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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

J. Bailey
DEA in consumer products is safe

S. H. Zeisel
Response to: DEA in consumer products is safe

Cover Legend: Mark Catesby (1682–1749), “The Crested Bittern,” Plate 79: hand-colored engraving from Natural History of Carolina, Florida and the Islands of the Bahamas, London, 1731–43. Catesby first sighted this bird in the Bahamas when he was sent to America in 1712 to explore the flora and fauna of England’s foreign colonies. After two long field trips, Catesby spent 20 years translating his drawings and observations into a two-volume edition of 220 hand-colored engravings accompanied by text. This feat set a precedent for John James Audubon 100 years later. For his accomplishment Catesby was elected fellow of the Royal Society on May 3, 1733.

Catesby’s Crested Bittern went through a taxonomic name change: Linneaeus recategorized it as Yellow-Crowned Night-Heron, (nycticorax violeaceus) in his 1758 Systema Naturae. The name stuck. Audubon spotted this species in the Florida Keys and it appears as Plate CCCXXXVI in The Birds of America. In his usual poetic style, Audubon writes in his journal: “The Night Heron heavily flew towards the land, like a glutton retiring at daybreak, with well-lined paunch, from the house of some wealthy patron. The Night Heron, fearful of the day, with hurried flight sought refuge in the recesses of the deepest swamps.” The Bahamians called these birds “crab-catchers, [with] crabs being what they mostly subsist on; yet they are well-tasted, and free from any rank or fishy savour.” As suggested on page 45 in this issue of The FASEB Journal, they’d go well with olive oil. (Legend by Ann Weissmann, Curator, MBL/WHOI Library, http://www.mblwhoilibrary.org)