

Revealed: The fish that nearly sank Isaac Newton

April 19 2012



A seventeenth century engraving of a flying fish from John Ray and Francis Willughby's 1686 book *Historia Piscium*. The 300-year-old drawing of a flying fish that nearly scuttled Isaac Newton's world-changing opus on modern physics will be showcased in the Royal Society's online picture library.

A 300-year-old drawing of a flying fish that nearly scuttled Isaac Newton's world-changing opus on modern physics will be showcased in the Royal Society's online picture library, launched Thursday.

The engraving was first published in 1686 in a lavishly-illustrated book "A History of Fishes," by John Ray and Francis Willughby, the

prestigious British academy of sciences said.

The work was ground-breaking but printing it nearly bankrupted the institution.

"This meant that the society was unable to meet its promise to support the publication of Isaac Newton's masterpiece," the Royal Society said.

Newton's work, *Philosophiæ Naturalis Principia Mathematica* ("Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy") sets down the principles of the laws of motion and gravity.

Fortunately, fellow scientist Edmund Halley, then a clerk at the Royal Society, saw the promise in Newton's work and raised the funds for it to be published in 1687.

The online library will sport more than 1,000 images from the archives of the world's oldest [scientific institution](#).

(c) 2012 AFP

Citation: Revealed: The fish that nearly sank Isaac Newton (2012, April 19) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-revealed-fish-sank-isaac-newton.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--