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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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moths) and the subfamily Galleriinae (wax moths) and finally the alien China Mark moths now established in numerous water-garden centres throughout Britain.

If you think the price is high, it is a very well-produced book, and secondhand copies of Beirne currently sell for over £30!

S.P. Garland
Bolton Museum

THE DRAGONFLIES OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND by C.O. HAMMOND,
revised by R. MERRIT.

2nd edition, 2nd impression, 1985. Published
by Harley Books. Price £9.75 (paperback).

I expect that in fifteen years time someone will write an article for THE BIOLOGY CURATOR (as BCG newsletter will be known by then), reviewing the century's significant or most influential natural history books. Cyril Hammond's book surely will be among them. The impetus given to the Odonata Recording Scheme and the formation of a British Dragonfly Society are two major expressions of this book's influence. More remarkable than these, however, is the astonishing distraction which has afflicted such a large and single-minded body as British bird-watchers. Seldom has such a large shift in taxonomic attention been wrought by a single book. Long may it continue!

Yet this increased popularity might prohibit improvements in this book. I confess to feeling more at home with a dichotomous key than a field guide, and I suspect many entomologists would appreciate a key to species, not just genera. Space on the text pages could be used for hints on separating species in the field, rather than leaving the novice to decide from text characters and plates how to tell one from another. I still fail to see why Sympetrum nigrescens should enjoy side views which are denied to the other species in this genus.

I also regret the absence of synonyms from the check-list. A statement to the effect that first edition Agrion are now Calopteryx and S. scoticum is now S. danae would be welcome. Of course these synonymies are of no consequence to those who use English names, but I resent the need to employ contrived, 'vernacular' labels in order to understand nomenclatural changes.

The second edition added text and figures for Coenagrion lunulatum as well as updating the maps for all species. Several corrections and additions to text and captions were made. The second impression of this edition includes a short account of further important records up to 1985.

Those of you who have access to the 1977, 1983 and 1985 printings might care to compare the colour plates. Anax imperator and Aeshna isosceles demonstrate colour variation beyond that found in life. Clearly experience must temper our interpretation of these paintings.

In 1986 we are promised three further books covering the British dragonflies. I doubt that any of them will replace this classic which, thanks to its less expensive paperback format, will remain first choice for anyone working on this group. Because it is a classic, there may be a temptation not to alter the text. Hopefully a third edition will acknowledge the present faults and make an effort to correct them.

A.G. Irwin
Norfolk Museums Service

WHERE THE CRANE DANCED
by C.H. KEELING

Available from Clam Publications, 13 Pound
Place, Shalford, Guildford, Surrey GU4 8HH.
Price £5.85 post paid. Optional extra - a set
of 14 photographs, price £1.70.

This booklet is a follow-up to Mr. Keeling's WHERE THE LION TROD and continues the theme, which is basically a foray into the history of British zoological collections and menageries. Establishments from as wide an area as Aberdeen to Exmouth are discussed as well as estate menageries and travelling menageries. Museum curators may find that a high percentage of their foreign vertebrate material actually originated from fallen stock at these early zoological collections.

Mr. Keeling obviously has a passionate interest in the subject and has very strong views, which surface regularly. These are that a zoological collection is a special and powerful educational tool and that many early owners and keepers learned much valuable information about their charges, much of which is now lost or disregarded.

This is a very enjoyable read, and is absolutely bursting with facts. The only thing lacking is an index to help find references to places in the text.

I look forward to his third publication which will deal with Ashover Zoological Garden in Derbyshire, which Mr. and Mrs. Keeling founded in 1955; now sadly closed.

S.P. Garland
Bolton Museum