Louis Jean Marie Daubenton Encyclopedia Article

Louis Jean Marie Daubenton

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Contents

Louis Jean Marie Daubenton Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Louis Jean Marie Daubenton.....3

Louis Jean Marie Daubenton

1716-1800

French comparative anatomist and physician who in 1742 was chosen by Georges-Louis Leclerc, comte de Buffon to help prepare anatomical descriptions of mammals for the latter's *Histoire naturelle* (published 1749-89). In 1744 Daubenton became Buffon's assistant in the Department of Natural History at the Jardin des Plantes (after 1793, the Museum of Natural History) in Paris. In 1753 Buffon and Daubenton set forth their Principle of the Unity of Composition, placing the skeletal structure of vertebrates within a comparative framework. A distinguished physiologist and descriptive paleontologist, Daubenton was named to the French Academy of Sciences in 1760, and in 1775 was appointed Lecturer in Natural History at the College of Medicine. In 1778 he became professor of zoology at the Collège de France. He introduced merino sheep into French agriculture. He was selected as the first director of the Museum of Natural History in 1793, and was named a member of the French Senate in December 1799, a month before his death.