated by specimens, casts, and engravings. This communication gave rise to an animated discussion, in which Dr. Trail, Professor Jameson, Mr. Stevenson, and Dr. Greville took a leading part, and in which on the one side doubts and scepticism were expressed as to the evidence satisfactorily establishing the unequivocal traces of the foot-marks of any quadruped whatever.

MISCELLANEOUS.

ON THE FUR SEAL OF COMMERCE.

In the December Number of the 'Annals,' Mr. J. E. Gray has noticed my paper* on the "Fur Seal of Commerce" which appeared in October last †. Mr. Gray considers that the figure and information given are insufficient to recognise the animal, and requests me to extend my description, that he may be enabled to ascertain whether the *Fur Seal* is the same with his *Leptonyx Wedellii*, which he described in 1837 from two specimens presented to the British Museum by Capt. Fitzroy.

With regard to my allusion to the figure, it was introduced in a note, and not in the body of the paper, as a compliment to a very deserving artist; and until Mr. Gray has seen the *drawing*, and compared it with a specimen of the *Fur Seal* either alive or dead, we

* Page 309 of the present volume.

† p. 81.

can scarcely consider him as competent to judge of its merits or demerits.

With regard *again* to the scientific characters of the animal as they are given in the body of the paper, Mr. Gray desiderates further information respecting "the teeth, the whiskers, the ears, and various other parts." But of "the teeth" I could say nothing, my description being taken from the stuffed specimens of the animal destitute of the crania; of "the whiskers," I stated that "the whiskers are brownish-black, five rows being present;" of "the ears," that "they are black, narrow and pointed, one inch in length, and situate 5 inches 6 lines from the tip of the snout;" and of the other parts and members of the animal I gave descriptions and measurements so detailed as might have exposed me to the risk of being considered needlessly prolix. In common with Mr. Gray, I regretted the absence of the crania, and professed to give the specific characters only "so far as my opportunities permitted."

But while my description was thus avowedly and necessarily defective—in regard more especially to the teeth and crania—I am happy to think that it is still amply sufficient to satisfy the leading and immediate object of Mr. Gray's inquiries, which is whether the Fur Seal is the same with his "*Leptonyx Wedellii*." Whatever else is done by my description, it at least establishes (as Mr. Gray himself observes), that the Fur Seal "is an Otary or Eared Seal." Now upon turning to the description of his "*Leptonyx Wedellii*" referred to by him, as contained in the 'Magazine of Natural History' for 1837, I find, according to the statement there given, that *it* belongs to a group which have "grinders with many roots, *ears* none, toes simple, soles and palms hairy." The Fur Seal then being "an Otary or Eared Seal," and the *Leptonyx Wedellii* having "*ears none*," how is it possible that they should be the same animal? It will be observed too, that the *Leptonyx Wedellii* has "*soles and palms hairy*," whereas my description of the Fur Seal bears, "the *under portion* of both extremities—to the extent of *two-thirds* of the anterior, and *nearly the whole* of the posterior—are *naked, being quite destitute of both hair and fur*." There are other marks of obvious distinction; but when it appears that the one seal is an Otary and the other not, it may justly be deemed superfluous to insist on any other distinctive features; and Mr. Gray's immediate purpose may be held to be sufficiently attained.—ROBERT HAMILTON.

CURIOUS HABIT OF EARTH-WORMS.

While staying at Whitley, near North Shields, Mr. Fryer pointed out to me that the worms (*Lumbrici*), which are abundant on the south