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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Title: Have You Any Genuine Wooden Duck Decoys?

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with the date and locality, revealed that they were the only eggs ever collected of *Hypsipetes affinis* a species only found on some of the Moluccas. I expect most collections have their curios, our prize examples in this category include an ostrich egg which once belonged to Lawrence of Arabia; and a nineteenth century Mute Swan's egg which has had spots painted on it so that it could be sold (as it indeed was) as the egg of a Great Auk! We have actually six eggs of the latter, and a tatty looking lot they are too. The series of plaster casts and models which we also have, look much nicer. Someday, if the fates are kind to me, I shall rewrite and update Oate's catalogue!

Michael Walters,  
Tring.

#### HAVE YOU ANY GENUINE WOODEN DUCK DECOYS?

Wildfowlers have always had to use subterfuge in pursuing a living, a way of life now virtually disappeared. Using decoys carved in wood is one classic way to attract the bird within range. The use of decoys has been traced to prehistoric times and is practised today by primitive tribes. Nowadays, of course, the sportsman uses lightweight, sometimes inflatable, plastic or rubber ducks, being unwilling to carry the relatively heavy and bulky wooden types across miles of saltmarsh. These latter have now virtually disappeared and are seldom seen in this country (though there is a thriving hobby in North America of collecting genuine wooden bird decoys of various species).

I recently staged a display by a local sculptor and artist, Stephen Radnedge of Fennisowles, Darwen, of modern examples supported by information on other methods, pipe decoys (now used for ringing and migration studies by ornithologists), the use of calls, etc. We did not have any examples of genuine decoy ducks, the only one so listed in the inventory turned out to be a Sikkim Gold Ore Smelter's Steam Generator, an unlikely identification which I made following a visit to the Horniman Museum where they have one just like it. Stephen Radnedge is now thinking of writing an illustrated booklet on the subject of wooden duck decoys and therefore any member aware of the existence of such artefacts, please contact the Editor.

E. G. Hancock.