



# Samuel Fallours: Tropical Fishes of the East Indies

By Theodore W. Pietsch

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## Swimming with the big fishes: A zenith in zoological illustration

One of the **first depictions of marine fauna** comes from **Samuel Fallours**, who was in the service of the **Dutch East India Company**. On the island of Ambon, one of the Moluccas, he made drawings of fish and other marine organisms of the Indian Ocean and brought them back to Holland in 1712. His drawings belong to a number of sets of similar drawings, depicting hundreds of animals, mostly fish but also crustaceans, insects, a dugong, and even a mermaid. Some of these became the basis for 18th-century publications, among them Louis Renard's *Poissons, Ecrevisses et Crabes* (1719) and François Valentijn's *Verhandeling der Ongemeene Visschen van Amboina*, a chapter in his *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien* (1724–1726).

These beautiful, elaborately detailed and brilliantly colored drawings bear extraordinary witness to the marine fish fauna of the East Indies and can still be interpreted in light of present-day scientific knowledge. From an artistic and historical viewpoint, **these drawings are among the finest natural history illustrations ever made.**

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

**Samuel Fallours** apparently born in Rotterdam, began his career as a common soldier in the service of the Dutch East India Company. On 27 April 1703, he sailed from Goeree, the Netherlands, to Batavia where he stayed until at least the close of 1705. By June 1706, he was serving as a soldier in Ambon, assigned to the main guard-house of Castle Victoria. From September 1706 to June 1712, he held the title of Associate Curate (krankbezoeker), a kind of assistant to the clergy, entrusted with consoling the sick of Ambon. He left the Indies for the Netherlands in November 1712. During his sojourn in Ambon, (1706-1712) Fallours executed the illustrations.

**Theodore W. Pietsch** is Dorothy T. Gilbert Professor in the College of Ocean and Fishery Sciences, and Curator of Fishes at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, University of Washington in Seattle. While his primary interest is marine ichthyology, he has published extensively on the history of ichthyology and its seminal figures, including Louis Renard, Samuel Fallours, Charles Plumier, and Georges Cuvier.

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