



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: In the Press

Author(s): Not Listed.

Source: Not Listed. (1986). In the Press. *Biology Curators Group Newsletter, Vol 4 No 5*, 111 - 112.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/1219>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

In the Press

The current issue of *STUDIES IN CONSERVATION* (vol.31 no.3, August 1986) has an interesting article on ultrasonic cleaning methods for feathers in ethnographic collections (authors Gerry Barton and Sabine Weik). Aqueous solutions were tested, the main variables being immersion time and detergent formulation; structural feather damage was assessed using scanning electron microscopy, and colour change by using a spectrophotometer.

The results showed that feathers can be cleaned very successfully by this method: of six detergents tested only one failed to remove dirt; optimal cleaning time was two minutes; there was no effect on pigment colour and only a very slight darkening of structural blues (due to slight changes in barbule surface structure caused by the ultrasonic vibration). The best cleaning agent was a mixture of anionic and non-ionic detergents (the formulation is given in the paper).

There may be applications here for the biological conservator. I don't know of any old bird material that has been cleaned ultrasonically - perhaps someone should give it a try and let us know the results.

Most of us are from time to time called on to produce displays, publications, signs and other bits and pieces which in some way or other interpret the environment. The scale and intensity may vary from new galleries to nature trail signposts; success (assuming it can be measured) can prove elusive. There now exists in Manchester a Centre for Environmental Interpretation (it is part of the Poly) with the aim of improving generally the standards of environmental interpretation. The Centre offers courses, hosts seminars, gives advice and produces a very useful bulletin called *ENVIRONMENTAL INTERPRETATION*. The latest issue I have seen (December 1985) is called 'Focus on Interpretive Publications' and is well worth a read. It is available from the Centre for Environmental Interpretation, Manchester Polytechnic, John Dalton Building, Chester Street, Manchester M1 5GD.

A special issue of *THE BULLETIN D'LIASON DES MUSÉES D'HISTOIRE NATURELLE* published by the Inspection Générale des Musées d'Histoire Naturelle de Province, 57 rue Cuvier - 75005, Paris, is devoted to a wide-ranging bibliography of taxidermy. (Numéro spécial 1er trimestre 1986, ISSN 0755 2440).

A new collections-based society has been formed in North America. Following the 1981 Workshop on the Care and Maintenance of Natural History Collections held in Ottawa (Proceedings of 1981 Workshop on Care and Maintenance of Natural History Collections, *SYLLOGEUS* No 44 National Museums of Canada, 1983), and a second workshop held in Toronto in 1985, it was decided to set up a new *SOCIETY FOR THE PRESERVATION OF NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTIONS*. The Society came into being in 1985 and now publishes a twice yearly newsletter *COLLECTION FORUM*.

COLLECTION FORUM aims to encourage studies and publish results about the basic requirements for collecting, fixing, preserving, storing, and displaying natural history collections. Emphasis will be on the development and application of technologies concerning the proper management of natural history collections. They include studies in computer technology, biochemistry, conservation, physical chemistry and other associated fields.

Membership details are available from Shirley Albright, New Jersey State Museum, 205 W. State Street, CN-530, Trenton, NJ 08625, USA. The Editor is Dan Faber, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa ON K1A 0M8, Canada.

The June issue of *CURATOR* (Vol 29 No 2) reports an interesting study carried out by Stephen Williams and Catherine Hawks of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History on the most suitable inks to use for label-writing in dry-preserved vertebrate collections. Twenty-four black inks available on the American market were tested and graded for the following properties: pH; corrosiveness and opacity; total solids; drying time; colour value; resistance to light; resistance to fluids; cost. Not all of the inks are available in the UK, but top of the list was Rotring 17 Black (which is the standard refill/cartridge drawing ink for Rotring pens, ref 591017 for 23ml bottle). I would think this is the most commonly used ink anyway. Pelican 17 Black and Pelikan 50 Special Black were both rated as acceptable. Other familiar inks which were down-graded on various counts were: Koh-I-Noor Universal; Parker Super Quink; Pelikan inks Super Black India, Black and Brilliant Black; Staedtler-Mars; Windsor and Newton. I recommend that anyone who has worries about the ink they use for permanent collection records consults this article; perhaps someone will carry out a similar study on all the inks available here.

The NATURAL HISTORY GROUP OF THE ICOM COMMITTEE FOR CONSERVATION produced its first NEWSLETTER in April of this year; it has no title yet. The Group membership is worldwide but the newsletter co-ordinators are Frank Howie (BMNH) and Velson Horie (Manchester Museum, from whom it is available). There is a Natural Sciences Conservation Questionnaire in the newsletter which I would urge all curators/conservators to complete. The 'update on projects' section lists a series of pest control and specimen deterioration investigations currently under-way at home and abroad and there is news from the BM(NH) that Nigel Armes has recently completed a PhD thesis on the life history and control of the museum pest beetle Anthrenus sarnicus, which should eventually be of benefit to us all (Geoff Stansfield gave a short bibliography on A. sarnicus in the last BCG Newsletter p.88). The subscription fee is £5.00.

From the Editor

I apologise for the late arrival of this Newsletter. The change-round in editor, format, content, printer and envelope sticker-downer has taken longer to organise than I anticipated.

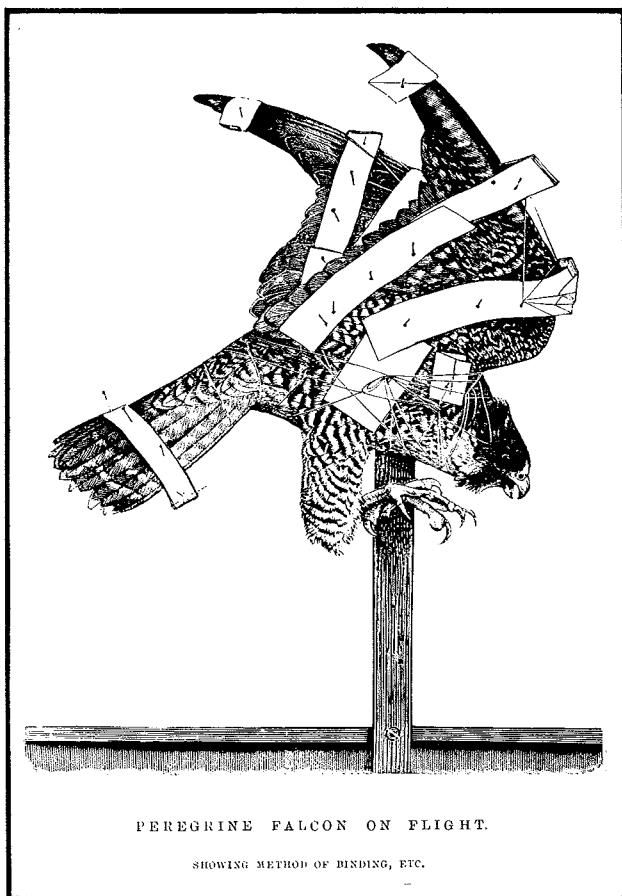
I hope everyone agrees that the double-column format is an improvement. It is certainly more economic of space than the old style Newsletter and this means I have been able to have it printed by offset litho rather than the photocopy process. Text illustrations, photographs, line drawings or half-tones can now also be reproduced to a high standard so I hope the visual content of the Newsletter will improve over the next few issues. This Newsletter is a bit of a hybrid; the new style is developing but there are still some wrinkles to iron out.

The change in content is more difficult to achieve. I would like to make the Newsletter 'newsier' - by this I mean carrying more information on events, publications, people, politics and general goings-on. I don't want this approach to appear to trivialise the Newsletter because it must retain its established position as a forum for debate and information exchange. 'Letters', 'Reviews' and short articles on collections, techniques, recording etc. will continue to be features, but I would like the 'Diary' and 'In the Press' columns to expand through greater input from members.

If the Newsletter progresses in this direction there will clearly be a need for a more 'serious minded', perhaps more permanent type of publication to take longer, properly refereed research and review papers. The Committee have in mind to establish a 'Journal of Biological Curation' (working title only!) with a preliminary first issue date of Spring 1988 to fill this gap. A full prospectus for the new journal will appear early in 1987.

This revision of the Group's publishing activities gives it a very ambitious programme: Newsletter, Journal, occasional Reports and the Handbook project. The first two of these particularly can only succeed through regular contributions from members, and I will end with the usual plea for support - words, pictures and ideas please.

John Mathias
Editor



An illustration from Practical Taxidermy by Montagu Browne: see Alec Coles' letter on the uses of mounted birds in museums.