



**The animal, subject matter
of medieval knowledge :
encyclopedias, arts of hunting, bestiaries**

Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour,
September 30th - October 3rd 2026

Call for papers

The International Reynard Society is pleased to announce that its XXVIth Colloquium will take place in France, in the city of Pau located at the foothills of the Pyrenees. It will be organized at the Université de Pau et des Pays de l'Adour and its main focus will be the animal as subject matter of medieval knowledge.

In the Middle Ages, scholarly texts and their accompanying depictions broach the subject of animal knowledge from different angles: practical and useful in the arts of hunting and of falconry, analytic and sorting in the encyclopedias, symbolic and spiritual in the bestiaries. Far from being a source of contradiction, such varied approaches complete and influence one another. They offer a fascinating and often surprising vision of the animal world in the Middle Ages. Gaining access to this common culture gives us a rich perspective on animal appearances in narrative and poetic literature, or allows us to elucidate some literary riddles. To foster the dialogue on the animal as subject matter of medieval knowledge, the organizers suggests the following areas of inquiry:

– Arts of hunting and of falconry

Since our colloquium will take place in Béarn, home of the count, author and poet Gaston Phébus, famous for his treatise on hunting (*Livre de chasse*), we would like to focus on this literary genre, its development, language and illustrations. What can it teach us on the relationship between humans and animals in the Middle Ages? The hunting motif as it appears in other literary genres can also be explored, in romances, dream sequences or when it appears as a metaphor.

– Animal depictions in encyclopedias

Whether they are the main subject of a treatise or part of a more massive endeavour, animals often figure prominently in medieval encyclopedias. Which beasts, birds and fishes appear in these books? How does the list of animals evolve through time? Where is this knowledge located in the general construction of medieval knowledge and how is this “zoological” knowledge transmitted from one language to another? Why did medieval scholars develop such a special interest in animals and what can we learn today from their texts and depictions?

– Relationship between animals and other elements of the natural world

Medieval texts and images are filled with examples of interactions between *herbs* and *beasts*, or with other elements of the natural world such as stones. Some stones are hidden in a fish's head, a tree's resin becomes a precious stone, slugs are born from the heat emanating from grass: all these examples reveal that interactions between plants, animals and minerals give authors, scholars and artists an infinite variety of subjects of study, to admire or to conceptualize the world and its rules. A close examination of these discourses enables us to question our own perspective on the natural world and the relationship human beings entertain with it.

As usual, any communication on the traditional subjects of the Society, such as animal tales, fables, fabliaux, *etc.* are also welcome. The organization also allows the possibility of a thematic session or a round table discussion where several researchers could collectively discuss a corpus or a methodological question.

It remains a tradition of the Reynard Society to foster a welcoming environment for young or neophyte researchers. Doctoral candidates and researchers who are still in the early stages of their career are absolutely welcome and should not hesitate to participate.

Communications can be presented in any European language, French and English being the preferred choices. The time allotted for each communication is twenty minutes, followed by a discussion with the public.

A proposal, with a title and an abstract between five and ten lines in length, must be sent to the following mail address, renard26@univ-pau.fr, before December 31st 2025.

We will send a second circular in the spring with a provisional program.

We hope we will be able to see you again or have the pleasure to make your acquaintance in Pau and send all of you our warmest reynardian salutations.

The organizers

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