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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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## The B.C.G. Conference - The Leicester Students' Impressions

As Museum Studies students we welcomed the opportunity to attend the recent B.C.G. conference in Leicester. Our overall impression was that it was an enjoyable and worthwhile weekend. Of particular interest was the discussion of current issues such as that on the proposed bird protection laws, led by Peter Morgan. It is advantageous to be kept in touch with such developments. The talks by Ian Tittley on the collection and preservation of marine algae and by Geoff Swinney on the collecting of fish were valuable introductions to their subjects. Hugh McAllister gave an enthusiastic presentation of current research in cytotaxonomy. Although not of direct relevance to most curators, it illustrated the fact that 'classical' taxonomy should not be considered in isolation but should make use of related fields of research. Tony Fletcher's demonstration on the use of thin-layer chromatography in distinguishing morphologically similar lichens also served to illustrate this point. The other practical demonstrations on the Saturday afternoon presented an opportunity to familiarise ourselves with the various techniques. It is much easier to learn such methods at first-hand than from the literature.

The opportunity for informal discussion is an added benefit to such a meeting. We were surprised that only about one-fifth of the membership was present. Is this a reflection of the members' employers or of the members themselves?

### An alternative contribution, or, the other half of a conference pair.

It was nice to see the faces of the names we've often seen and the voices to go with them, discussing current themes such as bird protection laws, proposed but not enacted. It would be nice to have in writing when more has been decided.

Repinning of the insects was especially useful to us, to solve some of the problems we will surely come across. As to the genitalia preps, well, what can we say? but who can name the moth flavouring soup-of-the-day?

Identification of lichens involved thin-layer chromatography. We didn't know South America was included in Leicestershire's geography. Collecting fish is something few of us may have to do. Its nice to know that Polos, Parachutes and Power Stations have other uses to.

Current research was described in the field of cytotaxonomy. When *Sorbus* strains the brain, resort to frontal lobotomy. The preservation of marine algae was made clear and easy to follow. Fortnum & Mason's have our custom, when mounting slides with Karo!

Several museum functions were touched on in turn. Collection, identification and research was our concern and all were well presented, with use of demonstration. Discussion of current topics was particularly welcome.

All in all a good weekend and we hope you thought so too. Please unfreeze your frozen jobs - we'll come and work for you! If this is double-dutch to you its because you didn't come. We hope you had a good excuse and you're not just a lazy individual.