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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Book Review: Freshwater Invertebrates of the Sheffield District (Sorby Record Special Series No. 4) Edited by Krys A. Lasada and Eluned H. Smith

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Source: Gray, J. (1981). Book Review: Freshwater Invertebrates of the Sheffield District (Sorby Record Special Series No. 4) Edited by Krys A. Lasada and Eluned H. Smith. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter*, Vol 3 No 1, 53.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1868>

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Freshwater Invertebrates of the Sheffield District (Sorby Record Special Series No. 4). Edited by Krys A. Lasada and Eluned H. Smith

150mm x 210mm, 58pp, 113 maps and 37 black and white illustrations. Sheffield, England (Sorby Natural History Society and Sheffield City Museums) 1981. Soft back, staple bound: £1.00.

This publication is the outcome of an invertebrate faunal survey of the water bodies in the Sheffield Metropolitan District. It was made possible by funding from the Manpower Services Commission under their Special Temporary Employment Scheme.

The survey is qualitative and the editors have recognised its limitations in that the sites were largely only able to be visited once during the survey period and that as the collection method was largely by hand net that some deep water species were not encountered. In total 434 sites were visited during 1979/80. Twenty invertebrate groups are represented in the material and all have been identified to species level where possible. Critical species have been forwarded to experts for identification and confirmation. Three chapters have been entirely written by specialists who had material forwarded to them. Each chapter has a short introduction to the anatomical features of the group followed by an outline of their biology and natural history.

The distribution of each species in the Sheffield area is discussed in relation to the known national distribution and a distribution map has been prepared for the commoner species. All known records prior to the survey period are included in both the text entry and the distribution map. Inevitably some groups are grossly under represented, for example the Tricladida, where correct identification requires living material and the Diptera where the taxonomic literature on the immature stages is inadequate or not available in a provincial museum library. Perhaps the most surprising omission from the survey is a complete absence of records of the Cladocera (Crustacea) which are relatively easily identified. It is possible that the mesh size of the collecting net was too large to retain some species although I suspect that the larger species would have been encountered.

In general the booklet is well presented with a clear type face and remarkably free from error. The illustrations are derived from previously published sources and are presumably intended as decorations rather than an aid to identification. At a selling price of one pound the booklet is certainly not over priced, it will appeal to teachers and stimulate naturalists to look closer into the freshwater habitats in the Sheffield area.

Generally this attractive little series of publications demonstrates the forward looking policy of both Sheffield City Museum and the Sorby Natural History Society who are to be congratulated on the standard of presentation and the honest assessment of the limitations imposed by the collecting methods and frequency.

John Gray,
August 1981.