

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS:

Beasts of the Borderlands: Unknown Animals and Contested Spaces in Early Modern Natural History (edited volume)

As part of the ERC Advanced Grant project “Scholars, Animals, Images, Geographies, and the Arts: De-exoticising Eastern Europe in the Early Modern Period,” Drs. Martyna Osuch and Christina Anne Stackpole (University of Warsaw) are compiling an edited volume. Spanning from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, this collection will focus on the discovery and treatment of rare or undiscovered animal species from global frontiers. These may include the outer fringes of continents or cultural spheres, disputed territories, colonies, or “undiscovered” lands, often (but not always) at a geographical remove from a “core.” As knowledge about these liminal areas spread across the world, animals were used as informational conduits, encapsulating the wonder and strangeness of encounters with a perceived Other, and both exoticising and de-exoticising their human neighbours. Whether in texts, images, commercial goods, naturalia, or as live creatures, animals from contested spaces were invaluable agents in knowledge circulation, scientific and artistic innovation, imperial conquest, and global trade.

We welcome abstracts from all areas of early modern studies (art history, history of science, intellectual history, book history, colonial history, economic history, etc.). We are particularly interested in areas and actors that have been traditionally underrepresented in anglophone scholarship. Some possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Professional and amateur zoological knowledge networks
- Scientific expeditions aimed at finding and cataloguing new animal species
- Circulation of animal knowledge in newspapers and ephemera
- Fantastical animals in nonfiction texts (encyclopedias, travelogues, etc.)
- Representations of rare or newly-discovered species in visual and material culture
- Global trade in live exotic animals and the creation of menageries
- Human-animal relations: exotic animals as pets or gifts, domestication, breeding
- Collecting naturalia, the creation of *wunderkammern* and early natural history museums
- Exotic animals in decorative art and luxury goods
- Endangered species and processes of animal extinction

The final edited volume will be peer-reviewed and published in open access by a leading academic publisher (e.g. Brill, Routledge, Brepols) by 2028. Please send an **abstract of 200-300 words** and a **brief biography** to ca.stackpole@uw.edu.pl or martyna.osuch@uw.edu.pl by **1 November 2026**.

