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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Letters

Dear John

Perhaps you could include the following request for information in the next available BCG Newsletter.

Mr R G Ledlieu is trying to find the whereabouts of his wife's great great grandfather's insect collection: Charles Stuart Gregson. Gregson collected Lepidoptera and Coleoptera, the collection apparently consisting of some 28,000 specimens. He sold the collection to a Sydney Webb of Brighton in 1888. I have no details of this material in our area. Gregson was born in Lancaster on 29th May 1818 and died in Liverpool on 31st January 1899. Any information concerning this collection should be sent to Dr Gerald Legg, The Booth Museum of Natural History, 194 Dyke Road, Brighton BN1 5AA.

Best wishes,

Gerald Legg

Here's a tasty little offer from Derby

Dear John,

Would you please insert this note in the next BCG Newsletter; it is an attempt to reduce our stocks of live Phasmids to a more manageable level.

We have the following species available, all of which could do with a good home:

Indian or Laboratory Stick Insect
Carausius morosus Food plant: Privet

Annam Stick Insect
Baculum extradentatum Food plant: Bramble

Pink-winged Stick Insect
Sipyloidea sipylus Food plant: Bramble

Macleay's Spectre
Extatosoma tiaratum Food plant: Bramble
or Eucalyptus

All species are easy to raise (as we have found to our cost) and, dipped in chocolate, could make interesting party snacks!!

We are offering specimens free, but would appreciate carriage costs if we have to send them by Red Star.

Nick Moyes
Assistant Keeper of Natural History
Derby Museum
The Strand
Derby DE1 1BS

More on the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections, which was introduced briefly in Newsletter 4(5). This note is from Ingrid Birker of the Redpath Museum, McGill, Montreal who is attending the Certificate course in Museum Studies at Leicester University.

NEW Natural History Journal and Society!

COLLECTION FORUM, a new journal from the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC) seeks short articles of scientific research pertinent to conservation, preparation, preservation, management, documentation and storage of natural history collections. Inter-disciplinary in scope, the journal stresses development and application of technologies concerning collection management and is published biannually.

COLLECTION FORUM, available in approximately thirty museum and university libraries worldwide, represents a 200 member strong Society formed in 1985. Although newly hatched and mainly North American, this volunteer, member-driven organization holds annual Meetings and Workshops and maintains ten Standing Committees and six Sessional Committees. A newsletter is published twice a year, intermittent with the issues of COLLECTION FORUM, to keep all members informed of the activities of each Committee. Annual Meetings are organized by host museums, alternately American and Canadian, and have featured two days of presentations and poster sessions followed by a third day of hands-on workshops. Though no Proceedings are published, the Abstracts of all poster and oral contributions are published in the Winter issue of COLLECTIONS FORUM so interested readers may correspond directly with the authors. This year's Annual Meeting at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, May 31 - June 3, will focus on Conservation of Natural History materials and tentative contributors include Carolyn Rose (Smithsonian), John Dawson (CCI-Canada), Chris Collins (Leicester) and Steve Williams (Carnegie Institute).

Currently, SPNHC is the only single organization addressing the needs of natural science collections on a worldwide and interdisciplinary level. Perhaps this mandate is too broad? However, natural science curators, collection managers and technicians need a united front in order to compete against the well-organized arts and social science museums community for public attention and funding. By developing a vehicle for internal dialogue among the natural sciences, common problems and information can be shared and beneficial solutions formulated.

The great majority of feature and research articles published to date have been submitted by American or Canadian authors. The time is ripe to exchange ideas and information with British and European colleagues in the field of natural history collection management.

For information regarding COLLECTION FORUM please contact the Editor: Dan Faber, National Museum of Natural Sciences, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K2A 3Y6. For details regarding this year's Annual Meeting contact Steve Williams at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15206 or phone (412) 665-2611. For local contact write: Ingrid Birker, Dept of Museum Studies, University of Leicester, 105 Princess Road East, Leicester LE1 7LG, England.

Legal Niceties

Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981:
The Quinquennial Review
(Information from DOE News Release no 493)

The outcome of the quinquennial review (which is required by the provision of the 1981 Act) was made public in September 1987. The number of native species protected from being taken from the wild, injured, killed or destroyed is increased by 48 animal species and 31 plant species, bringing the total number of species now protected to 177. The additions are to schedules 5 and 8 of the Act and include:

- * full protection for wild cat, dormouse and pine marten
- * full protection for all cetacea using British waters
- * extension of protection afforded to viviparous lizard, slow-worm and grass-snakes to make it an offence to kill or injure them
- * full protection for a number of plants which are known from one site only, such as sand crocus and pygmy weed.

The two species removed from the protected list are the chequered skipper butterfly and the carthusian snail.

The full list of additions is given below (the odd notation of common names comes straight from the press release). More information on the plants can be found in BSBI News no 47 (December 1987) p19.

Schedule 5 (animals)

Anemone, Ivell's Sea
Anemone, Startlet Sea
Apus
Beetle, Violet Click
Cat, Wild
Cicada, New Forest
Dolphin (all species)
Dormouse
Leech, Medicinal
Marten, Pine
Mat, Trembling Sea
Moth, Viper's Bugloss
Porpoise, (all species)
Sandworm, Lagoon
Shrimp, Fairy
Shrimp, Lagoon Sand
Turtles, Marine (all species)
Vendace

Walrus
Whale (all species)
Whitefish

Schedule 8 (Plants)

Adder's-tongue, Least
Cabbage, Lundy
Colt's-foot, Purple
Cottongrass, Slender
Crocus, Sand
Cudweed, Red-tipped
Fleabane, Alpine
Fleabane, Small
Gentian, Fringed
Germander, Cut-leaved
Goosefoot, Stinking
Grass-poly
Hawk's-beard, Stinking
Helleborine, Youngs
Horsetail, Branched
Hound's-tongue, Green
Marshwort, Creeping
Milk-parsley, Cambridge
Naiad, Holly-leaved
Pennyroyal
Pigmyweed
Ragwort, Fen
Ramping-fumitory, Martin's
Restharrow, Small
Rock-cress, Alpine
Rock-cress, Bristol
Speedwell, Fingered
Star-of-Bethlehem, Early
Stonewort
Strapwort
Viper's-grass

Skeletons in the cupboard

There must be many botanical collections in museums up and down the country whose curators are unwittingly breaking the law. How can this be so?

Try out the following check list. If the answer to any of the questions is "yes", then you should read to the end of the article!

- 1 Have you Coca specimens in your herbarium? If so, is it possible that any of them are *Erythroxylon coca*?
- 2 Now examine your collection of medicines. Do you have any morphine tablets?
- 3 Many museums have collections of economic botany samples. Do yours contain any poppy heads, perhaps with grooves scored in them?
- 4 There may well be a bottle of Dr Bowe's Liniment in a medicine chest. Did you know that it contains morphine?

The point of all these questions is simply that many museums have collections which contain Class A and Class B drugs (otherwise known as Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 drugs). Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, possession of any of these drugs is an offence (even if there is no criminal intent).