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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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There appears to be some confusion over the possible consequences of the proposed Wildlife Legislation. Firstly, it is necessary to point out that the proposals for such legislation have not yet been fully drafted by the Department of the Environment. Therefore, nothing said to date need form part of any resulting Act of Parliament.

The legislation, with regard to birds, will apply only to Schedule I species and will not replace or cancel the current Protection of Birds' Acts. It appears to fall into two distinct categories in the bird section, that is eggs and birds. This also appears to cause two distinct problems for museums, one being the "registration" of birds' eggs and the other the position of taxidermists and their dealings with mounted specimens. By this is meant not only the position of museums when they wish to buy specimens or objects incorporating parts of the protected species, etc., but also museum-based taxidermy operations.

The B.C.G. is involved at the committee level in discussion on these topics, with the D. of E., the Museums Association and the Guild of Taxidermists. This is notwithstanding the rather odd fact that the initial list of bodies circulated by the D. of E. did not include either B.C.G. or the M.A., nor the fact the initial reaction of the M.A. to this proposed legislation was uninformed and disappointing. Members who have any questions or comment on the subject are urged to write to the Secretary of B.C.G., address given at the end of the Newsletter.

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#### DRAGONFLY FICTION IN BOLTON

It seems to be a peculiar impression which local people have that dragonflies are valuable. In this area of (formerly) south-east Lancashire, several children each summer come into the museum to ask who will give them money for unidentified parts of the dragonflies which they catch in a variety of containers. There is now no one that I can trace that has ever given money for these insects so where does the "legend" come from? It seems to extend from Bolton to include the areas around Leigh and Swinton and originated in at least their grandparents' generation. The basic idea appears to be that pharmacists took these in (rather like various shops do with rosehips) and extracted a form of chemical useful to mankind and his medicine, according to some from the brown wings of *Aeschna grandis* (L). This is not so, as reference to any pharmacopeia or chemist will not produce any information on dragonflies. One local pharmacist actually suggested they may have been used for bloodletting years ago but, contrary to folk names such as Horse Stinger and Devil's Darning Needle, they are incapable of inflicting such wounds.

The only reasonable suggestion to explain this situation is that there was once a local chemist who collected insects and was prepared to pay a penny or shilling to the person who brought him a rarity not represented in his collection. Or perhaps other regions of the country can provide an answer?

E. G. Hancock.