

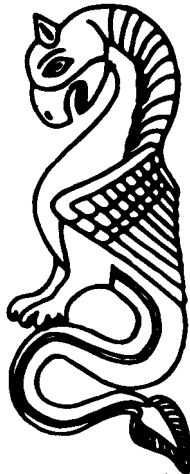
# Leeds Studies in English

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HANDBOOK OF ANIMAL REFERENCES  
IN MIDDLE ENGLISH RELIGIOUS PROSE

By Nancy Fischer

The following handlist of animal references in Middle English religious prose is the product of a study of the methods of amplification used in popular religious writing of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> The potential interest of such a list to historians of literature and art concerned with the traditions underlying medieval and renaissance imagery prompts its publication.

Medieval preachers and moralists were seldom content to mention an animal or its characteristics briefly; they often appended to any discussion of animals an associated religious or moral signification. Thus from the vernacular religious prose we can gain an appreciation not only of what lay people were told about animals, but also of what that information signified to them. It is perhaps clear, then, why the Latin works which had great influence on medieval animal symbolism, such as the *Physiologus*, have been omitted from the list of sources. Although we may presume that the information contained in such sources was familiar to educated clerics, we may not presume that it would have been transmitted wholesale to laymen.

Two points should be noted about the presence of animal references in Middle English religious prose: such references are not always interpreted, and many animals are capable of several interpretations. These points may prove valid in connexion with animal references in other literary genres of the period and in visual portrayals of animals as well.

SOURCES

The texts have been selected from manuscript and printed sources to represent a variety of types of religious prose in Middle English. Although the majority of the manuscripts derive from the fifteenth century, the date of the original composition is known to be earlier in at least a dozen cases and may well be earlier in others.

*Manuscripts*

Addit. 24202	Lollard tracts and sermons. 15th c. British Museum.
Addit. 37677	Religious works in Latin and English. 15th c. British Museum.
Bod. 95	Sermons for the year. 15th c. Bodleian Library.

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| Bod. 110            | Sermons and devotional works in Latin and English. 15th c. Bodleian Library. |
| Bod. 283            | Mirour du Monde or Vices and Virtues. 15th c. Bodleian Library.              |
| Bod. 423            | Mystical tracts. 15th c. Bodleian Library.                                   |
| CCCC 142            | Devotional treatises. 15th c. Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.             |
| CUL. Gg. vi. 16     | Sermons for Sundays and Feast days. 15th c. Cambridge University Library.    |
| Douce 60            | Devotional treatises and sermons. 15th c. Bodleian Library.                  |
| Edin. Univ. Lib. 93 | Devotional treatises. 15th c. Edinburgh University Library.                  |
| Greaves 54          | Sermons. 15th c. Bodleian Library.   |
| Harl. 1706          | Devotional verse and prose. 15th c. British Museum.                          |
| Harl. 1197          | Penitential handbook and sermons. 15th c. British Museum.                    |
| Harl. 1288          | Penitential handbook. 15th c. British Museum.                                |
| Harl. 2250          | Sermons and devotional treatises. 15th c. British Museum.                    |
| Harl. 2276          | Sermons for the year. 15th c. British Museum.                                |
| Harl. 2330          | Treatises attributed to St. Augustine. 14th c. British Museum.               |
| Harl. 2383          | Doctrinal and devotional sermons and treatises. 15th c. British Museum.      |
| Harl. 2388          | Devotional treatises. 15th c. British Museum.                                |
| Harl. 2398          | Devotional treatises. 15th c. British Museum.                                |
| Harl. 5085          | The Mirror, sermons for the year. 14th c. British Museum.                    |
| JCO 39              | Disce Mori. 15th c. Jesus College, Oxford, Bodleian Library.                 |
| Linc. Cath. 50, 51  | Sermons for the year. 15th c. Lincoln Cathedral Chapter Library.             |

- St JCC 95 Sermon. 14th c. St John's College Library, Cambridge.
- St JCC 188 Friar Sanal's Vision. 15th c. St John's College Library, Cambridge.
- St JCC 193 Theological tracts. 15th c. St John's College Library, Cambridge.
- SSCC 74 Sermon cycle. 15th c. Sidney Sussex College Library, Cambridge.
- TCC B. 14. 19 Devotional treatises. 15th c. Trinity College Library, Cambridge.
- TCC B. 14. 53 Devotional treatises. 15th c. Trinity College Library, Cambridge.
- UCO 97 Sermons and devotional treatises. 15th c. University College, Oxford, Bodleian Library.

*Published Sources*

- AN *An Alphabet of Tales*, ed. M. M. Banks. EETS, O.S. 126-27. London, 1904-5. (15th c. trans. from the Latin.)
- AR *The Ancren Riwle*, ed. James Morton. Camden Soc., London, 1853. (early 13th c.)
- Azen | *Dan Michel's Azenbite of Inwyt*, ed. R. Morris. EETS, O.S. 23. London, 1886. (1340 trans. of *Somme le Roi*.)
- Blench J. W. Blench. *Preaching in England in the Late Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*. Oxford, 1964.
- Book *The Book of Privy Counselling*, in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. P. Hodgson. EETS, O.S. 218. London, 1944. (c. 1375.)
- Branches *The Branches of the Appletree*, in *The Tretyse of Love*, ed. J. H. Fisher. EETS, O.S. 223. London, 1951. (composed last quarter 13th c.; trans. 1493.)
- Chast *The Chastising of God's Children*, ed. J. Bazire and E. Colledge. Oxford, 1957. (c. 1392-1408.)
- Cloud *The Cloud of Unknowing*, ed. P. Hodgson. EETS, O.S. 218. London, 1944. (late 14th c.)

- DM** "Disce Mori," ed. N. A. Chadwick. Univ. of Liverpool, 1966. (Unpub. M.A. thesis.) (2nd half 15th c., from MS JCO 39.)
- Disc Cler** *Peter Alphonse's Disciplina Clericalis*, ed. W. H. Hulme. *Western Reserve Univ. Bulletin*, XXII, 1919. (15th c., from MS Worc. Cath. F. 172, trans. from Lat. of the early 12th c.)
- Festial** "An Edition of John Mirc's Festial," ed. M. Wakelin. Univ. of Leeds, 1960. (Unpub. M.A. thesis.) (early 15th c.)
- Fire** *The Fire of Love*, ed. R. Harvey. EETS, O.S. 106. London, 1896. (1435 trans. of Rolle's *Incendio Amoris* by R. Misyn.)
- GR** *Gesta Romanorum*, ed. S. Herrtage. EETS, E.S. 33. London, 1879. (mid-15th c. trans. from the Latin.)
- Goad** Walter Hilton's translation of *The Goad of Love*, ed. and mod. C. Kirchberger. London, 1952. (late 14th c. trans. from the Latin of James of Milan.)
- Greg** John Gregory of Newport, sermon, ed. H. G. Pfander in *The Popular Sermon of the Medieval Friar in England*. New York, 1937. (early 15th c., from MS UCO 97.)
- Grisdale** *Three Middle English Sermons*, ed. D. M. Grisdale. Leeds School of English Texts and Monographs, V, 1939. (c. 1389-1404, from MS Worc. Cath. F.10.)
- Horst** *Yorkshire Writers: Richard Rolle and his Followers*, ed. C. Horstmann. 2 vols. London, 1895.
- JW** *Jacob's Well*, ed. A. Brandeis. EETS, O.S. 115. London, 1900. (c. 1450.)
- KofTL** *The Book of the Knight of La Tour Landry*, ed. T. Wright. EETS, O.S. 33. Rev. ed., London, 1906. (c. 1420-70, trans. from the French of c. 1370.)
- Ladder** *A Ladder of Foure Ronges*, in *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, ed. P. Hodgson. EETS, O.S. 231. London, 1955. (c. 1480.)

- Lant* *Lanterne of Liȝt*, ed. L. Swinburn. EETS, O.S. 151. London, 1917. (c. 1410, Lollard.)
- Mending* *The Mending of Life*, ed. R. Harvey. EETS, O.S. 106. London, 1896. (1434 trans. of Rolle's *De Emendacione vitae* by R. Misyn.)
- MES* *Middle English Sermons*, ed. W. O. Ross. EETS, O.S. 209. London, 1940. (c. 1400, from MS BM Roy. 18.B.xxiii.)
- Parst* *The Parson's Tale*, in *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F. N. Robinson. 2nd ed., Boston, 1957. (c. 1395.)
- Pistle* *A Pistle on Discrecioun of Stirings*, in *Deonise Hid Diuinite*, ed. P. Hodgson. EETS, O.S. 231. London, 1955. (last quarter 14th c.)
- Psalter* *The Psalter*, ed. H. Bramley. Oxford, 1884. (2nd quarter 14th c., Rolle's English version.)
- Rel Pieces* *Religious Pieces in Prose and Verse*, ed. G. Perry. EETS, O.S. 26. London, repr., 1914. (15th c., from Linc. Cath. Lib. MS Thornton.)
- Rolle* *English Writings of Richard Rolle*, ed. H. E. Allen. Oxford, 1963. (Rolle, c. 1290-1346.)
- Scale* Walter Hilton, *The Scale of Perfection*, ed. and mod. Evelyn Underhill. London, 1923. (last third 14th c.)
- Spec Christ* *Speculum Christiani*, ed. G. Holmstedt. EETS, O.S. 182. London, 1933. (mid-15th c., trans. from Latin of 14th c.)
- Spec Sac* *Speculum Sacerdotale*, ed. E. H. Weatherly. EETS, O.S. 200. London, 1936. (15th c.)
- Talkyng* *A Talkyng of þe loue of God*, ed. M. S. Westra, O.P. The Hague, 1950. (3rd quarter 14th c.)
- Tret of Love* *The Tretyse of Love*, ed. J. H. Fisher. EETS, O.S. 223. London, 1951. (late 15th c.)
- xii frutes* *A Devout Tretyse Called The Tree & xii frutes of the Holy Goost*, ed. J. J. Vaissier. Groningen, 1960. (c. 1450-75.)
- VV* *The Book of Vices and Virtues*, ed. W. N. Francis. EETS, O.S. 217. London, 1942. (c. 1375-1400, trans. of *Somme le Roi*.)

- Winn *Wyclif, Select English Writings*, ed. H. E. Winn. Oxford, 1929.
- Wyclif *The English Works of Wyclif*, ed. F. D. Matthew. EETS, O.S. 74. London, 1880. (late 14th c.)

## ARRANGEMENT OF ENTRIES

The entries below are arranged alphabetically by names of animals. The illustrations are divided into three categories: scriptural references, natural history references, and anecdotes. Biblical and doctrinal references are found under *Scripture*, even though the reference may include some fact from natural history lore. Under the heading *Natural History* will be found some of the characteristics associated with an animal in the Bible; they are included under this heading when the text from which the reference is derived does not cite a biblical source, or when the properties mentioned are not discussed in the Bible. *Anecdotes* include narratives in which animals play ancillary roles as well as fables in which they take the major parts. Each biblical or doctrinal reference, property from natural history, or synopsis of the story is followed by its signification and source. It will be noticed that all three categories are not always represented.

## HANDLIST OF ANIMAL REFERENCES

Adder. See SERPENT.

## ANT

*Scripture*

Go thou to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise (Prov. vi.6) — the ant, together with all the natural world, teaches mankind by example to avoid sloth, MS Bod. 283, f.49<sup>r</sup>; — the works of the ant offer more edification than the strength of the lion or the bear, *Rel Pieces*, 22.

*Natural History*

Provident; gathers in summer the food it needs for winter — contrasted to men who realize that they must gather virtues in this world in preparation for life in the next and yet do not, MS Bod. 283, f.22<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 116; — a man who does not provide for the future shows less reason than an ant, *Disc Cler*, 14; its stores devoured by swine — similarly, rich men gather wealth only to have it stolen or wasted, and thus they have no profit of their labour, *GR*, 372; daily grows stronger as it labours — contrasted to those who begin by being holy and daily grow more sinful, *DM*, 196-97; — compared to those who persevere in obedience to God, MS Bod. 283, f.123<sup>r</sup>.

## APE

*Natural History*

Imitates men, foolishly – compared to evil prelates who give a foolish imitation of the Apostles, Wyclif, 96; – compared to contemplative who pretends to be stirred from within but is actually copying other men, *Pistle*, 76-77; cannot sit still – compared to men at Mass, MS Bod. 283, f.27<sup>v</sup>;  
 playful, entertaining – compared to servants of a rich man, MS Bod. 283, f.29<sup>r</sup>; – compared to jokers, *ParsT*, 1.651; – entertainments preferred to Mass, MS Bod. 283, f.23<sup>v</sup>;  
 bound to a clog – similarly the soul is bound to the body, *DM*, 194;  
 female, at oestrus – illustrates pride of dress, compared to those who display themselves in tight trousers, *ParsT*, 1.423;  
 throws away a whole nut because of the bitter rind – illustrates that beyond the bitterness of the present is the sweetness of heaven, *GR*, 373; – compared to men who give up doing well before making a great effort, Edgeworth, *Sermons*, quoted in Blench, 123;  
 ape's Pater Noster – describes prayer said by complainers, MS Bod. 283, f.82<sup>r</sup>;  
 ape "resoun," ape "skile" – compared to priests' misinterpretation of duties to benefit worldly-minded, Wyclif, 412, 413;  
 devil's ape – a hypocrite who pretends to be virtuous by doing penance and good works, *DM*, 148.

*Anecdotes*

An ape with two whelps, when pursued by a hunter, clutches the one she prefers in her arms while the other leaps on her back. When she tires, she drops the first and the second continues to cling to her – the mother ape is likened to a sinner, *AN*, 478.

A liar and an honest man visit an ape settlement. The liar flatters the apes and is rewarded, the truthful man is punished – an adulator is frequently honoured and an honest man contemned, *AN*, 24.

Asp. See SERPENT.

## ASS

*Scripture*

Balaam is reproved by his ass which God causes to speak (Num. xxii.21-23) – author of *Chastising* asks for similar divine assistance, *Chast*, 95; – similarly, unlearned men speak the truth of Christ against the follies of religious men who, like Balaam, refuse to leave their apostasy, MS Addit. 24202, f.59<sup>r</sup>.  
 Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on an ass with her foal (Matt. xxi.2-5, prophesied Isa. lxii.11) – ass represents the Jews, bound under the old law, and foal represents Gentiles, bound under the law of sin, or believers in the new law, MS Harl. 2276, f.2<sup>r</sup>, MS Greaves 54, f.27<sup>v</sup>, MS Harl. 1197, f.144<sup>v</sup>, *Spec Sac*, 99; – illustrates Christ's poverty, *Tret of Love*, 26-27; – illustrates humility and meekness, MS Harl. 2276, f.2<sup>v</sup>, f.68<sup>v</sup>; – shows that Christ possessed both



Jews and heathen, MS Harl. 2276, f.1<sup>r</sup>; — shows that both flesh and spirit become meek under Christ's yoke, MS Harl. 2276, f.1<sup>v</sup>; — ass represents a righteous soul which gladly bears the commandment of Christ, *Spec Sac*, 99; — betokens the church, or each Christian whom Christ unbound from sin, even as he ordered the ass to be unbound, and upon whom he sits with the yoke of teaching and love of virtue, MS Harl. 2276, f.68<sup>v</sup>; — illustrates Christ's modesty which is contrasted to the pride of some horsemen, *ParsT*, ll. 434-35.

### Natural History

Loath to do any work, amazingly slow — emblematic of Deadly Sin of sloth, MS Harl. 1197, f.21<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Douce 60, f.203<sup>v</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.207<sup>v</sup>, *GR*, 372-73, *Ladder*, 140; — compared to slothful man, *JW*, 103;  
 has a feeble head and a strong behind — compared to devil, *AR*, 296;  
 loves music; stops eating to listen, but as soon as the music stops, returns to its food — compared to a sinful man who likes to listen to a preacher but who forgets the sermon as soon as it is over, *MES*, 166;  
 exercises reason, measure, and nature in generation — lecherous men and women, disregarding these, are more bestial, *DM*, 40;  
 mill ass, obedient — compared to man obedient to God, *VV*, 139, *Azen*, 141, MS Bod. 283, f.123<sup>r</sup>;  
 paradise of asses — preferred to the paradise of angels by a man who has forgotten God, *DM*, 19;  
 speaking to an ass — as efficacious as speaking to a man fallen into the sin of presumption, *DM*, 126.

### Anecdotes

An ass, jealous of the food and care given to swine who do no work, feigns illness and is well treated. He then realizes that the swine are being prepared for the butcher and decides to return to work — swine represent rich men and clerics preparing themselves for the devil; the ass, upon which Christ chose to ride, represents good men, *GR*, 369-70.

An ass, jealous of the attention his master pays a puppy, decides to mimic the dog's behaviour. When he greets his master by leaping on him and braying he is beaten for his efforts — illustrates the fate of those who, in trying to copy the behaviour of many virtuous people, lose their own kind of goodness, *Azen*, 155-56, *VV*, 154-55, MS Bod. 283, f.130<sup>v</sup>.

A priest's ass knows immediately that he should carry a usurer to the gallows, although he has not been commanded to do so nor has he ever travelled the road before — an unrepentant sinner will be carried to shameful damnation, *JW*, 198.

Fable of the ass and the proud horse: see HORSE. (See also MULE.)

**BARNACLE GOOSE***Natural History*

Grows from a tree, without generation – Christ came from the Blessed Virgin in the same manner, *Spec Sac*, 41;

grows in a tree over the water but does not become alive until it falls into the water – tree signifies Adam and Eve from whom Christian men and women descend; they are dead because of original sin and do not become alive until they are quickened by the water of Baptism, MS CCCC 142, f.112<sup>v</sup>.

**BASILISK (Cockatrice)***Scripture*

Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon (Ps. xc.13).

*Natural History*

From an egg laid by a snake and nursed by a toad is born the basilisk, called king of serpents because of a white, crown-like growth on his head. His stench slays serpents, his breath birds, and his sight every living thing, except the weasel, which may overcome him – snake is interpreted as evil desire.

Assenting to sin brings forth the basilisk that with sight slays all the virtues of the soul, with stench of bad example slays all men who come near, and with the breath of evil words slays all hearers. But the weasel, that is, the righteous man, may slay great sin with good will, *Psalter xc.13*;

slays by the venom of its sight – as the foul looking of lechers slays the soul, *ParsT*, l.852; – as men slay themselves and each other with eyes full of the venom of avarice, curiosity and lechery, *Goad*, 210;

kills greenery (cf. SERPENT) – compared to envious men, *VV*, 22.

*Anecdote*

Alexander slew a basilisk which was decimating his forces by making it look at itself in a mirror – Alexander represents each Christian, the army his virtues, the basilisk vanity, and the mirror his conscience which can slay vanity, *GR*, 240.

**BAT***Natural History*

Cannot see the sun – similarly, janglers and backbiters are blind to the love of God, *Rolle*, 74;

is blind because the humour which helps the sight is directed into its wings – similarly, men who are always trying to rise to higher estates or dignities become blind, *MES*, 231.

**BEAR***Scripture*

As a roaring lion, and a hungry bear, so is a wicked prince over the poor people (Prov. xxviii.15) – illustrates backbiting as a kind of homicide, *ParsT*, l. 567.

*Natural History*

- Constantly licks its chops because of its desire for honey which it greedily steals from industrious bees – emblematic of Deadly Sin of gluttony, MS Harl. 1197, f.24<sup>r</sup>, MS Douce 60, f.207<sup>v</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, ff.97<sup>r</sup>-98<sup>v</sup>, f.207<sup>r-v</sup>; – compared to gluttonous man, *JW*, 142, *GR*, 372-73;
- loves honey, continues to eat it even after being stung – bear interpreted as man's flesh, honey as lechery which man continues in even when he is stung by infamy, *MES*, 236;
- trapped by spreading its path with honey – just as flattery leads men to the trap of hell, *JW*, 149; – illustration against flattery, MS Bod. 283, f.78<sup>v</sup>;
- hunted with a basin, with which it is blinded – similarly, deadly sin hunts a man, making him blind to virtue, MS Bod. 95, f.41<sup>r-v</sup>;
- slothful – emblematic of Deadly Sin of sloth, *AR*, 202;
- has strong feet – attribute of the devil, beast of the Apocalypse, MS Bod. 283, f.14<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 10;
- has strong feet and a tender skull – compared to the devil, *AR*, 296;
- finds shame very disagreeable because of its great pride – compared to the devil, *AR*, 296;
- is not deterred by beatings if it gets what it wants – illustrates avarice; beast of the Apocalypse, MS Bod. 283, f.60<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 204;
- protects its cubs and becomes extremely angry when they are stolen – it is better to meet such an animal than a man who is full of wrath, MS Harl. 2250, f.95<sup>r</sup>;
- bound to stake – as soul is bound to body, *DM*, 194;
- tumbling – Lady Envy makes her bears tumble in great houses where every man wants praise, MS Bod. 283, f.40<sup>v</sup>.

*Anecdotes*

A bear lives with a hermit and helps him and is slain by envious men. (1) The hermit curses his disciples, they fall ill, and he is conscience-stricken – even brute animals obey the blessed, *AN*, 382-83. (2) The killers suffer a foul death – just as the envious, unless they make amends, shall have a foul end, *JW*, 87-88.

## BEASTS

*Scripture*

But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee: and the birds of the air, and they shall tell thee (Job xii.7) – by the example of unreasonable animals men should at least learn good behaviour, even if they do not learn to dread God's final judgment, *DM*, 195; – all nature cries out to man to be not idle, MS Bod. 283, f.48<sup>v</sup>.

*Quod exemplaritur nos docent formica prouidenciam, gallus vigilanciam, ouis pacienciam, canis fidelitatem, columba simplicitatem et turtur castitatem* (attrib. to St Bernard) – illustrates point that having one's mind on God and his creation keeps one from wanhope, *DM*, 201.

Thou has subjected all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen: moreover the beasts also of the fields (Ps. viii.8; also Gen.i.28) – sheep interpreted as the innocent, angels and men, oxen as spiritual men working in the church, beasts

as lovers of the world and fleshly lusts, *Psalter*, viii.7; – evidence of God's love for mankind, *AR*, 388; – beasts work for, clothe, and feed mankind, demonstrate its superiority, *Rel Pieces*, 22; – noxious beasts created for profit of mankind, for chastising, punishment, examples, tokens, or signs; contemplation of these creatures leads to praise of God, *Rel Pieces*, 22, 67, MS St JCC 193, f.5<sup>r-v</sup>.

And man when he was in honour did not understand; he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them (Ps. xlviii.13) – man, made in the image of God, became beast-like when he did not use his natural reason, *Psalter*, xlviii.12, MS Harl. 2330, f.100<sup>r</sup>, MS Bod. 95, f.41<sup>r</sup>.

Every beast loveth its like: so also every man him that is nearest to himself (Ecclus.xiii.19) – illustrates point that men should have the virtue of pity, *VV*, 143, MS Bod. 283, f.125<sup>r</sup>; – man should love God for he is made in His image, MS Bod. 95, f.64<sup>r</sup>; – man should love God because of his likeness to Christ, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.48<sup>v</sup>; – cited against manslaughter, sixth commandment, MS UCO 97, f.85<sup>r</sup>, MS Harl. 2398, f.97<sup>r</sup>, MS SSCC 74, f.185<sup>v</sup>; – a remedy for envy, MS Bod. 283, f.41<sup>v</sup>.

Beasts worshipped Christ at his birth – although they lacked reason, yet they acknowledged his lordship, *MES*, 316.

Beasts surrounded crib at Nativity – illustrates Christ's poverty, *DM*, 219.

(See also.OX.)

#### *Natural History*

Love and nourish their offspring – therefore God the Father will do even better for his children, *Chast*, 207-208, MS Harl. 1288, f.83<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 23, 221;

sinful souls transformed into the likeness of beasts after death – reflects the nature of their sins, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>;

go on four legs – an allegorical figure of gluttony goes on all fours because she desires to live with beasts; her fourth daughter is bestiality, MS St JCC 188, Ch. 6;

have eyes set earthward – compared to a man who sets his sights on worldly pleasures, MS Bod. 283, f.19<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 104-105; – contrasted to man who looks upward and whose spiritual works should be similarly upright, *Cloud*, 113;

eat night and day – compared to fast-breakers and gluttons who cannot wait for the proper hour to eat, *DM*, 229-30;

chew cud – compared to thinking with relish about sins of the flesh which one has committed, *DM*, 249;

love to eat bread, the most strengthening food – the Eucharist is the most strengthening food for a Christian soul, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.167<sup>v</sup>;

herd together when approached by danger; a beast that separates itself from the flock is devoured -- illustrates the necessity of constancy in love, *AR*, 252;

defend and govern themselves by means of the tail; animals chase flies away, birds and fish regulate motion – similarly man should defend his soul and body by means of thoughts on his (tail) end or death, *DM*, 217;

are profitable even when dead – in contrast, the dead body of a man is completely useless, MS UCO 97, f.130<sup>r</sup>;

- demonstrate natural reason: a fish withdraws from the bait when it sees the hook, a bird withdraws from the corn when it sees the snare – contrasted to the man who knows himself in peril but will not withdraw from lustful pleasures, MS Bod. 423, f.166<sup>v</sup>; every beast seeks refuge when pursued by his enemies, the deer in the park, the fox in his hole – thus man, when beset by his spiritual enemies, the world, flesh, and devil, should retire to a place of refuge, that is, his soul, MS Bod. 110, f.168<sup>v</sup>;
- communicate with their own kind – compared to a man who fails to speak in truth and love to his neighbour and therefore speaks more falsely than beasts or birds, MS Harl. 2398, f.88<sup>r-v</sup>;
- labour after their own natures – contrasted to mankind which has the power of discerning and yet does not labour to the pleasure of God, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.24<sup>v</sup>;
- are self-sufficient – contrasted to man who cannot help himself, MS SSCC 74, f.168<sup>v</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.31<sup>v</sup>, f.36<sup>v</sup>, MS UCO 97, f.101<sup>v</sup>, *Festial*, 146;
- maintain peace and order – therefore, woe to any reasonable creature who does not keep God's order, MS JCO 39, p.609;
- eat and drink as necessary – contrasted to men who eat and drink unreasonably, MS Harl. 2276, f.36<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 40; – those who wish to put off fasting excuse themselves by saying they should not fast more than beasts, *DM*, 136; – illustrates virtue of continence, *xii frutes*, 135;
- are unreasonable – an epithet used for women with intricate coiffures, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.195<sup>r</sup>; – Carthusians and Cistercians worse than unreasonable beasts, *DM*, 40-41; – deadly sin makes man an unreasonable beast, MS Greaves 54, f.120<sup>v</sup>; – epithet for gluttons and lechers, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.57<sup>v</sup>; – compared to gluttons, MS Harl. 1288, f.85<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 241-42, *Chast*, 211; – compared to drunken men, MS Harl. 2330, f.29<sup>r</sup>, Winn, 108; – sin of lechery makes men most like foul, wild, or unreasonable beasts, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.24<sup>r</sup>, *Azen*, 201, *VV*, 223, *xii frutes*, 161; – Samson made to behave like an unreasonable beast in punishment for his wrath, MS Harl. 2250, f.95<sup>r</sup>; – compared to men who will not learn to please God, although they easily learn romances and ribaldry, MS Bod. 95, f.86<sup>r</sup>;
- do not comprehend their mortality – compared to evil livers who do not dread death, MS Harl. 1706, f.21<sup>r</sup>;
- do not understand themselves, their maker, purpose, etc. – man who is reasonable should, *DM*, 17-18;
- know nothing of spiritual devotion – compared to those who do not seek great devotion and sweetness in Christ, MS JCO 39, p.600;
- lust immoderately after the flesh, especially mules, horses, and swine – contrasted to the moderation which should characterize marriage, MS Harl. 2398, f.166<sup>r</sup>, Winn, 105; – reasonable man made in the image of God should exercise restraint, MS Harl. 2398, f.162<sup>r-v</sup>;

destroy gardens – thus the five senses must be made like a fence around the garden of virtue to protect it from beastly sin, MS Harl. 2276, f.46<sup>v</sup>; – a hard life is a strong hedge which protects virginity from marauding beasts, *VV*, 257.

## BEE

### Scripture

They surrounded me like bees, and they burned like fire among thorns (Ps. cxvii.12) – interpreted to mean that as bees make honey for others and not for themselves, so evil men and backbiters who try to harm good men actually make sweet crowns for them, *Psalter*, cxvii.12.

### Natural History

Meek and obedient in gathering honey – as a meek heart gathers from every creature some kind of honey, or virtue, *xii frutes*, 114;  
 makes honey and avoids evil smells – as a meek heart seeks to praise virtue and ignore faults, MS Bod. 283, f.121<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 134, *Azen*, 136;  
 makes honey from flowers, air, and the juice of its body – illustrates the gentle bee of purity which brings the honey of contemplation into the soul, *xii frutes*, 59;  
 seeks food industriously, returns with it to the hive and lives on it thereafter – compared to those who take Christ's doctrines into their hearts, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.73<sup>v</sup>;  
 seeks food obediently in sunny weather and always returns to the hive with its honey – similarly the contemplative should receive visitations from the Lord meekly and discreetly and always return to Christ after his mystical flights, *Chast*, 107-108;  
 cannot make honey without flowers – nor would God come to earth until a flower, the Blessed Virgin, was grown there, *MES*, 188;  
 young produced from honey without sexual generation – the wax of the bee betokens the maidenhood of the Blessed Virgin, MS Harl. 2276, f.29<sup>v</sup>;  
 king bee has no sting – illustrates point that there is nothing more becoming to a man of high estate than pity, *ParsT*, l.466;  
 flies great distances to obtain a certain slime – compared to covetous men who go to great lengths to obtain riches, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.60<sup>v</sup>;  
 never idle, casts lazy bees from the hive, flies with earth in its feet for ballast, keeps its wings clean – compared to the contemplative who is never idle, who reproves idle men for their unworthiness, who takes his earthliness to heart so that he may not be blown off course by vanity or pride, and who lives virtuously, *Rolle*, 54-55;  
 attacks bears – bees signify the slanders heaped on lechers which yet cannot deter them from their sin, *MES*, 236;  
 attacks those who try to steal its honey – just as a contemplative should fight the devil who tries to steal from him the life of poverty and grace, *Rolle*, 55.

*Anecdote*

Bees construct a shrine in their hive to honour the sacrament which their owner placed in the hive to increase their productivity – miracle of the Eucharist, *AN*, 465.

**BIRDS***Scripture*

On the fifth day God made birds, some of the waters, some of the air (Gen. i.20-21) – explains why, on Shrove Thursday, repentant men are separated from evil men who will not repent. Birds of the waters signify men who continue in their sins, birds of the air good men in heaven, *Spec Sac*, 102.

And I will rejoice under the covert of thy wings: my soul hath stuck close to thee: thy right hand hath received me (Ps.lxii.8-9) – interpreted as an implied reference to the hen which protects her chicks, “for I am thy bird, and if thou hide me not, the glede will ravish me,” *Psalter*, lxii.8.

And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides (Ezek. i.8) – understood to refer to those who live a mixed life and are therefore not wholly birds of heaven, or contemplatives, *MS JCO 39*, p.601.

The kite in the air hath known her time: the turtle, and the swallow, and the stork have observed the time of their coming: but my people have not known the judgment of the Lord (Jer. viii.7) – cited as a contrast to the hard heart of mankind which would not recognize the coming of Christ, *MS Harl. 2276*, f.119<sup>r</sup>.

Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them (Matt. vi.26) – birds represent spiritual folk whose interest lies in heavenly things, *MS Harl. 2276*, f.130<sup>r</sup>; – even less shall He fail the man or woman who loves and serves him, *MS Harl. 5085*, f.131<sup>v</sup>, f.133<sup>v</sup>.

Fowls devour seeds sown by the wayside (Matt. iv.4) – interpreted as devils of hell which devour good works, *MS Harl. 2388*, f.15<sup>r</sup>.

My beeves and my fatlings are killed (Matt. xxii.4, understood as “My bulls and my tame fowls are slain”) – tame fowls betoken writers of the New Testament who fly upward by contemplation, dead to lusts of the flesh, *MS Harl. 2276*, f.139<sup>v</sup>; – fowls betoken saints of the new law, *MS SSCC 74*, f.56<sup>v</sup>, *Winn*, 97.

Birds of heaven have their nests (Matt. vii.20, Luke ix.58) – understood as true anchoresses, *AR*, 128.

*Natural History*

Praise God in the morning – contrasted to slugabeds, *MS Bod. 283*, f.50<sup>r-v</sup>, *DM*, 188; – example for gluttons who eat before they pray, *DM*, 232;

are taught to sing by God – similarly man may be taught the sweet notes of the Pater Noster, *VV*, 103-104;

sing to the death – compared to the lover of Christ who sings in Jesus, *Fire*, 100; fly about trying to eat newly sown seed – similarly the devil tries to trouble man’s soul, *MS Linc. Cath. 50*, f.71<sup>r</sup>;

- are eager to fly to food – compared to the devil who is eager to light on sinners, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.23<sup>r</sup>;
- fly so merrily that sometimes they collapse in the midst of their best flights – illustrates the variability of good fortune, *Chast*, 117;
- will not eat another of their own species – example for man to be stirred to show mercy on his own kind, MS Bod. 283, f.145<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 190, *Azen*, 185;
- will not remain in a place where men constantly destroy their nests or steal their eggs – similarly, the devil flees from men who confess often, *VV*, 181, MS Bod. 283, f.141<sup>v</sup>;
- with broken wings cannot fly – similarly, the sinful soul may not take spiritual flight, *xii frutes*, 155;
- lean birds fly well, fat birds do not – similarly, those in God's service who direct all their thoughts heavenward fly well, those who are fat remain involved in earthly thoughts, *Rolle*, 55-56, *AR*, 132;
- shine with different colours – by such an example men should understand that God made the scriptures able to be understood in several ways, MS Harl. 2276, f.122<sup>v</sup>;
- are snared: the more they struggle, the tighter the net becomes and the more feathers they lose – compared to man ensnared by lechery, *MES*, 212;
- used as decoys to trap other birds – just as the devil uses enticements and bad examples to trap men into sin, MS UCO 97, f.120<sup>r</sup>;
- caged – in meditation, author asks to be Christ's bird, sweetly singing in his cage, *Talkyng*, 58, 66;
- caged: ever look outward – compared to a curious anchoress, *AR*, 102;
- birds of prey – signify devils, *VV*, 140, MS Bod. 283, f.123<sup>v</sup>;
- a bird is held by Lady Lechery, who strokes it to make it tame, then puts out its eyes, removes its wings and heart and finally tramples it underfoot – allegorical figure for the soul, MS St JCC 188, Ch.7.

### *Anecdotes*

Birds in the woods of heathens stop singing on Palm Sunday and begin again on Easter. They sit on the branches with their wings extended in the form of a cross – an example to make men think more on Christ's passion, *Festial*, 85-86.

St Thomas Becket answers a bird's prayer for help when it is pursued by a sparrowhawk – if he answered a bird that knew not what it said, how much more willingly will he answer a prayer from the heart of a man, *Festial*, 142, *AN*, 71.

St Anne mourns her widowhood and barrenness and prays when she sees a nest of birds in her garden, complaining that birds bring forth according to their nature but she does not, *Spec Sac*, 199.

Blood Hound. See LEASH HOUND.

### BOAR

#### *Scripture*

The boar of the wood hath laid it waste (Ps. lxxix.14) – the boar, a singularly cruel beast, is the devil, the prince of evil men, *Psalter*, lxxix.14.



*Natural History*

Cannot bend down to strike with its tusks – similarly, the devil cannot see the humble, *AR*, 280;  
 hurls itself against a sword – compared to an ireful man running toward sin, *Spec Christ*, 62;  
 defends itself viciously – compared to the self-justification made by rebellious men, MS Bod. 283, f.83<sup>f</sup>, *VV*, 67.

Bull. See OX.

**BUTTERFLY***Natural History*

Lives on air, has innards made of wind, changes colour – compared to liars, *VV*, 60;  
 hovers round a candle until it falls into the flame – compared to those who hover round the occasion to sin until they fall into sin, *VV*, 228.  
 (See also CHAMELEON and MOTH.)

**BUZZARD***Natural History*

Blind – description of worldly clerics who condemn truth when it goes against them, Wyclif, 157, MS St JCC 193, f.119<sup>v</sup>.

**CAMEL***Scripture*

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God (Matt. xix.24) – illustration used in sermon against avarice; a similar statement from Cato is cited in support, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.43<sup>f</sup>.  
 Blind guides, which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel (Luke xxiii.23) – describes those who pay great attention to small things, little attention to great, MS St JCC 193, f.101<sup>f</sup>; – illustrative of hypocritical prelates who condemn matrimony and themselves live in lechery, Wyclif, 100; – compared to hypocrites who care more for the forms of the service than they do for preaching or living virtuously, Wyclif, 172.

*Natural History*

Food is shared equally among the herd – illustrates opposite of proverb “He who wanted all lost all,” moral of a story where men steal from each other like dogs, but, if they had been reasonable, would have chosen to be like camels, *Disc Cler*, 44.

(See also DROMEDARY.)

**CAT***Natural History*

Plays with a mouse before eating it – similarly the devil plays with those who are slow to repent because they hope for a long life, *VV*, 183, *A3en*, 179, MS Bod. 283, f.142<sup>r</sup>;

tame cat often burns its fur; wild cat does not – illustrates point that those who wish to remain virgins must refrain from speaking or hearing of lust, *VV*, 254; the “cat of hell” tries to catch a caged bird – similarly the devil tempts an anchoress to sin, *AR*, 102.

*Anecdote*

Fable of the cat and the fox. (See FOX.)

**CENOPEDES***Natural History*

Has only one foot, yet moves swiftly; uses its foot as a sunshade – an example for Christians who should move with and shelter under the foot of love, *MES*, 77.

**CHAMELEON***Natural History*

Lives on air and has nothing in its entrails but air; changes its colour – compared to a liar who is full of air and who changes truth in order to beguile, *A3en*, 162; – attributed to “a bird called gamaltan,” with same significance, *JW*, 151. (See also BUTTERFLY.)

**CHIMERA***Natural History*

Half man, half beast – compared to gluttons and lechers, *DM*, 40.

**COCK***Natural History*

Watchful – contrasted to those who sleep when they should be awake and praising God, MS Bod. 283, f.74<sup>r</sup>;<sup>2</sup> – more watchful than the man who lies in bed too late, *Disc Cler*, 14;

given a beautiful comb by nature and is naturally proud of it – in contrast, men have no reason to be proud of their dress because it is not a gift of nature, *VV*, 286, *A3en*, 258;

ceases to be merry when it loses its comb – similarly, a sinful man should sorrow when he loses the crown of righteousness, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.191<sup>r</sup>;

keeps many hens – contrasted to a man who cannot keep one wife in order, *Disc Cler*, 14;

brave on its own dunghill – similarly the flesh is bold while it is on the earth, *AR*, 140.

(See also HEN.)

Cockatrice. See BASILISK.

### CORMORANT

#### *Natural History*

Greedy – compared to a glutton who eats and drinks without measure, MS Bod. 283, f.74<sup>v</sup>;<sup>2</sup>

eager to eat small fishes – compared to a landlord who devours the poor, *DM*, 206.

Cow. See OX.

### CRAB

#### *Natural History*

Crawls backward – compared to those who refuse to obey the Ten Commandments, MS Greaves 54, f.124<sup>v</sup>.

#### *Anecdote*

When the younger crab went before the elder, the latter reproved it and told it to go straight rather than backward and crookedly. Then the younger asked the elder to go first as an example and the elder went more crookedly than the younger, *Grisdale*, 73-74.

### CRANE

#### *Natural History*

Feeds parents in sickness or age – illustrates discussion of fifth commandment, MS Bod. 283, f.6<sup>v</sup>;

can turn its head backward – compared to those who gaze all around during Mass, *KofTL*, 15.

### CRICKET

#### *Natural History*

Lives in fire – illustrative of patience which makes men strong and finer tempered, *VV*, 168:

### CROW

#### *Natural History*

Black – the soul of a sinner continuing in sin is blacker, MS Harl. 2330, f.39<sup>r</sup>.  
(See also EAGLE.)

### CUCKOO

#### *Natural History*

Sings only of himself – compared to boasters, MS Bod. 283, f.78<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 17, 57, *DM*, 126.

*Anecdote*

A woman about to die refuses to receive the Sacrament because she believes a cuckoo's assurance that she will not die, but she does – an example against putting faith in augury, *AN*, 486-87.

Deer. See *HART*.

**DOG (Hound)***Scripture*

Returns to its vomit (Prov. xxvi.11, II Pet. ii.22) – compared to a penitent who returns to his sin, *MS Harl.* 2398, f.178<sup>v</sup>, f.179<sup>r</sup>, *MS Greaves* 54, f.118<sup>r</sup>, *MS Harl.* 2388, f.12<sup>r-v</sup>, *Spec Sac*, 60, *GR*, 443; – illustration of the idea that it is better not to know the ways of righteousness than after knowing them to turn to sin, *MS Harl.* 2330, f.92<sup>r</sup>.

God sends word to Achab and to Jezabel that they will be eaten by dogs (III Kings xxi.23-24). Jezabel is devoured (IV Kings ix.35-36) – this debasing punishment they deserved because they were avaricious, against God's commandment, *Lant*, 118; – similarly, God venges himself on women who do not take pity on the poor, *KofTL*, 88-89.

Deliver . . . my soul . . . from the hand of the dog (Ps. xxi.21) – dog interpreted as devil, or dog of hell, sneaking up with bloody fleas of stinking thoughts, with teeth as poisonous as a mad dog's, *AR*, 290.

Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you (Matt. vii.6) – preachers should teach good men but not men who bark against God and his laws, *Wyclif*, 110-111.

It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters (Matt. xv.26-27) – the Canaanite woman demonstrated her meekness by allowing herself to be likened to a dog, *MS Greaves* 54, f.42<sup>r</sup>, *MS Linc. Cath.* 50, ff.108<sup>v</sup>-109<sup>r</sup>, *MES*, 67, 143-46; – hounds represent heathen who do not acknowledge father or mother, *MS Harl.* 5085, ff.45<sup>v</sup>-46<sup>r</sup>, *MS Harl.* 2276, f.59<sup>r</sup>; – cited in a prayer in which the petitioner asks to be comforted with one crumb of the heavenly joy that is to come, *Ladder*, 111.

Hounds lick leper's sores (Luke xvi.21) – hounds signify good counsellors, *MS Greaves* 54, f.60<sup>v</sup>; – hounds represent preachers of the word of God who take pity on the wounds of sinners, *MS Harl.* 2276, f.97<sup>v</sup>.

Many dogs have encompassed me (Ps. xxi.17) – dogs signify sins, *AR*, 324; – dogs are Jews and backbiters, barking and biting discourteously, *Psalter*, xxi.16.

They shall return at evening, and shall suffer hunger like dogs (Ps. lviii. 7) – so it is that some will be turned from the heat of avarice and will try to convert others, barking against their enemies like dogs, *Psalter*, lviii. 7.

That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of thy enemies; the tongue of thy dogs be red with the same (Ps. lxvii.24) – dogs interpreted as wise men barking against wickedness and lapping the waters of grace, *Psalter*, lxvii.25.

*Natural History*

- Malodorous – a sinful soul smells worse to God than stinking dogs to men, MS Bod. 95, f.25<sup>v</sup>, MS Harl. 5085, f.57<sup>v</sup>; – dead human flesh smells worse than stinking dogs, MS UCO 97, f.156<sup>r</sup>;
- unclean – compared to heathen, MS Harl. 2276, f.97<sup>v</sup>;
- lifts its leg at every bush – compared to those too old for lechery who continue to go through the motions, *ParsT*, l.857;
- easily provoked to anger – similarly, an evil man of religion is easily stirred to wrath and will not desist until he has expressed it, MS Addit. 24202, f.68<sup>r</sup>; – compared to a contentious anchoress, *AR*, 122;
- barks at a man for no reason – emblematic of Deadly Sin of envy, MS Douce 60, f.206<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Harl. 1197, f.19<sup>v</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, ff.206<sup>v</sup>-207<sup>r</sup>; – compared to envious men, *Scale*, 276-77;
- barks often without biting – compared to detractors, *xii frutes*, 80;
- the less provoked, the less it barks – similarly detractors speak less when they are ignored, *DM*, 179;
- first fawns, then bites a man's heel – emblematic of Deadly Sin of envy, MS Harl. 1197, f.19<sup>v</sup>, *JW*, 86-87;
- discourteous – signifies Jews, MS Harl. 2276, f.97<sup>v</sup>;
- forgets its father and mother – illustrates fifth commandment, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.7<sup>r</sup>; – compared to heathen who do not recognize God the Father, MS Harl. 5085, ff.45<sup>v</sup>-46<sup>r</sup>; – explication of the plague of hound flies (Ps. lxxvii. 45), *Psalter*, lxxvii. 50;
- rabid – compared to an angry man, *JW*, 100; – to be fled from, as from an angry man, *Spec Christ*, 62; bites its master – compared to those who refuse to acknowledge Christ, MS Bod. 95, f.41<sup>r</sup>; – represents blasphemers against Christ, MS Bod. 283, f.3<sup>v</sup>, f.83<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 67, *Azen*, 70; runs with open mouth, tongue hanging out – compared to a backbiter who always has his mouth open to speak ill of others, *MES*, 194; madness is caused by a worm under the tongue – similarly backbiting is caused by a devil under the tongue, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.178<sup>r</sup>, *MES*, 194; madness is caused by human blood – similarly the corrupt body, possessed of this most foul blood, grieves the soul, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>r</sup>; staggers all about, barking at any man it sees – similarly a backbiter looks all round to find faults in every man, *MES*, 195; barks at its own shadow – thus one sinful man backbites another, *MES*, 197; bites all whom it may and dies an evil death – compared to a soul in wanhope, MS Bod. 283, f.56<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 200; barks and bites all whom it may – compared to chiders, MS Bod. 283, f.81<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 64, *Azen*, 66; – compared to contemptuous man, *JW*, 154; its bite not easily cured – similarly the evil speech of a man of religion is not easily forgiven, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>r</sup>; malicious – signifies cruel pursuers, MS Harl. 2276, f.97<sup>v</sup>;
- greedy – compared to a man who takes meat or drink with too great appetite, MS Harl. 2250, f.100<sup>v</sup>; always wants more – compared to covetous men who are always so eager for more that they take no joy in what they have, MS Bod. 283, f.20<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 110;

- hungers after delicacies – compared to a slothful man who hungers for idle words, foul touchings and worldly worship, *JW*, 113;
- runs to eat carrion – an example against eating too fervently, MS Bod. 283, f.74<sup>v</sup>,<sup>3</sup> *VV*, 52, *DM*, 236, *ParsT*, 1.440;
- prefers a bone to meat – compared to the Pharisees who scorned the teachings of Christ, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.72<sup>r-v</sup>;
- requires immediate punishment when it begs at table, when it gnaws leather or harasses other animals – similarly sins require immediate confession, *AR*, 324-326;
- one dog steals from another – illustration of proverb “He who wanted all lost all,” *Disc Cler*, 44;
- dogs in a sack; one draws forth the other – example to show that a man cannot pray well when he stands beside another whom he hates, Wyclif, 319;
- gnawing – Christ’s body on the cross looked as if it had been gnawed by dogs, *Tret of Love*, 31-32;
- gnaws a bone – similarly an envious man gnaws at a virtuous soul, *DM*, 159-60; – sin gnaws the conscience allowing it a foretaste of the gnawing of the hounds of hell, *Festial*, 15; – compared to a gainsayer, who, however, is worse, for a hound soon gives up its bone, MS Harl. 2398, f.19<sup>r</sup>;
- unchastised – description of bishops who allow other men to sin, Wyclif, 272;
- fawning – signifies flatterers, MS Harl. 2276, f.97<sup>v</sup>, *AR*, 290;
- licks another dog’s tail – similarly flatterers kiss men in their sins, *JW*, 263;
- does not bite its master – contrasted to those who disobey the second commandment, MS Bod. 283, f.3<sup>v</sup>;
- scalding water forces it to flee kitchen – similarly tears of remorse drive away the devil, *VV*, 192, MS Bod. 283, f.138<sup>r</sup>;
- bravest on its own dunghill – similarly a man of religion is boldest in sin when he has great wealth, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>v</sup>; – the flesh is boldest on earth, as the soul is boldest in its heavenly home, *AR*, 140;
- tied to a post – poor priests, like Christ and his apostles, may do more good if they are not bound, as dogs, to their own yard, Wyclif, 252;
- butcher’s dog – compared to backbiter, MS Greaves 54, f.107<sup>r-v</sup>; – compared to envious man, MS Greaves 54, f.115<sup>r</sup>; always has a bloody mouth – compared to backbiter who bloodies his mouth with defamation and licking of a man’s sore spots or faults, *JW*, 262.
- Hell hounds – wicked spirits with which the devil hunts to capture souls in sin, MS Harl. 2276, f.58<sup>r</sup>; – signify wicked lies used by the devil to trap men, MS Harl. 5085, f.44<sup>v</sup>; – description of Jews, *Talkyng*, 44, 46.
- Dogs of pride, covetousness, envy, lechery – beset pilgrim on a spiritual journey, are to be beaten off with thoughts on the passion, virtuous living, bodily torment, etc., MS Addit. 37677, f.57<sup>v</sup>.

#### *Anecdotes*

A hound with a cheese in his mouth sees another cheese reflected in water and, opening his mouth to take it, loses the cheese he had – he lost both what he had and

that which he desired to have; shows that those who love the world separate themselves wilfully from the bliss of God, *Ladder*, 105.

Fable of the little dog and the ass: see ASS.

A chaste woman is persuaded by a procuress to bestow her favours on a young man when the procuress produces a weeping dog (made to weep by onions) and says that the dog is her daughter, transformed because she had refused a man her favours; the tears signify that she repents her refusal, *Disc Cler*, 31, *AN*, 361.

A dog follows its master to the gallows and then swims in the Tiber holding up the body, *AN*, 188.

A dog follows its master's body into fire, *AN*, 188.

Alexander is given two Albanian dogs, members of a breed which would kill any beast they saw. One of the dogs refuses to hunt or eat, so it is freed; but the other kills lions and, eventually, an elephant, *AN*, 229.

A Jew's starved dog refuses to eat the host (miracle of the Eucharist) – an unreasonable beast knew better than to defile the Eucharist, *MES*, 129-30.

Dogs and a lion avenge an insult to St Thomas, *Festial*, 110.

Dogs devour a lecherous woman's corpse, *AN*, 311.

Gaius, an emperor, is slain and eaten by dogs – Gaius' fate illustrates that of all proud men who shall be cast into hell like hounds, *MES*, 209.

Three black dogs devour a wicked estate officer – example to show that those who live a foul life will come to a foul end, *Festial*, 157-58.

A woman who had fed her lap dogs but refused to help the poor, even when rebuked by her priest, dies and is licked by the dogs until she turns black – an example that no lady should take pleasure in such beasts, nor give to them what could better be used to sustain the poor, *KofTL*, 28-29.

(See also GREYHOUND, HUNTING DOG, LEASH HOUND, SHEEPDOG, SPANIEL, WATCHDOG.)

## DOLPHIN

### *Natural History*

Buries other dolphins – similarly, men should practise the deed of mercy which is burying the dead, *VV*, 211.

## DOVE

### *Scripture*

Noah sends a dove from the ark (Gen. viii.8) – dove represents prayer, *MES*, 243. It finds no place to land and therefore returns to the ark (Gen. viii.9) – similarly, when the heart finds no earthly thing whereon it may set its love, it turns to itself, Horstmann, II, 53; – a soul should set its love nowhere but in Christ, *Goad*, 137.

It is sent out again and this time returns with an olive branch (Gen. viii.10-11) – dove signifies true Christian men, *Spec Sac*, 100; – dove represents the Holy Ghost bearing peace, the third gift of the Holy Ghost, *xii frutes*, 64.

My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hollow place of the wall, shew me thy face, let thy voice sound in my ears (Cant. ii.14) – Christ is signified by the rock, by the clefts His wounds, and by the dove the lover of Christ who would take refuge in His passion, MS Bod. 283, f.123<sup>v</sup>; MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r</sup>, MS JCO 39, p.616, MS Bod. 423, f.190<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 140, *A 5en*, 142, *AR*, 292.

Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves (Matt. x.16) – cited to describe St Edmund's behaviour while he was King of England, *Spec Sac*, 239; – Christ uses this image to explain to his disciples that their fervour should be tempered with innocence, MS Harl. 2276, f.92<sup>r</sup>; – illustrates need to use care in speaking and to seek wisdom in hearing, MS Harl. 2383, f.84<sup>v</sup>.

And I said: who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest (Ps. liv.7) – wings signify virtues that God gives to his lovers so they may flee from evil men and rest in the contemplation of God, *Psalter*, liv.6.

If you sleep among the midst of lots, you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold (Ps. lxxvii.14) – interpreted to mean: if you visit in contemplation the teachings of the Bible, free from sin and in perfect yearning for heaven, then you will have the virtues of a clean soul (feathers) and, in the clean love of your soul (back), you will shine in wisdom and discretion, *Psalter*, lxxvii.14.

A pair of doves is offered in the temple by Mary and Joseph (Luke ii.24) – in token of tears and lamentations for sin: one dove, for sorrow of sin, is given to the priest, while the other is burnt as an offering of the man who burns heavenward for love of God, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>r</sup>.

Jesus overturns the chairs of the dove sellers in the temple (Matt. xxi.12) – signifies that men of religion become hucksters of spiritual goods, vending the likeness of the Holy Ghost as they sell benefices, sacraments, etc., MS Addit.37677, f.100<sup>v</sup>.

Manifestation of the Holy Spirit – dove chosen to represent Holy Spirit because of its meekness and simplicity, *Spec Sac*, 32; – signifies charity through meekness, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>; – the Holy Spirit appeared before Christ as a dove rather than as fire to indicate His innocence and repudiation of bodily punishment, MS Harl. 2276, f.92<sup>r</sup>.

#### *Natural History*

Has no gall, is meek – likewise men should have no malice or wrath, *AR*, 292, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r</sup>; – explication of I will meditate like a dove (Isa. xxxviii.14), sorrowing for my sin, *Psalter*, Canticum Ezechie, 6;

does not attack other birds – similarly men should not hurt others in word or deed, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>;



- eats clean grain – signifies that men should worship the word of Christ and live cleanly, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>; – example that men should not set great store by worldly things, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>v</sup>;
- eats neither smaller birds nor worms – shows that lords should not oppress poor men by rapine or guile, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>;
- makes its nest in a stony hole upon a few sticks – compared to the good Christian who makes his home in Christ and possesses few worldly goods, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r</sup>;
- brings forth many birds – similarly the good Christian brings forth many virtues, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>v</sup>;
- nourishes other birds' chicks as if they were its own – shows that men should have charity towards their fellows and nourish their good deeds as if they were their own, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>;
- likes to be in a group – signifies the active life, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>r</sup>;
- makes a mourning noise instead of song – betokens lamenting of good men because of their desire for heavenly bliss, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>;
- flies to dovecote when pursued by a hawk – similarly a soul troubled by temptation should find security in the wounds of Christ, Rolle, 35;
- sits on a stone to avoid attacks of the kite – similarly Christians should set themselves steadfastly on Christ the rock to avoid their enemies, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>v</sup>.

(See also TURTLEDOVE.)

#### *Anecdotes*

St Mary and the white dove, *Festial*, 254.

St Margaret and the white dove, *Festial*, 212-13.

At the baptism of King Louis of France the crowd was so great that the bearer of the oil could not reach the altar. A white dove appeared bringing some oil, *Festial*, Life of St James, 78.

When a priest agrees to forsake his religion in order to marry a pagan woman, a white dove flies out of his mouth. Her father refuses to allow the marriage and the priest repents. When he is forgiven the white dove returns – the mercy of God is available even to those who turn against him, *AN*, 338-39, MS Harl. 5085, f.39<sup>v</sup>.

Mahomet deceives people into making him ruler of all the Saracens by pretending to be visited by the Holy Ghost, in actuality a white dove which he has trained to peck corn from his ear – an example of deception disguised as good, *AN*, 165.

A priest who is in a state of deadly sin tries to celebrate the Mass but is stopped by a dove which steals the host. When the priest repents, the host is returned by the dove, *AN*, 463-64.

Regulo names martyrs of whom he has never heard. He understands the significance of his act when three doves appear on the altar cross with the names of the martyrs written in blood on their breasts, *AN*, 187-88.

A curate reproves a knight for keeping so many doves that his neighbour's corn is ruined. The knight calls the doves together and tells them to go or stay, according to God's will, and they all fly away – shows that the feeding of doves does not please God, *AN*, 109.

## DRAGON

### *Scripture*

Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps, which is incurable (Deut. xxxii.33) – description of the pains of hell, *ParsT*, l.195; – gall of dragons interpreted as most cursed wickedness and bitterness of falsehood, *Fire*, 89, and as the evil treason of backbiters, drunk by them with delight, *Psalter*, Canticum Moysi, II. 48.

Thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample underfoot the lion and the dragon (Ps. xc.13) – dragon represents both the devil who tempted Christ and the dragon of the Apocalypse, *Spec Sac*, 141-42; – interpreted as guile and secret malice, blandishing with the face and stinging with the tail (traits usually attributed to the scorpion), *Psalter*, xc.13.

Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all ye deeps (Ps. cxviii.7) – dragons, the greatest beasts which live above the earth, are borne into the air and therefore the psalmist mentions them first; they love God and thus admonish men to do the same, *Psalter*, cxlviii.7.

### *Natural History*

Casts fire and flame with its mouth – compared to an envious man, MS Bod. 283, f.41<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 161;

flies in the air casting venom into waters; cannot bear the smell of burning bones – explanation of the first fire of St John, a fire of bones, *Festial*, 195.

### *Anecdotes*

St George and the dragon, *Festial*, 174-76, *Spec Sac*, 130.

St Margaret and the dragon, *Festial*, 211.

St Matthew and the dragons, *Festial*, 261.

St Michael quells a dragon destroying a city by taking the form of a bird, *Spec Sac*, 214.

St Michael drives Lucifer, the dragon, from Heaven (Apoc. xii.7-8), *Festial*, 266.

St Philip rids a city of a dragon, then cures and converts those stricken by it, *Spec Sac*, 143.

A dragon and other venomous beasts besiege a city, are repulsed by hanging a lion on a cross – dragon interpreted as voluptuous flesh, venomous beasts as fiends, city as soul, lion as Christ, *GR*, 332-33.

A dragon devours an hypocritical monk – illustrates evil of hypocrisy, *AN*, 531-32.

A dragon nearly devours a disobedient child, but he is saved by the prayers of monks, *AN*, 354.

(See also SERPENT.)

## DROMEDARY

### *Natural History*

Runs very swiftly – ridden by the Magi to Bethlehem, MS Greaves 54, f.32<sup>f</sup>,  
*MES*, 227, *Festial*, 148.

(See also CAMEL.)

## DUCK

### *Anecdote*

Mad King Cosdre set himself up as God with a tame duck rather than the Holy Ghost on his left hand, *Festial*, 256.

## EAGLE

### *Scripture*

As the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them, he spread his wings and hath taken him and carried him on his shoulders (Deut. xxxii.11) –

Literal explication: the eagle calls its birds to fly close to and look at the sun, but if they become weary it supports them with its wings. Allegorically:

Christ spreads his wings of charity and virtue and carries men up to heaven so they may see the sun that never sets, *Psalter*, Canticum Moysi, II.15-16.

They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint (Isa. xl.31) – cited to describe what happens to those who put their hope in the Blessed Virgin, *Goad*, 205.

Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together (Matt. xxiv.28; Luke xvii.37) – eagles represent the apostles gathered round the tomb of Christ, MS Harl. 2276, f.73<sup>v</sup>; – thus, wherever the body of Christ is, there are gathered men who will be saved; they are called eagles because eagles live high in the heavens, MS St JCC 193, f.114<sup>f</sup>.

### *Natural History*

Flies highest of all birds, has a great desire to be close to the sun – thus the eagle is the symbol of St John because he wrote most of the godhead of Christ, *Festial*, 267-68; – or, because he saw inwardly to a great height the power of Christ's godhead, he flew with Christ to heaven and pierced the mysteries of God, MS Harl. 2276, f.16<sup>v</sup>; – compared to the proud man, *MES*, 263; – similarly, if a man guards his soul with reason and loves God above all things, he shall abide in the presence and sight of God, Grisdale, 85-86;

sees farther and more clearly than any other bird – compared to St John who flew higher and saw more clearly than the eagle, *DM*, 31; – similarly, grace, virtue, and charity surpass any wit of the world, *DM*, 37;

descends to earth to eat carrion – compared to the proud man, *MES*, 263;

descends to the sea to take prey – as Christ descended from a great height into hell to take out his chosen people, *Spec Sac*, 119;  
 puts an agate in its nest to ward off serpents – as Christ in the heart of a Christian wards off the devil, *AR*, 134;  
 in old age its beak grows so that it may not eat, but then it hones its beak on a stone, eats and becomes young again – literal explication of Thy youth shall be renewed like the eagle's (Ps. cii.5); interpreted allegorically to mean that Christ takes away man's age of sin that keeps him from partaking in heavenly bread and thereby renews him, *Psalter*, cii.5.

#### *Anecdotes*

An eagle has sore eyes and asks a crow for help. The crow prepares a plaster which renders the eagle completely blind, then beats him and eats his chicks – the eagle represents a prelate whose eyes are open to look after his flock; the crow represents the devil who plasters the eyes with worldly goods so they may not see heavenly things, *GR*, 367-8.

Once when St Gregory was very hungry, an eagle brought him a fish, which they shared, *Spec Sac*, 39.

### ELEPHANT

#### *Natural History*

Drinks olive oil to cure its wounds – similarly, a sinner should drink oil of mercy to cure sins, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.187<sup>v</sup>;

has unjointed legs and therefore may not bend down to sleep – compared to those who think they will never die and therefore do not bend from sin, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.30<sup>v</sup>;

is inimical to the adder, who comes feigning friendship and then stings the credulous elephant – elephant represents man's soul, which credulously allows the devil to approach and is then stung, *MES*, 218;

never touches the female after she has conceived – men, because they are rational creatures, should be more temperate still, *VV*, 249, *Azen*, 224;

cannot bear squealing of swine – Alexander defeats the King of India, who has battle elephants with castles, by loosing swine on the battlefield, *Festial*, 195-96;

is encouraged to battle by the sight of blood – similarly man, who is not eager to fight the world, the flesh, and the devil, should be shown blood of kind, of sin and pain, that is, the blood of Christ, to hearten him, *Greg*, 59;

the most intelligent of all unreasoning beasts, is taught to worship a king – represents man who, because he is reasonable, should worship the Lord, *Greg*, 59.

### FALCON

#### *Natural History*

Excited to the hunt by its keeper – contrasted to those who are negligent in disciplining the body and exciting it to God's service, MS Bod. 283, f.52<sup>v</sup>;

is bound to a perch, freed by its keeper – as the soul is bound to the body and freed by its Master, MS Bod. 283, f.53<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 194;  
 desires only the heart of its prey – just as Christ wants only the heart of man, MS Linc. Cath. 51, f.49<sup>v</sup>; – likewise God wants no more than the heart of man, *DM*, 74.

## FISH

### Scripture

Christ feeds the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes (Matt. xiv.17) – fishes represent prayer and alms deeds, *Festial*, 26.  
 Eaten during time of fast – eating of fish is permitted because God did not curse the waters, *Spec Sac*, 53.  
 St Peter caught two types of fish – similarly, there are two types of Christians, some ordained to bliss, some to pain, Winn, 97.

### Natural History

Show moderation in eating – contrasted to covetous men who show less moderation, MS UCO 97, f.106<sup>v</sup>;  
 survive great storms – therefore betoken the true faith, *Lant*, 46;  
 live well in tempestuous seas – compared to patient people, MS Bod. 283, f.136<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 168, *Azen*, 167;  
 in good weather, large fish rise to the surface, forcing smaller fish down; but, in stormy or cold weather, large fish fall to the bottom and put the smaller above them – similarly, when rich men see the chance they rise above to boast and to put down simple folk, *Lant*, 45-46;  
 large fish eat small – so the rich devour the poor, *Lant*, 46;  
 large fish are caught in the net from which small fish escape – compared to proud and humble men respectively, *JW*, 80, 239;  
 a large fish gives the fisherman more joy than a small fish – similarly, the devil would rather catch a good man than a bad, *VV*, 264, *Azen*, 238;  
 caught by a hook – as a man is caught in his sin by the devil, MS Bod. 95, f.70<sup>r-v</sup>; – compared to a drunkard whom wine turns to unlawful behaviour, MS Harl. 2330, f.29<sup>r</sup>; – illustrates idea that no man knows when his death will come, *Spec Sac*, 64;  
 greedy fish caught by bait in the mouth – illustrates that over-indulgence in food and drink brings sudden death, *VV*, 275, *Azen*, 248;  
 deceived by bait – as men are deceived by the devil into lechery, *JW*, 159;  
 swim into the net of their own will but cannot escape unless they are released – similarly, sinners cannot escape from sin without the help of God, MS Bod. 283, f.137<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 171, *Azen*, 170;  
 cannot see when the water is troubled and therefore are easily caught – as the devil catches man easily by stirring him to wrath so that he loses his spiritual sight, MS Harl. 2250, f.95<sup>r</sup>;  
 a fish out of water – compared to a monk out of the cloister, Wyclif, 449.

### Anecdote

A harper attracts fish with beautiful music until a “hisser” competes with him

for their attention. An emperor passing by gives the harper a golden hook with which he is able to overcome the competition – harper interpreted as a preacher, fish as sinners, the “hisser” as the devil who keeps men from being attentive during sermons, the emperor as Christ, and the golden hook, the grace of God, *GR*, 136-39.

## FLEA

### *Natural History*

Bites – temptations harm the soul no more than the bite of the flea, provided that they are overcome or ignored, *Scale*, 87; – metaphor for anger, MS Bod. 283, f.38<sup>v</sup>; – fleas of the dog of hell signify stinking thoughts, *AR*, 290.

### *Anecdotes*

After spending a night in the bed of an abbess, a flea is nearly killed. The flea and the gout (an ailment which spent the day with a poor woman and was nearly drowned) decide to exchange places and find their new situations much more satisfactory – illustrates that an abbess should not be delicate in clothing and bedding, *AN*, 13-14.

St Bernard curses the fleas in his abbey and the next day they are found dead, *AN*, 367 – suggests that a curse on the wicked is much more powerful, *JW*, 64.

## FLY

### *Scripture*

Dying flies spoil the sweetness of the ointment (Eccles. x.i) – thus the service of Eucharist should be said quickly but with discretion so as to maintain its sweetness, *Spec Sac*, 127; – flies of sin cannot spoil the ointment of grace when God’s lovers are raised above strife and vain thoughts, *Fire*, 71.

### *Natural History*

Feeble – the devil is similarly feeble when he is resisted, *DM*, 257-58;

flies swiftly – an illustration of how some beasts are better than man, although not in the power of reason, *Azen*, 270;

eschews a boiling pot but sits on it when it cools – similarly, when a man is busy being virtuous, the devil may not come near with temptation, MS Harl. 2250, f.99<sup>r</sup>, MS Bod. 283, f.49<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 185, *Scale*, 437;

enters a pot when the cover is lifted – similarly, vanities enter the heart, MS Bod. 283, f.77<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 55;

opening the mouth to catch flies – compared to those who sit with open mouths thinking they eat angels’ food, *Cloud*, 105;

Beelzebub, lord of the flies – etymology explained, MS Harl. 2276, f.61<sup>r</sup>; –

Lollards considered to be followers of Beelzebub by their enemies and said to have eaten a fly, *Lant*, 11.

### *Anecdote*

A tale of greedy bailiffs shows that it is not good to change bailiffs frequently – illustrates proverb “hungry flies bite sore,” *AN*, 72-73.

## FOX

*Scripture*

The foxes have holes (Matt. viii.20, Luke ix.58) – Christ was poorer than foxes because he had nowhere to put his head, *Tret of Love*, 20-21; – compared to false anchoresses, *AR*, 128; foxes believe they are safe there, but the den is not sufficient protection against the hunter and his hounds – similarly, men gather riches as security, but they cannot keep death away, *JW*, 118. Catch us the little foxes that destroy the vines (Cant. ii.15) – foxes interpreted as the first enticements to sin, *AR*, 296.

*Natural History*

Vixen's tail covers her shameful parts – compared to flatterers who cover up the harlotry and sins of rich men, MS Bod. 283, f.79<sup>r</sup>; tail belongs to a deceitful animal – same significance, *VV*, 58, *Azen*, 61; thievish, ravenous, guileful, greedy – emblematic of the Deadly Sin of avarice, *GR*, 373, *AR*, 202; compared to false anchoresses, *AR*, 128; prefers to slay tame beasts rather than wild – similarly, covetous men prefer to deceive simple people, *JW*, 118; plays dead until birds light upon it, then devours them – compared to beneficed clergy who are dead to holiness and stir up lawsuits and war, Wyclif, 123; takes its prey to its den – compared to clergymen who take children into orders, *Lant*, 13; delights in its prey – compared to lechers, MS Bod. 283, f.69<sup>r</sup>.

*Anecdotes*

Although the fox brags that he has many wiles to use in escaping the hounds, he is caught. The cat, which has only one wile, escapes – cat interpreted as simple men, fox as lawyers, courtiers and other wily men, hounds as enemies of mankind, *GR*, 371.

A fox is called in to judge an argument between a wolf and a farmer about the farmer's oxen. The fox takes the farmer aside and says that he will judge in his favour in exchange for two hens. He then takes the wolf aside and tells him that the farmer has offered a large cheese in place of the oxen. The wolf accepts the offer and allows the farmer to take his oxen, then goes with the fox to a well in which the moon is reflected. The wolf is trapped at the bottom of the well when he goes down to get the cheese – for the thing to come he lost that which was present, *Disc Cler*, 48.

A fox is called in to judge a fight between a man and the serpent he has freed. The fox says he may not decide until he sees how things happened from the beginning. The serpent is bound again, and this time the man refuses to free it – illustrates proverb "who that loosith the dowte, vpon him shalbe the falle," *Disc Cler*, 24, *AN*, 473-74.

St Boniface sees a fox steal one of his mother's hens and prays that God will not allow it. When his prayer is finished, the fox drops the hen and falls dead at the holy man's feet – beasts obey devout prayers, *AN*, 390.

A fable of a mule and a fox: see MULE.

Frog. See TOAD.

## GNAT

### *Scripture*

Straining the liquid to get rid of a gnat and yet swallowing a fly – illustrates going to great lengths where there is least need, *AR*, 8-10.

(See also CAMEL.)

## GOAT

### *Scripture*

If thou know not thyself, O fairest among women, go forth, and follow after the steps of the flocks, and feed thy kids beside the tents of shepherds (*Cant.* i.7) – goats are stinking and lustful, and therefore a lustful anchoress should herd them, *AR*, 100.

### *Natural History*

Lives on unclean food; if it eats a quantity of honey, it nearly dies – compared to a man who lives in uncleanness of soul without penance; when he receives the Sacrament he takes it to his damnation, *MS CUL Gg.vi.16*, f.21<sup>v</sup>; – a sinful man will die unless he takes the sweet herb of contrition and the honey of confession and satisfaction, *MS Harl. 2247*, f.97<sup>v</sup>, quoted in *Blench*, 116; malodorous – emblematic of Deadly Sin of lechery, *GR*, 373.

## GOOSE

### *Natural History*

Hissing – compared to devil, whose hissing frightens only the sinful, *VV*, 27, *DM*, 189, *MS Bod.* 283, f.51<sup>f</sup>.

## GREYHOUND

### *Natural History*

Chases hare for love of hunting and forgets everything but the pursuit of the hare – similarly lovers of God pursue a virtuous life and forget all else, *MS Bod.* 283, f.90<sup>f</sup>, *DM*, 15, *VV*, 73-74, *Azen*, 75;

pursues hare unceasingly – compared to an envious man who pursues goodness to slay it, *DM*, 159-60;

loves hunting – compared to a sinner who runs after evil, *MS Bod.* 283, f.40<sup>f</sup>;

leaps eagerly on the hart – author compares himself leaping on Christ, *Talkyng*, 60;

seizes its prey eagerly – contrasted to a lover of God who should wait meekly and courteously, *Cloud*, 87;

over familiar, seeks handouts – compared to flatterers who await handouts from rich men, *MS Bod.* 283, f.40<sup>v</sup>;

is not always barking and whining – an example of how a good woman should behave, contrasted to uncivil behaviour of cur dogs, *KofTL*, 126;



young, wastes time running after every creature it sees – compared to those who try to copy the virtues of too many others, MS Bod. 283, f.130<sup>r</sup>, *Azen*, 155 (characteristic attributed to hare, *VV*, 154).

*Anecdotes*

Dog of Montargis: a faithful greyhound leads the king of France to his master's corpse, then slays his master's murderer – a tale against traitors, murderers, and those who cannot keep council, in which God shows a miracle performed by an unreasonable beast, *GR*, 396.

A faithful greyhound saves a child from a serpent. In the process a cradle is upset and because of that the owner, a knight, slays the greyhound, thinking it had harmed the child – knight interpreted as that part of man which loves vanities, child as the soul, serpent as the devil, greyhound as reason, *GR*, 98.

(See also *DOG*.)

**GRIPHON**

*Natural History*

Armed to do malice by nature – contrasted to man, who should be peaceable by nature, *DM*, 171-72.

**HALCYON**

*Natural History*

A bird whose eggs are protected while it is brooding by a withdrawal of the sea and an abatement of tempests – interpreted as an allegory for the birth of St Mary to St Anne, *MES*, 327.

**HARE**

*Natural History*

Cowardly – compared to a man who thrives on flattery, MS Bod. 283, f.30<sup>v</sup>; runs from fear – compared to those who serve God from dread, MS Bod. 283, f.90<sup>r-v</sup>, *VV*, 73-74, *DM*, 15; trembles without cause – signifies cowardice, *GR*, 373.

*Anecdote*

A wolf challenges a hare to a wrestling match at odds of ten to one; when the wolf runs at the hare, the hare dashes away and runs until the wolf is exhausted. The wolf argues that he is not overcome fairly because the hare has not wrestled. The lion is asked to arbitrate and judges for the hare – similarly a man who will wrestle with the world, flesh, or devil overcomes them by fleeing from them, for “he fehtith wele that fleith faste,” *GR*, 373-74.

**HARPY**

*Natural History*

Has a face resembling a man's; it slays the first man it meets, then sees its reflection in a pool and sorrows for having slain its own likeness – signifies that the wicked soul which slays Christ shall be stricken with sorrow, *Branches*, 113.

**HART (Deer, Stag)***Scripture*

As the hart panteth after the fountains of water; so my soul panteth after thee, O God (Ps. xli.1) – thus the soul of a contemplative thirsts for the coming of God, the living well, MS JCO 39, p.611; – explained as a reference to the hart which eats an adder, then searches for a well from which to drink so as to become young again; interpreted allegorically to mean that as vices are destroyed, the soul burns with desire to come to God, *Psalter*, xli.1.

*Natural History*

After fighting with venomous beasts, it runs to drink from a stream – just as a sinner must run to confession after committing a deadly sin, MS Linc. Cath. 50, ff.92<sup>v</sup>-93<sup>r</sup>;

when shot with an arrow, it eats bethany, a healing herb – similarly, a soul wounded with sin should seek out a curate, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.93<sup>r-v</sup>;

fawn cries for its mother and takes comfort only from her – illustrates that the contemplative should take comfort only according to the will of God,

*Branches*, 116;

has spreading antlers – compared to an unchaste woman who walks with stretched-out neck (cf. Isa. iii.16), *VV*, 240.

*Anecdotes*

A hart prophesies that Julian the Confessor will slay his father and mother. When the prophecy comes true, Julian and his wife give up all their wealth and become ferry-keepers. After many years of penance, he is forgiven, *JW*, 264-65.

During a hunt, St Eustace chases a hart which has a cross between its horns. The hart instructs him in Christianity, tells him to teach his wife and children, and warns him to suffer all losses (subsequently he loses his whole family) with patience, *AN*, 213-15.

St Paul heals a man who was struck down for killing a hart in the saint's name, *Spec Sac*, 23.

**HAWK (Sparrowhawk)***Natural History*

Fortified by the blood of its prey – similarly extortioners grow great by taking the livelihood of the poor, *MES*, 238-39;

always wants more to eat – illustrates covetousness, *DM*, 110;

may be captured by courteous behaviour – since courtesy can restrain a bird of prey, it should also restrain the pride of mankind, *KofTL*, 14;

held with a jess so it may not fly at will – as a man's heart should be bound with the jess of faith and love so that he will not fall into the devil's snare, *VV*, 282.

Hedgehog. See PORCUPINE.

## HEN

*Natural History*

Cackles after laying an egg – compared to boasters, MS Bod. 283, f.25<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 126;  
 cackling results in loss of eggs from which she could have hatched chicks – compared  
 to spoiling good works by talking about them indiscreetly, *AR*, 66;  
 protects its eggs from kites – an example against “shrewedness,” a branch of sloth,  
 MS Bod. 283, f.50<sup>v</sup>;  
 protects its chicks from kites by calling them to hide under its wings – similarly  
 Christians should fly to the shelter of Christ when they are troubled, *GR*,  
 370-71; – literal explication of: He will overshadow thee with his shoulders:  
 and under his wings thou shalt trust (Ps.xc.4), that is, the Lord will keep you  
 from fear and from sin, *Psalter*, xc.4.

(See also COCK.)

Hog. See SWINE.

Hoopoe. See LAPWING.

## HORSE

*Scripture*

Do not become like the horse and the mule; who have no understanding (Ps. xxxi.9,  
 also Tob. vi.17) – compared to those who attend to their own desires rather  
 than the will of God, *VV*, 248, MS Bod. 95, f.47<sup>v</sup>; – compared to a lecherous  
 cleric, *Spec Sac*, 42; – cited against lechery, *Azen*, 223; – interpreted to  
 mean that a horse is one who shows no discernment, for he will carry the  
 devil as well as God, and that a mule is one who will not forsake the burden  
 of sin, *Psalter*, xxxi. 11.

*Natural History*

Bridled – compared to a man with the virtue of soberness, *VV*, 276, 282, *Azen*,  
 254; – illustrative of one who has control over the five senses, *AR*, 74;  
 unbridled, will throw its rider – compared to the five senses, which, when not  
 controlled by reason, will overthrow the soul, *Azen*, 204, *VV*, 226;  
 obedient – compared to the meek, *VV*, 139, *Azen*, 140;  
 may be overburdened with too many small bundles – similarly, a soul may become  
 overburdened with too many venial sins, *Festial*, 22;  
 mares stink when they go to the horse – similarly, a man stinks when he follows his  
 fleshly appetites, MS Harl. 5085, f.188<sup>f</sup>;  
 one mare will nourish another’s foal – even so a man should show mercy to his own  
 kind, *VV*, 191, *Azen*, 185, MS Bod. 283, f.145<sup>v</sup>;  
 fears its own shadow – compared to those who fear penance, MS Bod. 283, f.141<sup>v</sup>,  
*VV*, 183, *Azen*, 179; – contrasted to anchoresses who should not fear the  
 world because it is but a shadow, *AR*, 242;  
 fears thunder and wakes – contrasted to a slothful man who cannot be awakened  
 with sharp pricks, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.92<sup>v</sup>;

drinks dirty water in preference to clean – compared to one who seeks nothing but sin with his goods, *ParsT*, l.814;

tosses its head – compared to unchaste women who look over their shoulders, *VV*, 240;

winces when a sore, result of improper currying, is touched – compared to friars who are angry when men reprove their vices which should be rubbed out, Winn, 38;

is curried in preparation for a fair – compared to women who dress themselves from top to tail, *DM*, 123;

horse and rider – an allegorical illustration of the body's relationship to the soul, MS Bod. 283, f.87<sup>r</sup>, f.147<sup>v</sup>, MS Bod. 95, ff.24<sup>r</sup>-25<sup>r</sup>, MS CCCC 142, ff.111<sup>r</sup>-121<sup>r</sup>;

horse of the devil – a wicked man's tongue becomes the devil's horse, MS Bod. 283, f.29<sup>r</sup>; – a soul in wanhope becomes the devil's horse, MS Bod. 283, f.56<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 199-200; horse as agent of the devil – an earl is carried to hell on horseback for sins of pride and false tithing, *JW*, 46; a knight is forced to ride a burning horse as punishment for adultery, *Festial*, 29; a horse does not bow down before the Eucharist like other animals, *Festial*, 88-89.

#### *Anecdote*

A well-arrayed horse criticizes an ass for not showing him proper reverence. Shortly thereafter the horse is stripped of his fancy trappings and made to draw a muck cart. The ass then taunts him – signifies the glory of the world is short-lived, *AN*, 236-37.

Hound. See DOG.

## HUNTING DOG

### *Natural History*

Knowledgeable about finding and capturing prey – similarly an evil cleric is wise in the ways of the world, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>r-v</sup>;

bays – sound preferred by some to the words of the Mass, MS Bod. 95, f.19<sup>r</sup>;

sometimes pursues the hare only because other hounds do – compared to some Christians who pursue spiritual progress only because others do, stopping when they are tired while others continue, no matter how tired they may be, *Scale*, 94.

## HYDRA

### *Natural History*

A seven-headed serpent: if one head is lopped off, another grows in its place; all heads must be cut off at once if it is to be slain – compared to the Seven Deadly Sins which must be confessed completely for the act of confession to be effective, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.91<sup>r-v</sup>.

## HYENA

### *Natural History*

Digs up corpses and eats them – compared to those who speak evil of servants of God who are dead to the world, *VV*, 59-60, *Azen*, 61.

Jay. See POPINJAY.

#### KITE

##### *Natural History*

Ravenous – souls of extortioners are turned into kites at death, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>; – compared to a glutton who eats and drinks without measure, MS Bod. 283, f.74<sup>v</sup>,<sup>2</sup> DM, 232;

seeks food with a crying voice – compared to covetous men, MS UCO 97, f.106<sup>v</sup>.

#### LAPWING (Hoopoe, Plover)

##### *Natural History*

Makes its home in the ordure of man – compared to speakers of evil, MS Bod. 283, f.79<sup>v</sup>, VV, 59, A<sub>7</sub>en, 61.

#### LARK

##### *Natural History*

Rises early and flies upward, returns to earth to seek its food, takes shelter under a clod in tempests – an example for the estate of labourers who should wake early and pray, then work hard, sheltering themselves from temptation with thoughts of death and unworthiness, MS Bod. 95, ff.97<sup>v</sup>-98<sup>r</sup>.

#### LEASH HOUND (Limer)

##### *Natural History*

Keeps its eyes straight ahead – illustrates how one should behave at Mass, *KofTL*, 15.

#### LEECH

##### *Scripture*

The horseleech hath two daughters that say: Bring, bring (Prov. xxx.15) – leech represents belly, two daughters gluttony and drunkenness, *JW*, 145-46; – first daughter signifies rightful rulers who extract payments unreasonably, second daughter worldly lords who act against the will of God and seek to gain wealth by sucking it from their subjects, MS Harl. 2398, f.103<sup>v</sup>.

##### *Natural History*

Sucks blood until it bursts – similarly, a glutton always wants more, until he ends in death, *JW*, 146;

explodes when fried – avaricious people burn more in hell, MS Bod. 283, f.20<sup>r</sup>.

#### LEOPARD

##### *Natural History*

Has a multi-coloured body – compared to the many wiles of the devil, MS Bod. 283, f.14<sup>v</sup>, VV, 10;

its body is green in the evil parts – compared to usurers, MS Bod. 283, f.60<sup>r</sup>;  
cruel – compared to usurers and other evil men, *DM*, 204.

Limer. See LEASH HOUND.

## LION

### Scripture

His eyes are upon the poor man: he lieth in wait in secret like a lion in his den (Ps. ix.30) – lion compared to extortioners, *MES*, 238; – in like manner the devil slyly waits his time to assail a sick soul, *Deonise*, 82; – lion represents violence and guile, *Psalter*, ix.31.

They have taken me, as a lion prepared for the prey; and as a young lion dwelling in secret places (Ps. xvi.12) – lion signifies the princes who tried to slay Christ or the devil who preyed on man's soul; young lion signifies the devil's son, or the people who waited to see how they might slay Christ, *Psalter*, xvi.13. Rolle interprets the lion as the devil and young lions as sons of the devil also in Ps. vii.3, xxi.22, lvi.5, ciii.21-22; in Ps. xc.13 the lion is understood as cruelty to one's neighbour.

Be sober, and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour (IPet. v.8) – cited against the devil, father of sins, MS JCO 39, p.553, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.17<sup>v</sup>, MS Bod. 95, ff.50<sup>v</sup>-51<sup>r</sup>; – because the lion runs in the streets, anchoresses are wise to enclose themselves, *AR*, 164.

Beast of Apocalypse has the throat of a lion (Apoc.xiii.2) – because of its devouring cruelty, MS Bod. 283, f.14<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 10; – signifies the rapacious us and fierce covetousness of the great estates of the world, *DM*, 204.

### Natural History

King of beasts, proud – similarly, pride is king of vices, *VV*, 12; – compared to a proud man, *JW*, 78; – pride turns a man into the likeness of a lion, *Scale*, 276, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>;

expects everyone to worship it – emblematic of Deadly Sin of pride, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.205<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Douce 60, f.193<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Harl. 1197, f.9<sup>r</sup>, *AR*, 198;

wrathful, malicious – compared to Herod as a ruler, *Spec Sac*, 13; – compared to an angry man, *JW*, 100; – anger transforms men into lions, MS Bod. 283, f.45<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 171-72, *AR*, 120; – an angry man should be fled from as one would flee from a lion, *Spec Christ*, 62; – contrasted to the meek, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.23<sup>r</sup>;

s pares prostrate man – landlords who do not have compassion on their tenants are less merciful, *DM*, 136-37;

strong, brave – Christ suffered his Passion with the strength of a lion, and his lovers should similarly face all adversity, *Goad*, 78-79; – compared to a man given confidence by the Holy Ghost, MS Bod. 283, f.135<sup>v</sup>, *Azen*, 166, *VV*, 167; – the sun passing through the houses of Leo, Virgo, and Libra illustrates the transformations of God: when he was in the house of Leo, he was righteous and judged men harshly, MS TCC B. 14. 53, f.136<sup>v</sup>;

slays a large beast rather than a small when it is hungry – compared to warring Christians who attack rich neighbours rather than poor, *Grisdale*, 78;

- when it hunts, it draws a circle around the prey which no beast dares to cross – similarly, extortioners encompass poor people on all sides, *MES*, 238;  
 its cubs are born dead and after three days are raised up by the roaring of their sire – a figure for the resurrection of Christ, MS Harl. 2276, f.74<sup>v</sup>, *Spec Sac*, 118; – the voice of Christ at the day of doom will be like the lion's roar which comforts its cubs and makes all other beasts afraid, Horstmann, I, 117; – since St Mark wrote at length about the resurrection, his symbol is the lion, *Festial*, 267;  
 lioness produces litters of 5 cubs, then 4, 3, 2, 1, and afterwards is barren – compared to a man who begins to live virtuously and grows less holy, MS Bod. 283, f.54<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 196-97;  
 lion turns from lioness when she displeases him – illustrates that a good woman should please her husband, *KofTL*, 55.

#### *Anecdotes*

God allows a lion to slay a prophet who has erred, but the lion is not allowed to worry the corpse because after his chastising the prophet is forgiven – man is tested by his meekness in chastising, *Chast*, 164.

St Thomas of India is avenged by a lion who slays a discourteous butler, *Spec Sac*, 253, *Festial*, 110.

A knight saves a lion from a serpent. The grateful lion follows him everywhere, but he becomes frightened and tries to sail away without it. The lion follows the ship and drowns – the knight is interpreted as Christ who frees the lion, or mankind, by means of Holy Writ and his Passion from the bonds of the serpent, or devil, *Festial*, 39-40.

A lion, grateful for the removal of a thorn, punishes a false wife who encompassed the death of her husband – the lion represents Christ, the husband/thorn-remover every Christian soul, the wife man's flesh, *GR*, 245.

St Jerome's grateful lion tends his ass, *AN*, 300-301.

An emperor, while out hunting with his dogs, pulls a thorn from a lion's foot. He is fed by the lion and later begets two sons and a daughter on a bear – emperor interpreted as Christian man, hunting dogs as fleshly lusts, lion as Christ, bear as fleshly lusts, *GR*, 327.

Shipwrecked merchants from Venice save a lion from death. The lion repays them by bringing food every day – illustrates how friendly an unreasonable beast is to those who do good to it, *AN*, 77-78.

#### LOCUST

##### *Natural History*

Travels in a company, without leader (Prov. xxx.27) – compared to John the Baptist, *Fire*, 31;

flies and eats grain – interpreted as backbiters (Ps. lxxvii.46) who run to gnaw other men's work so that those men cease to do good and have hunger in their souls, *Psalter*, lxxvii.51;

moves by leaping – interpreted as God's lovers (Ps. cviii.23) who are chased from place to place by evil men, *Psalter*, cviii.22;  
 parent of the larva bruchus – locust (Ps. civ.34-35) interpreted as vainglory;  
 bruchus, which is all belly, as outrage in eating and drinking. Together they are numberless because these two vices destroy more men than anyone may guess, *Psalter*, civ.32-33.

## LOUSE

### *Anecdote*

A knight fears to join a holy order because of lice. His friend reminds him that it is ignoble and unworthy to fear the sword in battle or the louse in the battle of Christ, *AN*, 443.

## LYNX

### *Natural History*

Has powerful vision – if men had vision as powerful as a lynx's they could see through fair bodies which inside are sacks of dung, *VV*, 79, *Azen*, 81, *DM*, 34-35.

## MAGPIE

### *Natural History*

Talks – example of priests who talk loosely about things they do not understand, Wyclif, 194.

### *Anecdote*

A magpie reported to a husband that in his absence his wife and servant ate his eel. The wife and servant plucked the magpie's feathers in retribution, and ever after when the bird saw a bald man or a woman with a high forehead he said, "Ye spake of the eel" – no woman should eat delicate morsels in the absence of her husband unless it be with worshipful folk to make cheer, *KofTL*, 22.

## MERMAID (Nicor)

### *Natural History*

One type has the body of a woman, tail of a fish, claws of an eagle, and sweet song – compared to liars, *MS Bod.* 283, f.79<sup>r-v</sup>, *VV*, 58-59, *Azen*, 61;  
 another type, said to resemble serayn, an adder, runs faster than horses and is very poisonous – compared to speakers of evil and backbiters, *MS Bod.* 283, f.79<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 59, *Azen*, 61;  
 casts upon the shore things which will attract men and, when they come, captures and devours them – similarly, the earth offers men things of beauty like wealth, worship, fulfilment of lusts, but the takers of these are damned, *MS CCCC* 142, f.120<sup>f</sup>.



## MOLE

*Natural History*

Lives in the earth – compared to men who are wise in the ways of the world, *DM*, 37-38; – compared to curates who set their parishioners an example of worldliness, *Wyclif*, 147;

cannot discern night from day – compared to those who are wise in the ways of the world and will not see the light of Christian teachings, *Edgeworth, Sermons*, f.6<sup>v</sup>, in *Blench*, 123.

## MOTH

*Natural History*

Devours wool – similarly, the rebellious and delicate flesh wastes the soul, *MS Harl.* 2330, ff.61<sup>v</sup>-62<sup>r</sup>;

flies about a candle until it is burned – illustrative of what happens if one does not forsake lechery and the temptations leading to it, *Azen*, 206.

(See also BUTTERFLY.)

## MOUSE

*Natural History*

Blinded by the sun – compared to those who commit sins against the Holy Ghost, *MS Bod.* 283, f.39<sup>v</sup>.

*Anecdote*

A rich man's home is invaded by mice. He flees to a ship, but they pursue him, gnaw the ship until he is forced to land, and devour him completely, *AN*, 367.

## MULE

*Scripture*

(See HORSE.)

*Natural History*

Product of the generation of a horse and an ass – compared to mankind whose father is God and whose mother is earth, *DM*, 19.

*Anecdote*

A mule, because of his dullness, answers a fox's question "Have you no father or mother?" by saying that the horse is his uncle – similarly, for shame a man does not acknowledge his father, *Disc Cler*, 21.

(See also ASS.)

Nicor. See MERMAID.

Nightcrow. See OWL, SHRIEK OWL.

## NIGHTINGALE

*Natural History*

Sings when amorous, afterwards is silent – illustrates the point that one should not wed a second time for vain pleasure, *KofTL*, 156;

sings throughout the night in sweet longing for its love – compared to the lover of Christ who should sing more sweetly to his love throughout the night of his life in the world, *Fire*, 102-103, *Branches*, 114;

sings night and day in summer, keeping awake by resting its breast against a thorn, and brings forth birds and teaches them to sing as it does – an example for the aristocratic class which should always be waking and doing good works for the poor, reminded of their distress by the thorn of pity, and should bring forth children and teach them to worship God and do good works, MS UCO 95, f.98<sup>r-v</sup>.

#### *Anecdotes*

A bird helps a malefactor escape from prison by bringing him a magic, precious stone – the prisoner represents a sinner who can escape from sin by confession and contrition; the gaoler is the devil; the bird is the voice of God and the stone is Christ, *GR*, 334.

A man captures and plans to kill a nightingale, but the bird persuades him that it is more useful alive because it has a precious stone inside it. In the end, the man is beguiled and the bird flies away singing: *Non nimis amissis doleas, nec omne quod audis credas, nec cupias id quod habere nequis*, *Disc Cler*, 47ff., *AN*, 132-33.

A nightingale bathes herself in a well after adulterous exploits. When a jealous knight locks the well, her mate discovers her infidelity and calls together a multitude of birds to slay her – the nightingale betokens the soul which commits adultery every time it consents to sin but cleanses itself with penitence afterward; the devil locks a man's mouth so that it may not confess, and then he is sent to everlasting death, *GR*, 441-43.

#### OSTRICH

##### *Natural History*

Cannot fly well, although it makes a pretence of doing so, because it is a heavy bird with few feathers – compared to anchoresses who are kept from flying heavenward by fleshly desires but nevertheless pretend they are holy, *AR*, 132.

##### *Anecdote*

The Emperor Diocletian captures a young ostrich and takes it to his palace where he keeps it in a glass cage. The mother follows it there but cannot free it until she returns three days later with a certain worm by virtue of whose blood the glass breaks – emperor interpreted as God, young bird as Adam, its mother as Christ, and the worm as Christ's manhood, *GR*, 435.

#### OTTER

##### *Natural History*

Slays many more fish than it needs and stores them in its den; because of the resulting stench it sickens and dies – compared to a covetous man, *JW*, 118.

#### OWL

##### *Natural History*

Sees by night, is blind by day – compared to a wicked man who cannot see the light, *Spec Christ*, 210;

sees better by night than by day – compared to covetous men who may not see the way to heaven, MS UCO 97, f.106<sup>r</sup>, MS SSCC 74, f.172<sup>v</sup>;  
 its eyes are hurt by the light of the sun – similarly the envious are hurt by goodness, *DM*, 158;  
 knows nothing of music – compared to men who, as soon as they come of age, will pass judgments on everything, though they know nothing, *MES*, 194.

#### *Anecdote*

A wise owl predicts that Herod will be released from prison and will die in prosperity – shows that augury sometimes proves true, *AN*, 67-68.  
 (See also SHRIEK OWL.)

#### OX (Bull and Cow)

##### *Scripture*

Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out thy corn on the floor (Deut. xxv.4) – similarly a good servant should be fed, MS Bod. 283, f.74<sup>r</sup>,<sup>3</sup> *DM*, 234-35.  
 Christ drives the sellers of oxen from the temple (John ii.14-16) – oxen betoken the law which should not be bartered but should free the land from weeds and make it bear fruit, MS Addit. 37677, f.100<sup>r</sup>.  
 Five yoke of oxen (Luke xiv.19) – represent man's five wits, MS Harl. 2388, ff.15<sup>v</sup>-16<sup>r</sup>; – represent the five senses because oxen make the earth bring forth plenty, while the senses are the procurers of earthly goods, MS Harl. 2276, f.100<sup>r</sup>.  
 My beeves and fatlings are killed (Matt. xxii.4) – bulls, the leaders of the herd, represent the fathers of the Old Testament, often slain for their righteousness, MS Harl. 2276, f.141<sup>r</sup>; – signify the patriarchs who fought God's battles with their horns, Winn, 97.  
 Christ asks the Pharisees what man would not retrieve his ox or ass from a pit on the Sabbath (Matt. xii.11 and Deut. xxii.1-4) – compared to those who help their beasts, ox of avarice and ass of lechery, while allowing their souls to perish, MS Harl. 5085, f.142<sup>r</sup>; – ox betokens wise men, or Jews living under the law, ass represents dull men, or heathen living like wild asses, who were drawn from the pit of avarice by Christ's pity, MS Harl. 2276, f.134<sup>v</sup>.  
 Bulls used in sacrifice – because St Luke speaks much of Christ's sacrifice, his symbol is the bull, *Festial*, 267.  
 Ox and ass present at Nativity (cf. Isa. i.3) – recognize the Lord and worship him, *Festial*, 116, MS Greaves, 54, f.32<sup>v</sup>; – keep Christ warm, MS UCO 97, f.122<sup>r</sup>; – as Christ lay between two beasts at his birth, so he hung between two thieves at his Passion, MS Harl. 2250, f.96<sup>v</sup>.

##### *Natural History*

Bought and sold – a man's child is dearer than his cattle and therefore should not be sold into houses of religion, MS Bod. 95, f.14<sup>r</sup>; – compared to Judas' sale of Christ for which he received less than the value of an ox, *Tret of Love*, 44; – compared to bartering of benefices, MS St JCC 193, f.110<sup>v</sup>; – false priests set more value on cattle than on souls, Wyclif, 174;

the ox which men will slay, they fatten, and that which they will keep, they put in the yoke – a comforting thought in tribulation, *VV*, 201;  
 is a ruminant animal – illustrates that a man should chew over thoughts of God after swallowing the Eucharist, *VV*, 109, *A3en*, 111, MS Bod. 283, f.108<sup>r</sup>.

#### *Anecdotes*

St Michael, the bull, and the establishment of his church, *Festial*, 264, *Spec Sac*, 211.

A bull establishes a church in Cornwall, *Festial*, 265.

Apostles of St James calm wild oxen by the sign of the cross, *Festial*, 223-24, *Spec Sac*, 175.

St Stephen revives a child trampled by oxen, *Spec Sac*, 10.

A judge is bribed with an ox, his wife with a cow. On the day of judgment, “the ox could not speak because the cow would not let him” – signifies that bailiffs frequently take money but do not deliver what is promised. The text adds this note: *Hec fabula valet ad quoscumque iudices et quod munera seruertunt iudicem et quod mulieres sepius optinent magis quam viri*, *AN*, 73-74; – an example to show that justice is sometimes hampered by covetousness, so that it decides in favour of the rich. Here the ox represents what the poor man gives to reason, the cow what the rich man gives to avarice. Just as the cow is of less value than the ox, so temporal wealth is less worthy than the wealth of heaven, *JW*, 213.

A priest sings like a calf and is informed of it by a female parishioner – illustrates that many who believe that they sing well are deceived by their own song, *AN*, 85.

The plowman and his oxen, the fox and the wolf: see FOX.

Parrot. See POPINJAY.

#### PARTRIDGE

##### *Natural History*

Nearly dies from fright when it is in the claws of the hawk – similarly all vice leaves a man who thinks about how he may escape death which is, nevertheless, inevitable, MS Harl. 1706, f.21<sup>v</sup>.

#### PEACOCK

##### *Natural History*

Proud of its tail – compared to one who displays his bodily beauties, MS Bod. 283, f.28<sup>r</sup>; – contrasted to men who take pride in their dress which, unlike the peacock’s tail, is not a natural gift, *VV*, 286, *A3en*, 258;  
 enjoys displaying itself and being praised – compared to a woman who wishes to be desirable to all, MS Bod. 283, f.68<sup>v</sup>; – compared to lust, *DM*, 247;  
 makes other birds enamoured of its beauty – in contrast, man should not use his bodily beauty to entice others to sin, *DM*, 137;

looks at its tail and is proud, but sees its ugly feet and cries for shame – similarly, a man who enjoys worldly pleasures should take heed of his mortality, *Grisdale*, 92-93;  
 wakes in the night, crying for fear that it has lost its tail – similarly the soul should always be in dread of losing its fairness, *Branches*, 110.

## PELICAN

### *Natural History*

Slays its young in anger, then repents and revives them with blood drawn from its breast – young birds represent good works, slain by anger, restored by drawing sin from the heart in confession, *AR*, 118;  
 mother's blood revives dead offspring – similarly the Eucharist quickens Christians, *MS Linc. Cath.* 50, f.166<sup>r</sup>;  
 flies well because it is a thin bird – an anchoress should be similar in leanness, *AR*, 118, 126;  
 flies well and dwells alone – interpretation of I am become like a pelican of the wilderness (*Ps.* ci.7); similarly hermits flee the fellowship of men and worship God in solitude, *Psalter*, ci.7.

## PHOENIX

### *Natural History*

Unique; builds a nest of thorns on which it immolates itself; from the ash arises another phoenix -- represents Christ who similarly had no peer or earthly father and who burnt himself on the altar of the cross, *Branches*, 117; also represents spiritual souls which gather thorns of virtue and sacrifice themselves to God, *Branches*, 117.

Plover. See LAPWING.

## POPINJAY (Jay, Parrot)

### *Natural History*

May learn to speak, but can say "Hail Cæsar" without any lessons – much more should men reverently greet the Blessed Virgin with an Ave, *MES*, 332;  
 trips about in its cage talking foolishly – compared to one who repeats the Pater Noster inattentively, *DM*, 122; – compared to those who repeat the service without understanding it, *Lant*, 56; – example of priests who blab noisily about things they do not understand, *Wyclif*, 194.

## PORCUPINE (Hedgehog or Urchin)

### *Scripture*

The high hills are a refuge for the harts, the rock for the urchins (*Ps.* ciii.18) – interpreted to mean that Christ is the refuge for them that are covered with small sins, *Psalter*, ciii.19; – Christ the rock is the refuge for those who are full of the pricks of penance, *VV*, 140, *MS Bod.* 283, f.123<sup>v</sup>.

*Natural History*

Covered with spines – represents sharpness in a list of animals who participate in the burial of the wolf, *GR*, 373; – compared to the appearance of the body of St Edmund when he had been martyred by the Norsemen, *Spec Sac*, 240; collects apples on its spines – emblematic of the Deadly Sin of avarice, MS Harl. 1197, ff.12<sup>v</sup>-13<sup>r</sup>, MS Douce 60, f.197<sup>r</sup>, MS Linc.Cath. 50, f.205<sup>v</sup>; – compared to a covetous man, *JW*, 117; casts its spines in anger – compared to a speaker of evil, MS Bod. 283, f.81<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 63-64, *Azen*, 66, *JW*, 154.

## RAT

*Natural History*

Beguiled by poisoned dough – similarly, men are beguiled by the devil when he cloaks the sin of lechery under the guise of fulfilment of nature, MS SSCC 74, f.205<sup>v</sup>.

## RAVEN

*Natural History*

Greedy – covetous men are turned into the likeness of ravens at death, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>; – description of the devil, *JW*, 252; eats carrion – a backbiter is worse than the raven of the devil of hell because he eats living flesh, not carrion, *AR*, 84; builds a large nest from twigs and mud – represents worldly men who make riches the foundation of their lives, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r-v</sup>; produces birds which are white at birth and refuses to feed them until they become black – literal interpretation of: Who giveth to beasts their food; and to the young ravens that call upon him (Ps. cxlvi.9); allegorically, ravens are the sons of sinful men who do not follow in the ways of their fathers but turn to God. When men are white in virtues, God feeds them, but when they become black in sin, the devil acknowledges them and feeds them on the carrion of worldly lusts, *Psalter*, cxlvi.10; produces black birds which it feeds with carrion – represents worldly men who bring forth ugly sins, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r-v</sup>; casts young from nest to encourage independence – example to show that children should be taught to be industrious at an early age, *DM*, 195, MS Bod. 283, f.54<sup>r</sup>.

*Anecdote*

A knight requests his cousin to sell his horse and give the proceeds to the poor to shorten his stay in Purgatory. The cousin keeps the horse and is punished by a swarm of ravens who carry him and the horse into the air and drop them onto rocks, then carry his soul to hell, *Spec Sac*, 228.

## SALAMANDER

*Natural History*

Lives in fire – compared to a man who lives patiently in tribulation, thus strengthening and tempering his character, *Azen*, 167; – compared to a man who is purified by patience, MS Bod. 283, f.136<sup>r</sup>.

(See also CRICKET.)

## SCORPION

*Scripture*

As a yoke of oxen that is moved to and fro, so also is a wicked woman: he that hath hold of her, is as he that taketh hold of a scorpion (Eccles. xxvi.10) – illustrates wickedness of lecherous handling, *ParsT*, l.854.

*Natural History*

Has a fair face like a woman and a venomous tail like a serpent – compared to those who first flatter and then turn to backbite, *Fire*, 22, MS Bod. 283, f.79<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 60, *Azen*, 62, *JW*, 151; – emblematic of the Deadly Sin of lechery, *AR*, 204.

*Anecdote*

In his martyrdom, St Laurence is beaten with scorpions, *Spec Sac*, 180.

## SERPENT (Adder, Asp)

*Scripture*

Agent which tempted Eve, punished for its deception (Gen. iii.1-15) – signifies suggestion of sin, *DM*, 257, *ParsT*, l.325, *xii frutes*, 147.

She shall crush thy head (Gen. iii.15) – signifies destruction of wicked thoughts, MS TCC B. 15.39, f.165<sup>r</sup>; – virginity has crushed the serpent, but chastity must constantly battle, *xii frutes*, 141.

And earth thou shalt eat all the days of thy life (Gen. iii.14) – interpretation of Ps. lxxi.9, and his enemies shall lick the ground, that is, they shall love earthly things and be damned, *Psalter*, lxxi.9.

Moses raises an adder of brass in the desert (Num. xxi.7-9; John iii.14-15) – adder prefigures Christ, an alloy of God and man, raised on the cross to insure eternal life for believers, MS Harl. 5085, f.86<sup>r-v</sup>, *DM*, 179-80, *VV*, 224-25, *Azen*, 203; – poisonous adders signify lusts that poison man's soul, the healing power of the brass adder prefigures salvation brought by Christ, whose flesh was as clean as Moses' adder was without venom, MS Harl. 2276, f.96<sup>r-v</sup>; – a type of the crucifixion, *Winn*, 58.

They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent: the venom of asps is under their lips (Ps. cxxxix.4) – interpreted to mean that under flattering words they have incurable venom in their hearts, *Psalter*, cxxxix.3; – descriptive of deliberate swearers, cursers and blasphemers, MS Bod. 95, f.3<sup>v</sup>, f.71<sup>v</sup>.

If a serpent bite in silence, he is nothing better than backbiteth secretly (Eccles. x.11) – serpent emblematic of Deadly Sin of envy, *AR*, 200.

Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent: like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears: which will not hear the voice of the charmer; nor of the wizard that charmeth wisely (Ps. lvii.5-6): the serpent stops one ear with earth, the other with its tail – compared to those who will not listen to the word of God and stop their ears with love of earthly goods and with unrepented sins, *Psalter*, lvii.4; – illustrates prudence in listening, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.32<sup>r-v</sup>; – similarly, men should not listen to liars and flatterers, *VV*, 284-85, *Azen*, 257; – signifies lack of compassion, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.33<sup>v</sup>; – similarly, men should stop the devil by thoughts of death, for the tail signifies the last end, the earth mortality, MS Harl. 2383, f.84<sup>v</sup>; stops its ear with earth – similarly, a covetous man stops his ears against God's word with earthly goods, MS Greaves 54, ff.123<sup>v</sup>-124<sup>r</sup>; stops its ear with its tail – similarly, a proud man shuts his soul with his vain trust in long life, MS Greaves 54, f.124<sup>r</sup>; refuses to come out of a filthy hole to hear the charmer – compared to a lecher who refuse to forsake his sin, MS Greaves 54, f.123<sup>r-v</sup>; – compared to men who refuse to hear the voice of Christ which would bring them to heaven, *Psalter*, lvii.5.

#### *Natural History*

Venomous, stinging – compared to sin, *Rel Pieces*, 12; – to be avoided, like sin or temptation, *Scale*, 269-70, *MES*, 198, MS Harl. 2330, f.27<sup>r</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.75<sup>v</sup>; – compared to envious man, *VV*, 22; – compared to curates who poison secular lords with simony and other sins, Wyclif, 161;  
 spittle of a fasting man slays serpents – fasting is more potent still against the old serpent, the devil, *Festial*, 7; – similarly, continence slays the serpent of vicious living, *xii frutes*, 137;  
 is slain by the juice of a cedar, queen of trees – similarly charity, queen of virtues, slays sin, MS St JCC 95, f.169<sup>r-v</sup>;  
 casts out its venom before copulating – no interpretation, MS Harl. 2383, ff.84<sup>v</sup>-85<sup>r</sup>;  
 casts out its venom before drinking – signifies that wise men should cast out all venomous wrath and forgive as they would be forgiven, MS Harl. 2330, f.21<sup>r-v</sup>;  
 casts off its skin in summer – no interpretation, MS Harl. 2383, f.85<sup>r</sup>;  
 kills greenery (cf. BASILISK) – compared to envious men, MS Bod. 95, f.38<sup>v</sup>;  
 moves easily through briars – similarly robbers, boasters, and extortioners move easily through the intricacies of the world, MS Bod. 95, f.78<sup>r</sup>;  
 has a long tail – compared to a lady's long gown, illustrative of pride, *DM*, 125;  
 extends its tail to save its head – similarly men who are apart from Christ, the head, do not feel his pains, *Goad*, 57;  
 moves by wriggling – contrasted to a man who goes forthrightly, MS Bod. 283, f.127<sup>v</sup>; – compared to a covetous man, *MES*, 264.

#### *Anecdotes*

St Paul casts out a serpent which a woman had swallowed from a pitcher three years previously, *Spec Sac*, 23.

St Paul's host and family are immune to serpent bites; serpents are placed in the cradles of children to determine their paternity, *AN*, 404.



A serpent is unable to harm a young monk because of his virtue; his abbot punishes him and a brother so that they will not become over-proud of their virtue – vainglory in a young man is restrained, *AN*, 258.

Hercules slays a serpent while still in his cradle – represents Christian souls who must slay three serpents, the world, the flesh, and the devil, *MS Linc. Cath.* 50, f.164<sup>r</sup>.

A knight who saves a serpent from a toad is in turn saved from the toad by the serpent – knight interpreted as every good Christian, serpent as Christ, toad as devil, *GR*, 5-7.

A toad usurps a serpent's nest. The serpent rings the justice bell and the emperor rules the case in favour of the serpent. When the emperor loses his sight, the serpent brings a stone which heals him – emperor interpreted as reason, serpent as Christ, toad as the devil, stone as virtue, *GR*, 18.

A serpent punishes a son who does not treat his mother well – those who do not honour their parents are punished, *AN*, 246-47.

A knight arranges to feed a serpent and her young. Because of this he becomes wealthy and has a son. His wife urges him to kill the serpent and, although he fails, he loses both child and riches. He begs the serpent to allow him to feed her again but she refuses – knight is understood as typical Christian, the serpent as Christ (with whose aid a man becomes spiritually wealthy and a father of good deeds), the wife as the flesh urging the husband into sin which slays Christ whom he should feed with devotion, *GR*, 242-245.

The ungrateful serpent: see *FOX*.  
(See also *VIPER*.)

## **SHEEP**

### *Scripture*

They are laid in hell like sheep: death shall feed upon them (*Ps.* xlvi.15) – sheep which lose their wool compared to wicked men who lose their natural gifts, *Psalter*, xlvi.14; – the word sheep sometimes connotes evil sheep, as in this verse, *MS Harl.* 2276, f.78<sup>f</sup>.

And I was as a meek lamb, that is carried to be a victim (*Jer.* xi.19) – Christ was brought forth like a lamb, *Tret of Love*, 45.

He was offered because it was his own will and he opened not his mouth; he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth (*Isa.* liii.7) – thus Christ allowed the Jews to despoil him of his clothing; men should learn to face the loss of worldly goods with patience by this example, *MS Harl.* 2250, f.96<sup>f</sup>, *MS Harl.* 2398, f.19<sup>v</sup>, *Horstmann*, II, 359.

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep. But the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and flieth: and the wolf catcheth, and scattereth the sheep (*John* x.11-12) – by the good shepherd is understood

God, by the sheep all Christians, and by the wolf the devil, *MES*, 137-38; – shepherd interpreted as a good curate, hireling as an evil curate, sheep as parishioners, wolf as devil, heretic, or tyrant, MS Harl. 2276, ff.78<sup>r</sup>-79<sup>r</sup>; – hireling compared to bad priests, *ParsT*, l.791, Wyclif, 32; – hireling compared to slothful men, *ParsT*, l.720.

And I lay down my life for my sheep (John x.15) – contrasted to pastors who take from their sheep milk, wool, and fat but refuse to heal them when they become ill, MS Harl. 5085, f.69<sup>r</sup>.

Christ came to save the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel (Matt. xv.24) – that is, those who sin simple-mindedly, MS Harl. 5085, f.45<sup>r</sup>.

Christ ejects sheep-sellers from the temple (John ii.15) – sheep-sellers represent those who sell works of pity and mercy, MS Addit. 37677, f.100<sup>v</sup>.

Cursed is the deceitful man that hath in his flock a male, and making a vow offereth in sacrifice that which is feeble to the Lord (Malach. i.14) – God should have the best of a man's efforts, MS Bod. 95, f.12<sup>v</sup>; – cited against the practice of marrying off pretty daughters and sending ugly ones into houses of religion, MS Bod. 95, f.86<sup>v</sup>.

### *Natural History*

Eat as often as they like – compared to wicked knights who eat oftener than seven times a day, MS Bod. 283, f.27<sup>v</sup>;

eat their pasturage to the roots, but it grows again – grass compared to sinners in hell who are always dying but never die, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.81<sup>v</sup>, f.82<sup>r</sup>;

run to unwholesome pasture when allowed liberty – compared to parishioners whom preachers must constantly lead to wholesome doctrine, Edgeworth, *Sermons*, f.295<sup>v</sup>, quoted Blench, 125;

caught in briars while serpents are not – compared to innocent men who are caught by the laws of men while liars escape, MS Bod. 95, f.79<sup>r</sup>;

clean, innocent, meek, uncomplaining – compared to meek men, MS Harl. 2276, f.31<sup>r</sup>, MS Bod. 283, f.123<sup>r</sup>, *VV*, 139; description of Christ, *Goad*, 58, *Ladder*, 105; – compared to Christ in his Passion, *Talkyng*, 36, 50; – compared to a lover of Christ in all adversities, *Goad*, 79; – interpreted (Ps. lxxvi.21) as chosen people, *Psalter*, lxxvi.20;

most profitable of animals, but meek nevertheless – compared to meek men, MS Bod. 283, f.121<sup>r</sup>, *A3en*, 137, *VV*, 135; – represent soul of man, MS Harl. 2276, f.78<sup>r</sup>; – interpreted (Ps. lxxix.1) as virtuous men, *Psalter*, lxxix.1;

recognize their shepherd and obey him, clothe and feed him with wool and milk – understood as good Christian men who treat their pastor well, MS Harl. 2276, f.78<sup>v</sup>;

bear wool for man's clothing – interpreted as chosen people (Ps. lxxvii.52) who bear charity and good works as their souls' clothing, *Psalter*, lxxvii.57;

mad – compared to those who give up the life of contemplation for the world, *DM*, 79; – compared to the rolling eyes of those who are affected with hypocritical visitations of the spirit, *Cloud*, 97-98;

one scabbed sheep defiles a whole flock – similarly a little gall turns much sweetness

- into bitterness, MS Harl. 2330, f.34<sup>v</sup>; – illustration of commandment to heal the sick, Winn, 52;
- herd together and flee wolves by nature – illustration for injunction to seek good company, *VV*, 137;
- when confronted by a wolf they lack power to flee and strength to fight – interpretation of Ps. cxviii.176, *Psalter*, cxviii.176;
- harp strung with a mixture of sheep and wolf gut: see **WOLF**;
- a lamb in Egypt spoke and testified to the birth of Christ – one of the miracles of the created world at the Nativity, MS Greaves, 54, f.32<sup>v</sup>.

*Anecdotes*

St Clement prays for a well and is led to one by a lamb, *Spec Sac*, 241.

St Patrick commands stolen sheep to bleat in the belly of the thief, *AN*, 232.

Fable of the wolf and the lamb: see **WOLF**.

**SHEEPDOG***Natural History*

- A good dog protects the flock – similarly, a good man of religion would rather give to the poor than take from them, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>v</sup>;
- drives wolves from the flock – similarly, a Christian pastor must keep evil from his people by industriousness and wariness, MS Harl. 2276, f.78<sup>r</sup>;
- an evil dog bites the sheep – similarly, an evil man of religion would rather steal from simple folk than give them help, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>v</sup>;
- an incompetent dog does not bark against the wolf – compared to prelates who are so choked with worldly goods that they may not warn the people against the devil, Wyclif, 104.

**SHREW***Natural History*

- Would rather rot in a dungeon than try to escape – compared to a man who will not bother to repent, MS Bod. 283, f.50<sup>v</sup>.

**SHRIEK OWL***Natural History*

- Lives near graveyards; when it feels a death approaching it cries with pity – an example illustrating the compassion of a soul which should mourn the approach of deadly sin, *Branches*, 111.

(See also **OWL**.)

**SNAIL***Natural History*

- Has horns which frighten silly men – compared to one who is slothful because of cowardice, *VV*, 27, *DM*, 189; – compared to the devil who has no more power over a soul in grace than has a snail, MS Bod. 283, f.51<sup>r</sup>.

**SPANIEL***Natural History*

Remains loyal to its master through all difficulties – similarly, men should love God through all tribulation, MS JCO 39, p.572.

**SPARROW***Scripture*

In the Lord I put my trust: how then do you say to my soul: Get thee away from hence to the mountain like a sparrow (Ps. x.1) – sparrow described as unstable, flighty, and without charity, comparable to heretics and false brethren, *Psalter*, x.1.

For the sparrow hath found herself a house (Ps. lxxxiii.4) – sparrow represents meek men who flee earthly loves to live in heaven, *Psalter*, lxxxiii.3.

There the sparrows shall make their nests. The highest of them is the house of the heron (Ps. ciii.17) – sparrows, holy poor men, make their nests in the goods of both meek and lordly men of God; they are not as high as the heron (Rolle, hawk) but their leader is Christ, *Psalter*, ciii.18-19.

Our soul hath been delivered as a sparrow out of the snare of the fowlers (Ps. cxxiii.7) – the soul, by living virtuously, is delivered from the devil and flies to the kingdom of heaven, *Grisdale*, 85-86; – the sweetness of the world is the devil's snare, but sparrows (good men) are delivered from it, *Psalter*, cxxiii.6.

*Natural History*

Flees the woods and nests in houses – as in the interpretation of: I have watched and am become as a sparrow all alone on the housetop (Ps. ci.8), the righteous man removes his heart from the world and rejoices in his heavenly home, *Psalter*, ci.8;

delivers its companions from snares – illustrates injunction to be merciful, *JW*, 250-51;

feeds forsaken fledgelings – thus pity springs in the ground of mercy, *JW*, 250-51;

hides its young from the adder – similarly, a Christian should perform works of mercy secretly, *JW*, 251-52.

Sparrowhawk. See HAWK.

**SPIDER***Natural History*

Makes a web to trap flies – similarly, a man's time is occupied in seeking of worldly goods, *Psalter*, lxxxix.10, MS Harl. 5085, f.44v;

dies at the touch of a finger – interpretation of Ps. xxxviii. 12, *Psalter*, xxxviii.15;

its insignificant web is blown away by a little breeze – compared to the world, which the virtuous man sees as nought, *VV*, 164, *Azen*, 164; – compared to hypocrisy, *JW*, 74;

makes a web on a windmill to trap flies – spider interpreted as avaricious man, windmill as fortune, flies as worldly goods, *DM*, 54-55.

Stag. See HART.

## STORK

### *Natural History*

Has wings but cannot fly because of its heavy body – compared to those who appear to be holy but cannot fly to the love and contemplation of God because of their earthly loves, Rolle, 56.

### *Anecdote*

A stork discovers that his mate has committed adultery and calls a great company of birds to kill her – shows that if birds abhor adultery, men should hate it even more, AN, 27. (See also NIGHTINGALE.)

## SWALLOW

### *Scripture*

Tobit blinded by swallow – a lesson in patience, MS UCO 97, f.109<sup>r</sup>.

### *Natural History*

Takes its food while on the wing – similarly, a soul should take no comfort or pleasure in temporal things, *Branches*, 115.

### *Anecdote*

A swallow returns every year to nest in a farmer's house. The farmer attaches a note to the bird and receives a reply from Asia. He thinks this is a miracle, AN, 244.

## SWAN

### *Natural History*

Sings when its death approaches – signifies joy in tribulation, *Branches*, 112; after a day's swimming comes to land and shakes the water from its feathers – compared to those who heard the preaching of Christ and were unaffected, MS Linc. Cath. 51, ff.72<sup>v</sup>-73<sup>r</sup>;  
black, rarely seen – compared in numbers to men who show perfect obedience, *Goad*, 171.

## SWINE (Hog)

### *Scripture*

Christ allows devils to enter swine which then drown themselves (Matt. viii.30-32) – signifies that devils have the power to dwell in gluttons and to drown them in hell, MS Bod. 283, f.73<sup>r</sup>, JW, 141, VV, 46-47, DM, 228; – similarly, the devil enters idle men, MS Bod. 283, f.49<sup>v</sup>; – the devils, who could enter the swine only when permitted by Christ, have less power to enter a man, *Chast*, 161-62.

Neither cast ye your pearls before swine (Matt. vii.6) – illustration for injunction to speak with discretion, VV, 151, Azen, 152; – interpretation of Ps. cxxxvi. 2, On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments, *Psalter*, cxxxvi.2.

The sow that was washed [is returned] to her wallowing in the mire (II Pet. ii.22)  
 – compared to a secular who becomes a religious but continues to behave as he did before, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>r</sup>; – compared to those who after Easter return to sinful ways eschewed during Lent, MS Harl. 2398, f.179<sup>r</sup>.  
 (See also DOG.)

### *Natural History*

- Loves to live in a moist and foul place – compared to gluttons, MS Bod. 283, ff. 72<sup>v</sup>-73<sup>r</sup>, *DM*, 228; – compared to those who love sin and refuse to climb the hill of virtue, *VV*, 124, 183, MS Bod. 283, f.116<sup>r</sup>, f.142<sup>r</sup>, *Azen*, 126, 179; – compared to rich men who are slow to serve God because of their love of earthly goods, MS Harl. 2398, f.78<sup>v</sup>; – compared to those who follow their lusts rather than reason or understanding, MS Bod. 95, f.48<sup>v</sup>, Wyclif, 217; – compared to curates who leave their parishes unattended, *Lant*, 119; – the mire is the natural habitat for swine and the unnatural one for men who lie in the filth of sin, ashamed to do well, *DM*, 187; – a swine is less defouled by living in a mire than a lecher is by living in his sin, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>r</sup>; – emblematic of the Deadly Sin of lechery, MS Harl. 1197, f.26<sup>r-v</sup>, MS Douce 60, f.210<sup>r</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.208<sup>r-v</sup>;
- prefers a foul place to a clean river – compared to men who prefer foolish company to wise, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.208<sup>v</sup>, *JW*, 159;
- lecherous – compared to lecherous men, MS Linc. Cath. 50, ff.59<sup>r</sup>-60<sup>r</sup>, MS Edin. Univ. Lib. 93, f.53<sup>v</sup>, MS Bod. 95, f.80<sup>r</sup>, *Scale*, 277; – compared to false merchants, Wyclif, 186; – compared to beneficed priests, Wyclif, 253; – compared to those who lose their wits through gluttony and sink into lechery, Wyclif, 216; – in transmigration of souls, lecher takes on the likeness of a swine, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.58<sup>v</sup>; –
- slothful – compared to those who love idleness and sleep, *DM*, 182; – compared to gluttons and worthless men, MS Harl. 2398, f.181<sup>v</sup>; – as a swine is fattened by sloth, so the devil fattens sinners for his feast by sloth, *DM*, 185;
- gluttonous – emblematic of Deadly Sin of gluttony, *AR*, 204; – compared to gluttonous men, *MES*, 101, Wyclif, 96; – compared to those who join a holy order under the pretence of virtue in order to live in riches, Wyclif, 425;
- eats unclean things – signifies committing sins of gluttony and lechery, *Mending*, 115;
- eats acorns without ever thinking of the tree – compared to those who never thank God, MS CUL Gg. vi.16, f.7<sup>r</sup>, MS Bod. 283, f.21<sup>v</sup>, *DM*, 113;
- does no good while it is living – compared to those who are ashamed to live well, MS Bod. 283, f.50<sup>r</sup>;
- grunts constantly – compared to murmurers and constant complainers, Edgeworth, *Sermons*, f.262<sup>r</sup>, quoted Blench, 123;
- defends piglets against men in white – contrasted to those who speak evil of all men of religion indiscriminately, MS Bod. 283, f.79<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 59, *Azen*, 61;

has compassion on another swine which squeals – therefore man, a reasonable creature, ought to have pity on his brethren, MS Harl. 2250, f.98<sup>r</sup>;  
 its cries frighten elephants – Alexander drove away the battle elephants of the king of India by loosing swine on the battlefield, *Festial*, 195-96;  
 its state of health determined by inspection of the tongue – similarly, a man's intelligence or foolishness is known by the words he speaks, *VV*, 282;  
 roots in the earth and ruins plants – similarly, an evil man of religion goes among good men and destroys their penance, meekness, and simplicity which are the roots of other herbs of virtue, MS Addit. 24202, f.60<sup>v</sup>.

#### *Anecdotes*

A hog refuses to eat bread offered to it by an excommunicated smith – one who is excommunicated should be avoided by all, *AN*, 215; – since an unclean and unreasonable beast will not take bread from a cursed man, it is reasonable to assume that God will not receive prayers or good works from the accursed, *JW*, 35.

A wolf, returning from a lion's feast, meets a swine who asks if the lion served draff. The wolf replies that such unworthy food would hardly be served at so worthy a feast – illustration used to answer the man who asks if there will be hounds and hawks in heaven, *GR*, 368-69.

Fable of the ass and the swine: see *ASS*.

### **TIGER**

#### *Anecdote*

St Simon and St Jude tame two man-eating tigers, *Spec Sac*, 217.

### **TOAD (Frog)**

#### *Scripture*

And I saw from the mouth of the dragon, and from the mouth of the beast, and from the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs (Apoc. xvi.13) – frogs represent avarice, gluttony, and lechery, *Lant*, 19.

#### *Natural History*

Cannot bear the brightness of the sun – compared to envious man who hates to see others doing well, MS Bod. 95, f.62<sup>r</sup>;

is born from a dish of venom – compared to pride, MS Greaves 54, ff.106<sup>v</sup>-107<sup>r</sup>;

lives in swamps – frogs (Ps. lxxvii.45) interpreted as vain babbling of filthy wits, *Psalter*, lxxvii.50; – compared to princes who live in filth of sin, *Psalter*, civ. 28.

#### *Anecdotes*

A toad tempts a woman to commit sins of ire and is discovered clutching her heart so that she cannot repent before she dies – illustrates punishments of hell, *KofTL*, 138-39.

A huge black toad is found in a grave clutching the throat of a wealthy glutton – illustrates punishments of hell, *Festial*, 11.

Toads fill the heart of a dead usurer with the coins he had had buried with him – the punishment of usurers is visibly demonstrated, *AN*, 523.

A usurer finds his contribution to a church transformed into toads. The priest tells him he must stay all night in the coffer with the toads. In the morning he is found completely devoured – illustrates that the gifts of usurers do not please God, *AN*, 524-25, *JW*, 209.

A toad pursues a man until he lets it bite him. He cuts out the bitten portion, which immediately expands and bursts, and is thus saved, *AN*, 119.

(See also SERPENT.)

## TURTLEDOVE

### *Scripture*

For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones (Ps. lxxxiii.4) – the turtle, that is, chaste flesh sorrowing for sin, has found truth and charity in the which good works may be kept securely, *Psalter*, lxxxiii.3.

### *Natural History*

Remains faithful to its mate, always mournful of its death – people of religion should remain ever faithful to the Church, and make sorrow so that they may go to heaven, *MS Bod. 95*, f.99<sup>r-v</sup>; – exemplifies behaviour which widows should emulate, *Azen*, 226;

after the death of its mate it never rests on a green tree again – people of religion should never rest in lusts, but sit on the dry tree of the cross, *MS Bod. 95*, f.99<sup>v</sup>;

sorrows greatly when it comes to the place where its mate died – similarly, the soul should mourn for the loss of Christ, *Branches*, 113;

lives in solitary places – signifies the contemplative life, *MS Harl. 2276*, f.31<sup>r</sup>;

hides its young from the adder (see SPARROW);

feeds its chicks by night – signifies that men should nourish virtues with good deeds while they are in the world (night), *MS Harl. 2276*, f.31<sup>r</sup>;

feeds its chicks with clean food – signifies that men should flee the examples of wicked men, for their deeds stink worse than carrion and will hurt virtues (chicks), *MS Harl. 2276*, f.31<sup>r</sup>;

eats only clean grain – people of religion eat only clean wheat, that is, Christ himself in the Eucharist, *MS Bod. 95*, f.99<sup>v</sup>;

can turn its head backwards (see CRANE).

(See also DOVE.)

## UNICORN

### *Natural History*

Cruel and strong – compared to devil, *MS Bod. 283*, f.51<sup>r</sup>;

wrathful – emblematic of Deadly Sin of wrath, *AR*, 200; – angry men transformed into unicorns, *AR*, 120;



proud, dies from indignation if it is captured — interpretation of the horns of unicorns (Ps. xxi.22), that is, arrogance of Jews and other proud men, *Psalter*, xxi.21; — beloved son of the unicorns (Ps. xxviii.6) interpreted as Christ, son of the Jews, called unicorns for their pride, *Psalter*, xxviii.6; has a single horn — and he built his sanctuary as of unicorns (Ps. lxxvii.69) interpreted as a reference to men who have a single hope, that is, in God, *Psalter*, lxxvii.75; — compared (Ps. xxi.22) to all proud men who consider themselves singular, *Psalter*, xxi.21; is rendered powerless by the sight of a maiden — compared to the humility of St Paul after his conversion, *Festial*, 156.

#### *Anecdote*

A man pursued by a unicorn climbs a tree in which there is honey. Despite a dragon in a ditch, beasts gnawing the tree, and frogs poisoning the air, he forgets the danger and eats the honey until he falls into the ditch — by the man is understood a sinner, by the unicorn death, by the ditch the world, by the dragon the devil, by the beasts night and day, by the honey delight in sin, *GR*, 109-111.

Urchin. See PORCUPINE.

### VIPER

#### *Scripture*

And seeing many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them: ye brood of vipers, who hath shewed ye to flee from the wrath to come? (Matt. iii.7) — description of false prelates, Wyclif, 2, 315, MS St JCC 193, f.102<sup>v</sup>.

#### *Natural History*

Comes forth by slaying the mother — compared to the thoughts of a wrathful man, *DM*, 178.  
(See also SERPENT.)

### WATCHDOG

#### *Natural History*

Protects house from thieves by barking — contrasted to a man who lies in deadly sin and will not bother to repent, MS Bod. 283, f.50<sup>v</sup>;  
a thief feeds it a soporific herb (or frog) to stop its barking — similarly, the devil puts shame into a sinner to stop him from being shriven, MS Bod. 283, f.141<sup>v</sup>, *VV*, 182, *A3en*, 179.

### WEASEL

#### *Natural History*

Overcomes the basilisk — similarly, the righteous man overcomes sin, *Psalter*, xc.13.

## WHALE

*Scripture*

Jonah is swallowed by a whale (Jonas ii.1-11) – belly of the whale prefigures Christ's sepulchre, MS Harl. 2276, f.75<sup>r</sup>; – Jonah's abiding in and being cast from the whale's belly prefigure Christ's burial and resurrection, MS Harl. 2276, f.87<sup>v</sup>.

## WOLF

*Scripture*

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravishing wolves (Matt. vii.15) – understood as hypocrites who beguile men by their outward holiness, which they put on in order to obtain worldly goods or worship, MS Bod. 95, f.59<sup>r</sup>, MS Bod. 283, f.34<sup>r</sup>, MS Harl. 2276, f.113<sup>v</sup>, Wyclif, 313; – compared to a tyrant who physically oppresses his people, to a heretic who encourages men to deviate from the true belief, or to the devil who confuses men into doing sin, MS Harl. 2276, ff.78<sup>v</sup>-79<sup>r</sup>; – description of evil clerics, *Lant*, 38; – description of hypocrites and pseudo-penitents, *Form*, 110; – compared to lords who steal from their people, *ParsT*, l.774; – compared to prelates who oppress and extract payments from poor curates, Wyclif, 103; – compared to bailiffs who take the worldly goods of simple men, MS Harl. 2276, ff.115<sup>v</sup>-116<sup>f</sup>.

*Natural History*

Covetous – emblematic of Deadly Sin of avarice, *Scale*, 277;

wrathful – compared to angry man, *JW*, 90; – anger transforms anchoresses into she-wolves, their prayers into howling, *AR*, 120;

lies in wait to avenge grievances – emblematic of Deadly Sin of wrath, MS Douce 60, f.200<sup>v</sup>, MS Harl. 1197, f.16<sup>v</sup>, MS Linc. Cath. 50, f.206<sup>v</sup>;

its gut, if mixed with sheep gut to string a harp, causes the harp to lose its tune – similarly, a group of malicious and good men may not maintain harmony, MS Harl. 1197, f.16<sup>r-v</sup>, *JW*, 90;

is always causing trouble – compared to an envious man, MS Harl. 2330, f.18<sup>r-v</sup>;

strong in body – similarly, a heretic is strong in persevering in his falsehood, MS Harl. 2276, f.113<sup>v</sup>;

enemy to sheep or lamb – compared to prelates who have no pity on their spiritual subjects, *VV*, 34; – compared to hypocrites, *DM*, 147; – compared to evil prelates, MS St JCC 193, f.13<sup>r</sup>; – as a lamb gets no pity from a wolf, so a man gets no pity from an ignoble knight, MS Bod. 283, f.28<sup>r</sup>;

crafty in capturing prey – compared to the devil, *Talkyng*, 36; – similarly, a heretic awaits his chance to trap a faithful man, MS Harl. 2276, f.113<sup>v</sup>;

hunts by night to avoid the shepherd and his dog – as a heretic teaches openly only when men do not criticize his teaching, MS Harl. 2276, f.113<sup>v</sup>;

seeks to take sheep by the throat – as the devil seeks the throat of a glutton, MS Bod. 283, f.73<sup>f</sup>, *JW*, 141, *VV*, 47, *DM*, 228; – compared to heretics who cut off virtuous teaching and then mortally wound faithful men with false doctrine, MS Harl. 2276, ff.113<sup>v</sup>-114<sup>r</sup>;

leaps in haste and therefore is often tricked – similarly, a heretic is often too hasty in his teaching and is therefore stopped in time, MS Harl. 2276, f.113<sup>v</sup>;  
nourishes cast-off children – illustrates point that man should at least show mercy to his own kind, *VV*, 191, *Azen*, 185-86, MS Bod. 283, f.145<sup>v</sup>.

#### *Anecdotes*

When St Edmund was beheaded, his head was lost. Searchers found it protected by a wolf who followed it to the sepulchre, *Spec Sac*, 240.

A she-wolf, accustomed to being fed by a hermit, finds he is not at home and steals a loaf. She repents and is forgiven, *AN*, 232-33.

An angry she-wolf avenges herself on a scholar who had cut off her whelps' feet, *AN*, 307-308.

A wolf steals a damsel from a town to bring her to the aid of an ailing wolf, whom she helps, and then delivers her safely home again, *AN*, 307.

A wolf accuses a lamb of stirring up mud in the pool from which they are drinking and proposes to revenge himself on the lamb for trespasses of the lamb's father – those in power often complain against the poor, *AN*, 421.

The lion calls an assembly of animals to celebrate a burial mass for the wolf; afterwards they feast on his goods – it happens similarly when a rich man dies; an abbot calls an assembly of beastly men in which the lion signifies pride, the fox fraud, the bear greed, the goat lechery, the ass sloth, the porcupine sharpness, and the hare fear, *GR*, 372-73.

(See also FOX, SWINE, HARE.)

#### WORM

##### *Scripture*

But I am a worm, and no man (Ps. xxi.7) – understood as the words of Christ who calls himself a worm because, like the worm, he is born without generation, *Psalter*, xxi.5.

And the worm of them shall never die (Isa. lxvi.24, Mark 1x.45) – understood as the worm of conscience which gnaws in hell, *DM*, 270, MS Greaves 54, f.125<sup>r</sup>, MS Addit. 37677, f.60<sup>v</sup>.

##### *Natural History*

Gnaws and wastes goods – interpretation of Ps. liv.24, compared to worldly business, *Psalter*, liv.25;

gnaws in the stomach – similarly, wicked thoughts gnaw in the heart of man, *Goad*, 111;

vile, worth nothing, comes from the earth naked – just as man comes into the world, *VV*, 238-39; naked as a worm – compared to Christ as he was led to Calvary, *Rolle*, 21;

born from a dish of venom: see TOAD.

## NOTES

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- 1 Nancy Alden Fischer, "Animal Illustrations in English Religious Prose of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries" (Ph.D., University of Leeds, 1967).
- 2 MS Bod. 283, the first of two folios numbered 74.
- 3 MS Bod. 283, the second of two folios numbered 74.

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## INDEX

- Adder. See SERPENT.  
 ANT.  
 APE.  
 Asp. See SERPENT.  
 ASS. (See also MULE.)
- BARNACLE GOOSE.  
 BASILISK (Cockatrice).  
 BAT.  
 BEAR.  
 BEASTS.  
 BEE.  
 BIRDS.  
 Blood Hound. See LEASH HOUND.  
 BOAR.  
 Bull. See OX.  
 BUTTERFLY. (See also MOTH.)  
 BUZZARD.
- CAMEL.  
 CAT.  
 CENOPEDES.  
 CHAMELEON.  
 CHIMERA.  
 COCK. (See also HEN.)  
 Cockatrice. See BASILISK.  
 CORMORANT.  
 Cow. See OX.  
 CRAB.  
 CRANE.  
 CRICKET.  
 CROW.  
 CUCKOO.
- Deer. See HART.  
 DOG (Hound). (See also GREY-  
 HOUND, HUNTING DOG,  
 LEASH HOUND, SHEEPDOG,  
 SPANIEL, WATCHDOG.)
- DOLPHIN.  
 DOVE. (See also TURTLEDOVE.)  
 DRAGON.  
 DROMEDARY.  
 DUCK.
- EAGLE.  
 ELEPHANT.
- FALCON.  
 FISH.  
 FLEA.  
 FLY.  
 FOX.  
 Frog. See TOAD.
- GNAT.  
 GOAT.  
 GOOSE.  
 GREYHOUND. (See also DOG.)  
 GRIPHON.
- HALCYON.  
 HARE.  
 HARPY.  
 HART (Deer, Stag).  
 HAWK (Sparrowhawk).  
 Hedgehog. See PORCUPINE.  
 HEN. (See also COCK.)  
 Hog. See SWINE.  
 Hoopoe. See LAPWING.  
 HORSE.  
 Hound. See DOG, GREYHOUND,  
 HUNTING DOG, LEASH  
 HOUND.  
 HUNTING DOG.  
 HYDRA.  
 HYENA.

Jay. See POPINJAY.

KITE.

LAPWING (Hoopoe or Plover).

LARK.

LEASH HOUND (Blood Hound  
or Limer).

LEECH.

LEOPARD.

Limer. See LEASH HOUND.

LION.

LOCUST.

LOUSE.

LYNX.

MAGPIE.

MERMAID (Nicor).

MOLE.

MOTH.

MOUSE.

MULE.

Nicor. See MERMAID.

Nightcrow. See OWL.

NIGHTINGALE.

OSTRICH.

OTTER.

OWL. (See also SHRIEK OWL.)

OX (Bull and Cow).

Parrot. See POPINJAY.

PARTRIDGE.

PEACOCK.

PELICAN.

PHOENIX.

Plover. See LAPWING.

POPINJAY (Jay and Parrot).

PORCUPINE (Hedgehog or Urchin).

RAT.

RAVEN.

SALAMANDER.

SCORPION.

SERPENT (Adder, Asp). (See  
also VIPER.)

SHEEP.

SHEEPDOG. (See also WATCH-  
DOG.)

SHREW.

SHRIEK OWL. (See also OWL.)

SNAIL.

SPANIEL.

SPARROW.

Sparrowhawk. See HAWK.

SPIDER.

Stag. See HART.

STORK.

SWALLOW.

SWAN.

SWINE (Hog).

TIGER.

TOAD (Frog).

TURTLEDOVE. (See also DOVE.)

UNICORN.

Urchin. See PORCUPINE.

VIPER. (See also SERPENT.)

WATCHDOG. (See also SHEEP-  
DOG.)

WEASEL.

WHALE.

WOLF.

WORM.