

Franz von Paula Schrank, *General Guide to the Study of Natural History* (1783)

Abstract

In 1774, after the suppression of the Society of Jesus, former Jesuit Franz von Paula Schrank (1747–1835) was ordained as a priest. He went on to pursue a career as a professor and a scholar. In 1784, he was appointed professor of botany and zoology at the University of Ingolstadt. From 1809 to 1832, he served as director of the botanical gardens in Munich. He was one of the few Catholic representatives of physico-theology in the south of Germany.

In his treatise *Allgemeine Anleitung die Naturgeschichte zu studiren* [*General Guide to the Study of Natural History*], he recommends the most important works of zoology of his day, such as Linnaeus's *Systema Naturae*, Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, Bloch's and Gouan's ichthyological works, Johann Fabricius' and Réaumur's entomological books, and Martin's and Chemnitz's conchology, among other titles. For the field of mineralogy, he suggests Werner's and Wallerius' systems of classification. His list includes the standard works of late-eighteenth-century natural history.

Source

[...]

Here, I must not leave my readers in uncertainty about the choice of natural classification systems. The advantages of Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* are clear. It should be applied when dealing with the animal and plant kingdoms: but one should use the Latin version, which is far better than the German version developed by the immortal Müller in Erlangen, since his translation deals only with the animal kingdom (plants and minerals are addressed elsewhere). Furthermore – as if foreseeing his impending death – it was obviously done in haste, which caused him to commit some errors. One should also read Buffon's *Naturgeschichte der Vögel und säugenden Thiere* [*Natural History of Birds and Mammals*], and Ökonomische *Naturgeschichte der Fische* [*The Economical Natural History of the Fishes*], which brought such notoriety to the author, Dr. Bloch of Berlin, as well as Couan's *Natursystem der Fische* [*Natural System of Fishes*].

Likewise, regarding insects, use of the Linnaean system is preferred. It is adequate for beginners and much easier to use than Prof. Fabricius' system, which has its advantages and is recommended once one has gained more experience and skill. Additionally, the works of Rösel, Degner, and Reaumur should be read.

Conchology has been exceptionally well covered by Martini and his predecessor Chemnitz, as have intestinal worms by Göze and Bloch.

But in the mineral kingdom, one must begin by learning to differentiate the object from its external characteristics, according to the instructions of Mr. Werner. Then, eventually, a system must be chosen. Here, I would recommend the translation of Wallerius, as completed under the direction of Professor Leske, if it were not for the misfortune of possibly having to wait a long time to see its second part. Whoever has the opportunity and inspiration to conduct chemical experiments can use the Kronstedt mineral system. Additionally, one should read the German translation of the Linnaean system by Prof. Gmelin in Göttingen and Vogel's *Praktisches Mineralsystem* [*Practical Mineral System*]. I am deliberately skipping the plant kingdom because I have dedicated

a separate paper to it.

Source: Franz von Paula Schrank, *Allgemeine Anleitung die Naturgeschichte zu studiren*. Munich: Johann Baptist Strobl, 1783, pp. 28–33. Available online at: ZB Zürich, <https://doi.org/10.3931/e-rara-46674>

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Recommended Citation: Franz von Paula Schrank, General Guide to the Study of Natural History (1783), published in: German History Intersections, <<https://germanhistory-intersections.org/en/knowledge-and-education/ghis:document-186>> [July 16, 2025].