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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Wanted - historical information on Bustards (Otididae)

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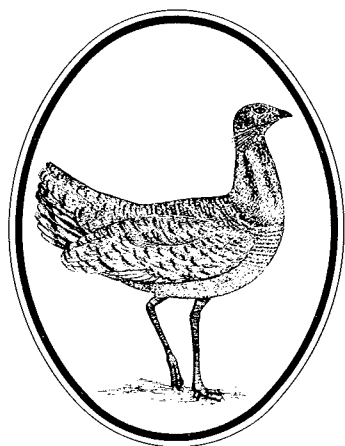
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certainly is judging by the numbers of trading taxidermists. Most of these of course abide by the law but not all as demonstrated by the fact that in the last three or four years we have taken several prosecutions for taxidermy related offences.

Having said that, I fully accept that stuffed specimens clearly have an educational value and hence, of course, the reason the RSPB does not feel it can impose its own policies on others.

If you feel it would be helpful, then feel free to publish the relevant parts of this letter in one of your future newsletters, and of course if I have not made anything clear, please do not hesitate to come back to me.

Yours sincerely,
Richard Porter
Head of Species Protection
RSPB



Wanted - historical information on Bustards (Otididae).

Dear Sir,
The Great Bustard Trust was founded in 1970 with the aim of re-introducing these beautiful large game birds back into the British countryside after an absence of over one hundred and fifty years. Birds imported from Portugal and Hungary have been reared in an attempt to establish a breeding nucleus on Salisbury Plain, the project and immediate environment being protected within the confines of the Defence Establishment boundaries.

While the long-term scheme continues on a practical level, various aspects of the birds' history are being researched, especially the period prior to and during their decline and eventual extinction in Britain (around 1830). The Trust would, therefore, be very interested to learn of any data regarding Bustard specimens (skins, mounts, eggs, skeletons, etc..) of both indigenous and overseas species held in British museums. Also, to enable the historical record to be substantiated, it may be possible to tie in specimens with accounts in the county avifaunas, so references from these would also be of interest.

Information about the last Great Bustards (*Otis tarda*) in Britain is to be used to compile a record of the overall distribution and decline of the species; the data will be scanned for any patterns which may emerge. Information would also be welcomed regarding the other species which are known as sporadic migrants in Britain, namely, the Little Bustard (*Tetrax tetrax*) and the Houbara Bustard (*Chlamydotis undulata*). Again, avifaunas may hold references to sightings and 'shootings' in the 19th and 20th centuries.

All information will be greeted with great interest, and it is hoped that resulting data will contribute towards a display which the Trust intends to use to help generate interest in the species and its kin throughout the world, and to promote their conservation. Of the 23 species of Bustard, most are now considered 'endangered' on a world basis.

Expenses such as postage and photocopying will be refunded as necessary.

Yours sincerely,
Mark Newman-Wren
(Hon. Sec. Great Bustard Trust Ltd.)
'Remap'
Pentridge
Nr. Salisbury
Wilts. SP5 5QX

Dear John,

May I publicly thank all those who replied to my last query about sealing museum jars, which is now happily solved. I now have another problem to put to the combined wisdom of Biology Curators, so successful was this means of enquiry.

We wish to remount spirit specimens for display, putting them in phenoxytol with a view to preserving what colour remains, and even regaining some which has been lost in the past. Past preserving media include both ethanol and formalin. The problem is that we wish to include a display label inside the jar on the mounting board. In the past we have used tissue stuck with gelatin, but now are experimenting with both Letraset and letters produced on a Graphix machine (which cuts out letters to order from plastic sheet). For the mounting board, we prefer to use either Perspex or a newer, cheaper substance called Foamex rather than glass, simply because they are easier and safer to drill holes in for mounting the specimen. Unfortunately, in phenoxytol on Perspex or Foamex neither Letraset, nor Graphix letters nor tissue will stick for long using its regular adhesive. It now also appears that even in previous media, tissue and gelatin are not permanently fixed if the mounting board is Perspex or Foamex.

Do we have to go back to alcohol, tissue/gelatin and glass, or has anyone else got a better method of producing clear, reasonably