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out a pilot study on the insects of Canada and that the first part, "Collections of Canadian Insects and Certain Related Groups" (supplement to the Bulletin of the Entomological Society of Canada, Vol. 10 (No. 1), March 1978) had been completed.

It will be noted that this project was not an end in itself but a small part of the Biological Survey which will also include reviews of the state of the current knowledge on insects and resources for insect identification as well as what will eventually amount to an enormous body of data resulting from field work throughout the country. Also, it is interesting to contrast the British with the North American approach. Here, the BCG is a small enthusiastic body comprised mainly of individual curators keen to communicate. In the United States, the ASC (Association of Systematic Collections) is based on institutional memberships and has money granted by the U.S. government to assist in all their functions which are essentially the same as those of B. C. G. In an exact parallel, the NWCRU, and others now starting elsewhere in this country, are quite voluntary and self-motivated activities, whereas the Canadian Biological Survey of Insect Collections has been financed directly from their central government. Clearly, we have a different concept of approach and I would suggest an inferior one when it comes to raising finance for these small but important (to the scientific community) projects. However, it is not difficult to imagine the response if BCG had gone to the Department of Education and Science in 1974 and asked for financial support in order to found and run our activities!

The survey of Canadian insect collections is a comprehensive compilation of public and large private collections listed by institution. A subject index in the form of tables shows a breakdown by numbers of each collection where returns to their questionnaires provided this amount of detail. In this respect it is similarly arranged to the BCG "Survey of Zoological and Botanical Collections in the British Isles" (being published soon). It does not list individual collectors or collections and so cannot be used in the same way as the Collection Research Units' productions.

E. G. Hancock
Bolton Museum and Art Gallery

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THE ALCAN BLAKEMOOR FARM TRAIL

Blakemoor Farm is a small mixed lowland farm on the coastal plain of Northumberland, some fifteen miles north of Newcastle and half a mile north of Cresswell. The farm buildings are situated on slightly rising ground some four hundred yards behind the line of sweeping

sand-dunes that separate the farmland from Druridge Bay and the North Sea. Much of the land in this area is owned by the National Coal Board, but some is now leased to Alcan, the large multinational aluminium company which some years ago built a large smelter some two miles down the coast at Lynemouth. The siting of the smelter was determined by the ready supply of coal from the modern Lynemouth Colliery. The 4,500 acres leased to the company is now managed as the Alcan Farm Estates.

The trail and the recently opened centre are of interest from two points of view. Many trails and centres do not explain about farming, but concentrate on the wildlife of an area, perhaps ignoring just how much of our countryside is man made and man-managed. It is also evidence of the work of the Wildlife Advisory Group - whose aim is to bring together land owners and land users as a way of sorting out problems resulting from the differing needs of farmers and wildlife conservation. The local group of this national organisation are known as the Northumberland Countryside Liaison Group.

Discussion between Alcan and the Northumberland Countryside Liaison Group led to the formation of an Alcan Farms Working Group - chaired by Alcan and having representatives from the National Park Authority, the Northumberland Wildlife Trust, the R.S.P.B., the County Council and the Ministry of Agriculture. Discussions at these meetings centre on ways in which the farms can best be managed with regard both to the needs of agriculture and to the needs of wildlife. The Blakemoor Farm Trail emerged from these discussions providing a way of explaining the activities of the farmer and the subsequent effects on wildlife and also providing public access to the farm and fields that otherwise would not be possible. While the formulation of such management plans for the farm inevitably take time (proposals being based on biological surveys of the area and are hence still in their infancy), the provision of a trail for the public was quickly achieved, satisfying one of the management proposals and also providing useful prestige for the firm of Alcan, whose name appears on the signs and Trail leaflets.

A plan of the Trail accompanies this article and from it are easily seen the main features which are dealt with in the fourteen page leaflet under the following headings; The Farm, Silage, Sheep, Barley, Cows, Grass, Shelter Belts, the Lanes and the Pool. The leaflet is very informative, does not get bogged down with technicalities and firmly emphasises the farming activities, explaining where necessary the theory and the practice involved in, for instance, cattle breeding or cereal growing and how these are inter-related on the farm. The consequences for wildlife tend to follow such information but are explained in simple unemotional terms, e.g. 'modern weed killers really work don't they - there's hardly another plant in the field except wheat or barley'. The Trail leaflet is not of the stop-look-read instructional type but more the story of the farm and can be dipped into, when you want to know what sort of sheep they are, or what the odd

vegetable is that looks like a turnip but isn't.

The pool by the way, is a typical local feature though not all farms have them and is caused by subsidence due to the extensive mining of coal seams. Though it is a godsend for birds and birdwatchers, it is a real problem for the farmer, having submerged one lane (an important access route) and extending gradually northwards to consume more land.

For anyone interested in the country and not of farming stock the leaflet helps to fill the large gaps of knowledge that often exist even among those who can readily identify every bird seen or give the latin name for each plant, no matter how small.

Following the success of the Trail, Alcan approached the Countryside Commission for a grant towards refurbishing some of the old stables and piggery at Blakemoor Farm to develop an Interpretative Centre. In all, some £30,000 was probably spent on the project. The Centre was opened in September this year (1979). Essentially it complements the information available in the leaflet and of course, provides extra facilities such as toilets, car-parks and a lecture area for parties. The appearance of the buildings have been altered as little as possible. The roofs have been re-tiled and some skylights put in, the doors and frames are all new, but the rest is much as it was, the stable floor being left complete with the gulleys for cleaning out, the old hay-racks are still in position and the old pot containers at the head of each stall have been retained and in some cases contain exhibits. The old pig-sty, which now serves almost as a roundabout in the car-park, has obviously been renovated and must be one of the plushiest in the country containing two young healthy snorters and a dove-cote in the roof space.

The reception area leads to the right into a short arm of the building, mainly housing the toilets and cloakroom area, whilst straight ahead is the long room with the interpretative displays. The displays themselves are simple, consisting of a series of bays with mainly graphical information but some specimens to excite interest, for example a selection of dried grasses, a barn own on the beam, some of the birds associated with the pool and hedgerows and a few old agricultural instruments, though no attempt is made to show the history of farming. These objects along with the pigsty merely reflect the changes that have taken place. One nice feature is the presence of packets of food-stuffs, (including Scots Porage Oats & Weetabix cartons) which serve to drive home the point of agriculture - that of providing food for us the visitors.

The displays were professionally done by a firm in Newcastle and scripted by Tony Tynan, Curator of the Hancock Museum. The tailpiece of the exhibition is an elaborate flow chart made of cogs and pathways showing all the inter-relations between plant, man and beast

on the farm - Heath Robinson would have been proud of it!

All in all, I was impressed by the Trail and the Centre, perhaps because it isn't full of platitudes and philosophy. I have no doubts there are and always will be conflict between the need of farmers and those of wildlife conservation, but if this scheme is the result of a liaison between such groups, then it is obviously a good path to follow.

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