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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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The report of the Biological Recording Working Party of the Linnean Society was approved for publication by the Linnean Society Council in January. It is hoped that it will be possible to distribute the report to County Trusts, Local Authority Departments and other interested bodies.

## Curatorial Course

Natural Sciences Curatorial Course  
Losehill Hall, Derbyshire  
17th to 21st October 1988  
Organised jointly by BCG and GCG

### Provisional programme

Monday 17th:

pm Registration  
Introduction  
Brief history, functions,  
organisation and current trends in  
Natural Sciences in museums  
evening Collections Research: sources/  
importance

Tuesday 18th:

am Study visit to Rotherham Museum  
Running a Museum based records centre  
Collection, preservation and storage  
of invertebrates  
pm Study visit to Sheffield Museum  
New displays  
Treatment and preservation of  
material for exhibition purposes  
Enquiry services  
The "Ecology Unit"  
evening Museums and conservation

Wednesday 19th:

am Study visit to Buxton Museum  
Storage of geological collections  
Geological site recording  
lunch Matlock Bath - also an opportunity  
to visit the Peak District Mining  
Museum  
pm Study visit to Derby Museum  
The practical and theoretical  
considerations involved in planning  
the new Derby Natural History Museum  
- plus a site visit to look at  
progress  
evening Do we undervalue Natural Sciences  
Collections?

Thursday 20th:

am Study visit to Manchester Museum  
Preservation, storage and  
documentation of vertebrate material  
Preservation, storage and  
documentation of botanical material  
Legal and practical aspects of live  
displays in museums  
pm Recent trends in Natural Sciences  
conservation  
Short study visit to Edale visitor  
centre (Peak District National Park)  
evening Museum Natural Sciences and Education

Friday 21st:

am Documentation of collections: the  
special requirements of natural

history, types etc.

Collecting policies: legal aspects,  
relationship to display programmes  
etc.

lunchtime Course finishes

A further note on the Curatorial Course from the Secretary, Derek Whiteley. Losehill Hall has now been booked for the period of the course. The programme, outlined above, is now being finalised and will be given in full in the next Newsletter.

The cost will be £150 and this will cover food, accommodation, tuition and transport by minibus to neighbouring museums. We have tried to keep the costs to a minimum. Although the course failed to attract grant-aid it is still cheaper than the first curatorial course organised by BCG two years or so ago in Leicester. It should be good value for money!

Queries on the course content should be sent to Steve Moran, Inverness Museum and Art Gallery, Castle Wynd, Inverness, IV2 3ED. Tel: 0463 - 237114.

Bookings can now be accepted with a deposit of £30.00, cheques made payable to 'Biology Curators Group'. Send your name, address, telephone number and any special requirements you may have regarding the accommodation (diet etc.), and deposit to Derek Whiteley (BCG Secretary), City Museum, Sheffield S10 2TP.

## Beetle-down....

"Beetle-down .... to your local museum"

### 1. The Idea

"I never realised that you do so much!" exclaimed a staggered member of the audience, following a lecture on the activities of our Natural Sciences department. "The museum was the last place I'd think of" said another, who couldn't believe that we are actually involved in local nature conservation.

"I thought you just put things in glass cases and typed the label". How many times have we heard this remark? "But you should tell people what else is available!" added a particularly vociferous council activist, of course, hitting the nail right on the head. And broadly speaking she was right .... we very rarely advertise our bread-and-butter public services.

"Beetle down .... to your local museum", is an attempt by BCG to tackle the problem nationally, starting with a co-ordinated campaign week, and then taking it from there. We are printing 30,000 "Beetle down ...." leaflets A4 size, folded twice to fit in the pocket or notebook. Initially aimed at children, the leaflet describes, with the aid of cartoons, most of the services and activities at most museums. Displays, temporary exhibitions, information, identification services, enquiries, live

displays, records, reference and study collections, loans, museums on holiday; these are some of the topics covered. The reverse side of the leaflet carries a list of museums which provide some level of biological (natural history) service.

Those carrying a star (\*) provide most or all of the services listed in the leaflet and employ a curator specialising in biology (natural history). Other listed museums provide some of these services but, crucially, do not employ a biologist in a curatorial post.

The leaflet is deliberately similar in design to the Geological Curators' Group 'Thumbs Up' leaflet, and the two should complement each other.

## 2. The Events

"Beetle down ...." Week 22 to 31 July 1988

National and local press releases will be available but most museums will prefer to write their own. We are hoping that each museum will organise special activities some time during this week, to carry the "Beetle-down ...." flag. Most children will be on holiday from school during this week, and the idea is to get them down to their local museum, either in their home town or on holiday in the UK (this aspect is covered in the leaflet).

Activities may involve simply drawing media attention to some aspect of your work; or actually involving your Education staff in a special activity; or may be publicising a particular object or collection. At the very least, please try to publicise the spirit of "Beetle-down ....".

The main thing is .... please try to get involved! And don't forget to let us know how things go, and send a copy of press cuttings.

## 3. The Products

"Beetle-down ...." Package

A window sticker - for those museums qualified to display one.  
A general press release.  
A batch of "Beetle-down ...." leaflets.  
Car stickers may be available.

The package will be available in late Spring at a nominal cost, from BCG. The price will depend on how much we can raise from sponsors. Further details at the Bolton meeting and in the next Newsletter.

"Beetle-down ...." does not end on 31 July 1988. The campaign will continue throughout the summer holidays, and into 1989. If things go well a range of products and leaflets may become available, in the future.

Derek Whiteley  
BCG Secretary  
City Museum  
Sheffield S10 2TP

## STOP PRESS!!

We have just heard that WATCH, the youth wing of RSNC, have offered to co-produce the leaflet. We should be able to provide the package at a very nominal charge with their help.

# Techniques

<sup>not</sup>How to treat your type specimens.

The following is quoted from MONOCULUS (Copepod Newsletter) no.14 (April 1987); it is transcribed from 'Type Specimens of Ergasilus funduli Kroyer, 1863 (Crustacea: Copepoda) re-examined', Steenstrupia 12 (9): 154-156, by Z. Kabata.

"This paper would not be complete without an account of the fate of the examined specimens. The best-preserved of them (Fig.1) was selected as the lectotype, there being no type designated in Kroyer's material. Afraid that further manipulation might be damaging to the fragile specimens, I labelled the slide on which it had been mounted in Berlese's fluid and returned it to Dr Wolff in Copenhagen. To my surprise, Dr Wolff, having looked at the slide, was unable to find anything under the coverslip. The specimen had inexplicably vanished. I asked Dr Wolff to send the slide to me again, so that I could verify this strange fact. I need not have troubled. The much-travelled slide was indeed innocent of any specimens."

It continues, explaining the disappearing copepods.

"Both Dr Wolff and I wanted to have a lectotype selected. Having picked out of the remaining material the only specimen that, in my opinion, sufficiently displayed the diagnostic features of the species, I put it on a slide in Berlese's fluid and labelled it immediately. Several days later I inspected the slide thoroughly. To my utter disbelief, the specimen was not there. A small clump of debris that might have represented copepod remains was all that could be found.

It seems fairly obvious that Berlese's fluid must have acted as a solvent and caused a complete, or almost complete, disintegration of the copepods. This could have happened only because of the old age of the specimens, combined with whatever treatment they had received in the past ...

This strange incident is reported upon as a warning to copepodologists who have to examine century-old specimens. I am also glad to report that Dr Wolff's helpful friendship for me appears to have survived this debacle."

Further comment arising from the above appeared in MONOCULUS 15 (November 1987) from Vernon E. Thatcher in Brazil. It is quoted fully here.