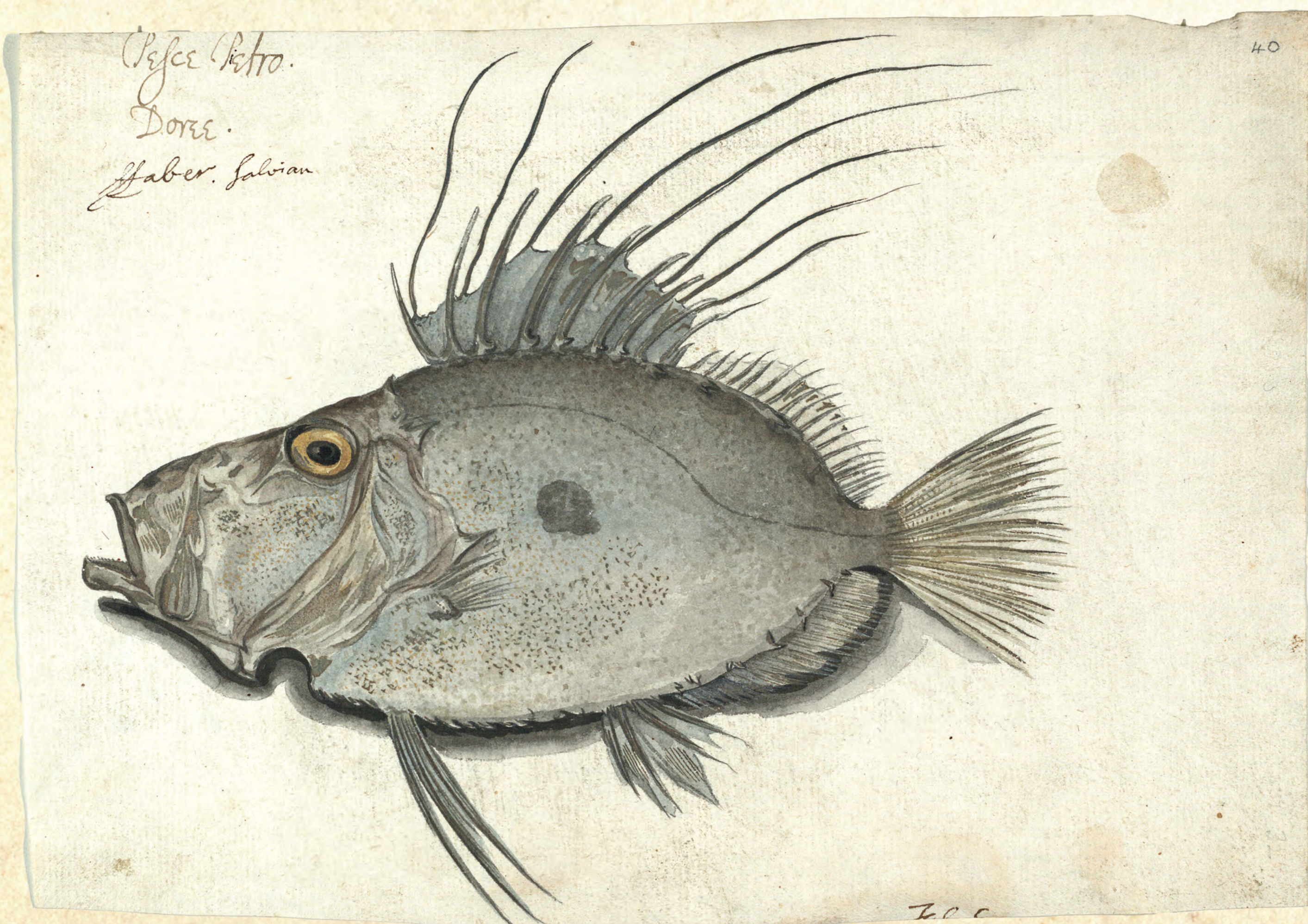




An illustration of the Perennial Cornflower provides information about flowers, leaves and roots to assist the novice botanist.
Middleton Collection, Mi LM 22, f.96v

Philip Skippon annotated this image with the identification 'Pesce petro doree' [now commonly John Dory] while Willughby noted references by Johannes Faber and Hippolyto Salviani.
Middleton Collection, Mi LM 25/40



One illustration of a flower, an Anemone, includes a butterfly, a Large White.
Middleton Collection, Mi LM 22, f.79r

Collections

Illustrations were an important tool for the early natural historian; they assisted identification and the comparison of variants. Depictions of nature had a long tradition; medieval herbals generally focused on the medical value of plants, while bestiaries used images of real and imagined animals to give moral instruction.

By the time of Willughby, students of the natural world could consult influential works containing engravings and descriptions of birds, fishes, quadrupeds and plants. Aldrovandi, Rondelet and other authorities are cited in the *Ornithology* and *Historia Piscium*, sometimes as the source of illustrations.

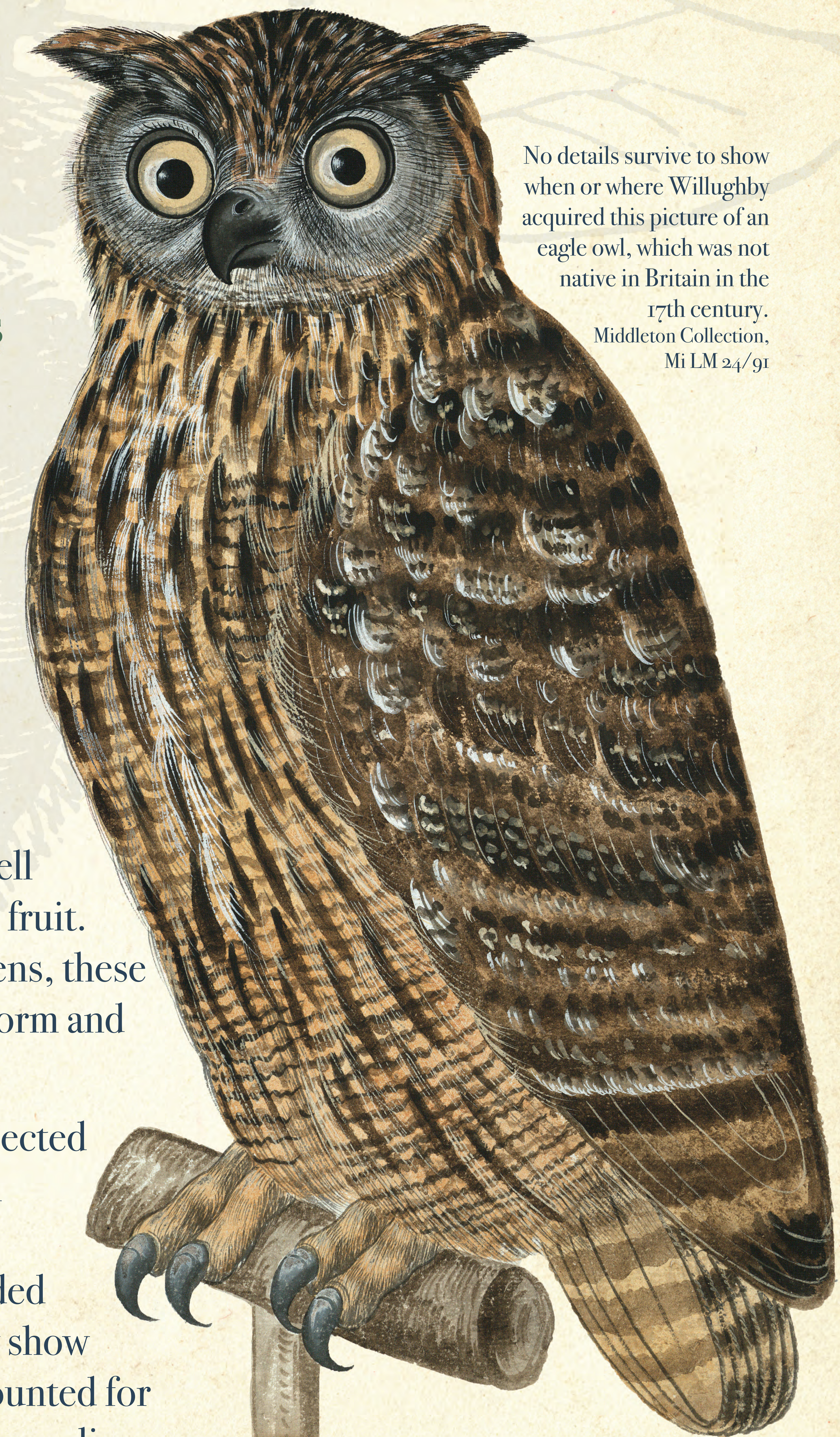
Although Willughby and Ray obtained specimens wherever possible and recorded their observations in detailed notes, they saw the value of 'elegant and accurate Figures' to 'illustrate and facilitate the understanding of Descriptions'. In Europe, Willughby sought out high quality colour illustrations. He purchased a volume of pictures of waterfowl by Leonard Baldner, a Strassburg fisherman, and another volume of coloured drawings of birds at Nuremburg, and also commissioned images from other artists.

Francis Willughby

A Natural Historian and his Collections

Purchased illustrations were not always of recent date. Willughby's collection of plant watercolours, now bound in a single volume, contains subjects dating from the 16th century. Some of its images show tubers and root systems as well as buds, flowers, stems, leaves and fruit. Unlike most organic plant specimens, these illustrations have preserved their form and colour over the centuries.

Only a fraction of Willughby's collected images of birds, fishes, insects and plants survive. Some are simply illustrations; others have notes added by Willughby, Ray or others; a few show pinholes, suggesting they were mounted for reference; and most are trimmed, revealing reuse over time.



No details survive to show when or where Willughby acquired this picture of an eagle owl, which was not native in Britain in the 17th century.
Middleton Collection, Mi LM 24/91