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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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8.5 The NW and YH CRUs are suggested as possible candidates to pilot the spring-clean operation, as data transfer protocols have already been established.

The detailed data standards were then discussed field-by-field. Mostly the existing FENSCORE approach will be continued, with all fields free text except those containing: Collection Name; Associated Names; Holding Institution; and Name of Recorder. The Subject and Geographical Source fields will continue to have sort-search codes added in separate fields, and a new code field is being created for the Period field. The opportunity is being taken to make some minor improvements to the detailed FENSCORE instructions and Code Lists, and these will be circulated after they have been approved by the full FENSCORE Committee.

If you wish to comment on the proposals please contact your local CRU representative, or, if you prefer, one of the following working party members: John Burnett (Royal Scottish Museum), Margaret Hartley (Cliffe Castle Museum); Richard Light (MDA); Charles Pettit (Manchester Museum).

Federation for Natural Sciences Collections Research

List of Representatives as at January 1989

A Collection Research Units (two voting members each)

CRU Chairman; other representatives

CRNAM Graham Walley; Geoff Halfpenny
CRNNE Peter Davis; Chris Brewer
CRNNW Charles Pettitt; Steve Garland
CRNSE Gordon Read; Rosina Down/Paul Hyam
CRNST Mike Taylor; Geoff Hancock/
David Heppell
CRNSW Charles Copp; nomination vacant
CRNYH Bill Ely; Margaret Hartley

B National Museums and Manchester Museum (one voting member each)

Institution: nominated representative

British Geological Survey: A W Medd
British Museum (Natural History):
Neil Thompson
Manchester Museum: C W Pettitt
National Museum of Wales: Peter Morgan
Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh:
James Cullen
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: G L L Lucas
Royal Scottish Museum: John Burnett
Ulster Museum: Philip Doughty

C Institutions invited to send Observers

Institution: nominated observer

Biology Curators' Group: Steve Garland
Biological Records Centre: Paul Harding
Geological Curators' Group: D I Steward
National Museum of Ireland:
Nigel Monaghan

National Museums of Merseyside:
Eric Greenwood
Museums and Galleries Commission:
Rosemary Ewles
Museums Association: nomination vacant
Museum Documentation Association:
Andrew Roberts
Soc Bibl Nat Hist: nomination vacant
Systematics Association: Dr G P Larwood

The Scottish, Welsh and the seven English Museum Area Services are all invited to send observers to FENSCORE meetings.

D Institutions and people receiving FENSCORE documents 'for information'

American Museum Computer Group (Editor SPECTRA); Association of Systematic Collections, USA (Stephen R Edwards); Dr Howard Brunton; Canadian National Museum (Natural History) (C C Eades); Dr P F Lingwood; Director, Manchester Museum.

Charles Pettitt
Manchester Museum

Letters

Dear Dr Mathias,

I would like to bring your members up to date on some activities of the Association of Systematics Collections. We recently completed a report on Systematics Collections Resources for the 1990s that reviews a survey of systematics collections in the US and Canada, and presents the results of a workshop held in Washington, DC, in October of 1988. The report has been presented to the National Science Foundation and its governing body, the National Science Board. We hope that as a result of the report, the National Science Foundation will provide new programs for the support of computerization and networking, graduate training in systematics, and curation of specimens resulting from efforts to inventory and preserve biological diversity worldwide. Other programs are also recommended. [NB see separate note on this item - Editor.]

The US Congress is considering legislation to provide funding for a National Center for Biological Diversity. The Center would review and make available existing databases on biological diversity, organize efforts toward a national biological survey, and identify critical areas in need of study and/or preservation. Its activities would not be limited to the United States - it would also be concerned with the loss of biological diversity worldwide. We have been advising Congress on the legislation. It is possible that the Center would be located within the Smithsonian Institution, but would be able to give funding to other institutions and organizations through contracts. Those interested in summaries of the legislation should write to ASC.

ASC has been asked to organize a workshop on training and job opportunities for systematists/curators worldwide, at the 1990 meeting of the International Congress on Systematics and Evolutionary Biology to be held July 1-7, 1990, at the University of Maryland. For a circular describing the meeting, contact Cheryl Blackman, Room 1123, Microbiology Building, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742, USA.

ASC has recently published two new books which will be of interest to BCG members. A GUIDE TO MUSEUM PEST CONTROL, edited by Zycherman and Schrock, is available for \$36.00 (plus \$9.00 for overseas airmail postage) and SYSTEMATICS: RELEVANCE, RESOURCES, SERVICES, AND MANAGEMENT: A BIBLIOGRAPHY, by Knutson and Murphy is available for \$9.00 plus \$3.60 for overseas airmail postage.

Sincerely,

Dr K. Elaine Hoagland
Executive Director
Association of Systematics Collections

Dear Sir,

MGC Annual Report 1987-88

In your recent newsletter (Vol 5, No 1) Derek Whiteley drew attention to the small amount of money spent by the MGC on biological projects in 1987-88. It is only fair to point out however, that grant-aided projects listed in our annual reports (eg capital grants to provide new stores) tend to be described in general terms and can benefit natural history collections together with a range of other types of collections. In addition, it should not be forgotten that we fund the English Area Museum Councils which provide grants towards biological projects, undertake subsidised conservation work and support surveys of natural history collections (although these are not listed in our annual reports). The Conservation Unit has also been active in supporting conferences concerned with the conservation of natural history collections. Notwithstanding these points, there IS a lack of money spent on biological projects and the reason for this is chiefly a paucity of applications (good or bad!).

The recent publication of BIOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS UK has highlighted the desperate plight of many natural history collections. The MGC intends to react positively to this report and we are convening a meeting of interested parties to discuss the best way forward. We shall of course be inviting representatives of the BCG to this meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Newbery
Deputy Secretary
Museums and Galleries Commission
7 St James's Square
LONDON SW17 4JU

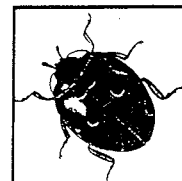
DERBY FINAL Evening Telegraph

Beetle off to see the things that bug you

The nationally-based Biology Curators' group is launching a campaign this week entitled, **Beetle Down...** to your local museum.

Museums throughout Britain are organising special exhibitions and events to make people aware of the varied work that goes on in natural history museums.

At Derby City Museum the National History staff-keeper Bill Grange and assistant keeper Mick Moyes — have prepared a special exhibit. It focuses on the



identification of household pests, which form a high proportion of inquiries from the public.

The display features a mock-up of a corner of a kitchen complete with a selection of realistically nosed insects and other

small bugs — some of them harmful pests, others harmless intruders.

Cockroaches munch through biscuits, clothes moths devour a sock, a spider crawls up the wall — and the blowflies on a dish of cat food are particularly revolting!

Another exhibit shows how specimens and habitat models are prepared for displays, featuring freeze-drying and other modern techniques, and which are hoped to be used in the proposed Derby Nature Museum of Allestree Hall.

The museum is open 10 — 5 Tuesday — Saturday, admission free.

BETTER-DOWN AT DERBY CITY MUSEUM

Beetle-down came at an opportune time for us. Nick Moyes (Assistant Keeper) and myself in the Natural History Section here were in something of a despondant mood as it looked (and still does) that a project to create a new 'Derby Nature Museum' at Allestree Hall, just north of the City, was to be 'axed'. We had been working enthusiastically for the last two and a half years on some far-reaching and exciting plans; but in May the Conservatives took over from Labour in the local elections.

No official decision has come to us at the time of writing, but murmurings in the press and other reported remarks lead us to fear the worst. In addition a top councillor who visited the Museum recently was heard to mutter, as he swept through the Natural History Gallery, "I don't see the point of putting stuffed birds on show". Admittedly, the quality of displays in the existing gallery are not terribly inspiring - what we had planned for the new project was light-years away in concept.

Beetle-down gave us the opportunity to present what we are all about to the public. We immediately thought of an exhibition. Instead of a temporary affair, we decided to mount a small 'permanent' display within one of the existing cases in the natural history gallery of the main museum, as part of a general upgrading of a rather unexciting and obsolete room.

We rejected a straight systematic account of our work and decided to 'focus down' on a particular aspect. 'Beetle-down' sparked off the idea of dealing with the identification of household pests. Enquiries in this field make up a significant proportion of those coming from the general public, and many are passed on via the Environmental Health Department. It was a good subject to cover, we thought, as it highlights our close relationship with the local community, dispelling any 'ivory tower' image.