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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: New Exhibition at Natural History Museum

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BUTTERFLY SALE - IS IT ETHICAL

Last autumn, Michael Taylor, Keeper of Natural Sciences at Perth Museum, drew the attention of the BCG Committee to the sale of Schedule 5 listed butterflies by Worldwide Butterflies.

The catalogue included 'Large Copper Rarities', 'Extinct English Large Blues' and 'Protected English Swallowtails'. One English Large Copper was offered for sale at £275.00 and 22 Large Blues at prices ranging from £75.00 to £150.00.

A licence was granted by the Secretary of State for the Environment for the sale and the following restriction published.

'RESTRICTION : Only bona fide individuals or institutions actively engaged on the study of the species, will be eligible to purchase. Serious entomological collectors are included.'

'DONATION : Your purchase will benefit the British Butterfly Conservation Society. For each Large Blue purchased we will be forwarding £20 as a donation towards the Society's purchase of Broadfern Reserve, one of the best Swallowtail habitats in Norfolk. The Society's target is £50,000 : anyone wishing to help towards this appeal is invited to send their contribution c/o Robert Gooden, Vice Chairman, at the above address.'

Michael Taylor expressed concern over the apparent ease with which these items were being sold compared with, say, birds eggs and the implications which may be involved with regard to the possible disposal of museum collections.

A letter on behalf of the Committee requesting clarification of the reasons for granting the licence prompted the following reply:

Dear Mr Moran

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981
SCHEDULE 5
SALE OF PROTECTED BUTTERFLIES

1. Thank you for your letter and enclosure concerning the sale by Worldwide Butterflies at Sherbourne, Dorset of various butterflies on Schedule 5 of the above Act.

2. A sale licence was issued to Worldwide Butterflies Ltd, to sell or expose for sale, a number of butterflies subject to the conditions normally attached to licences for Schedule 5 species that any sale of the specimens is to 'bona fide scientific or educational institutions or similarly authenticated individuals who

are actively engaged on scientific study of the species'. It is also conditional that the Department is informed in writing of the names and addresses of purchasers within 14 days of any sale of the specimens.

3. I hope this allays any concern you may have over the sale of the items.

Yours sincerely

A J Grant
Endangered Species Branch

This adds very little to what we already know about the sale. Keeping a record of the purchasers' addresses seems to be little more than paying lip-service to the Act. After seeing the reply, Michael Taylor asked - should BCG press to have sales of all Schedule 5 species banned? The Committee would like to know what the membership's thoughts are on this matter.

Letters, please, to the Editor.

Stephen Moran
Inverness Museum and Art Gallery

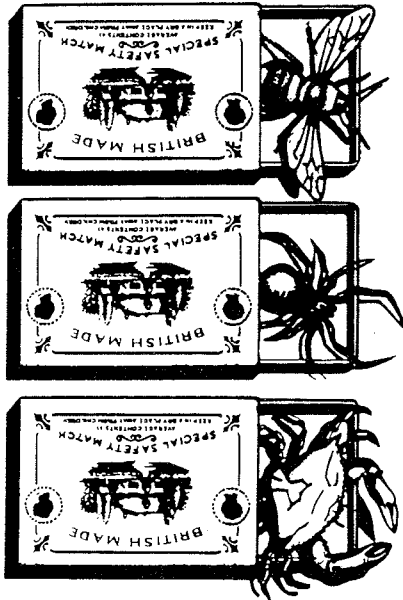
REGISTER OF NATURAL SCIENCE COLLECTIONS IN NORTH WEST ENGLAND (with geographical, subject and associated collector indexes). E G Hancock and C W Pettitt, 1981.

A few more copies of this publication came to light recently during redecoration at the Manchester Museum. They are available for sale at £11, including postage, from C W Pettitt, Manchester Museum, The University, Manchester M13 9PL. Supplies are very limited, so please do not send money with your order, we will invoice you. Requests will be dealt with strictly in the order received. The money raised will go into NWCRU funds.

Exhibitions

NEW EXHIBITION AT NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

For anyone that doesn't already know, 'NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM' is the new name for the BM(NH), and 'CREEPY CRAWLIES - THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY' is the title of a new popular exhibition on the invertebrates which opened to the public in late May. I have not seen the exhibition yet, but the press release suggests it covers



'CREEPY-CRAWLIES'
THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY
Natural History Museum

the major invertebrate groups - quote 'Insects, Arachnids (spiders & co.), Crustaceans and Centipedes and Millipedes' treated in a lively and novel way using '14 video shows, hundreds of interactive models and specimens'. There is a six metre high termite mound and a giant model of a swallowtail butterfly. The centrepiece is a full size house within the exhibition, 1 Crawley Place, which illustrates the invertebrates that live in association with Man.

Despite the unfortunate title this seems to be a fun exhibition aimed at introducing visitors to the less well-known animal groups. If any BCG members get the chance to see it in the next few months, perhaps they would like to write down their impressions for the next Newsletter.

John Mathias
Editor

Letters

Dear Sir,

I am working on the life of William Robson, 1805-1865.

Amongst many other outstanding hobbies William Robson had a collection of birds eggs which was so good that many naturalists went to see it.

On his death in 1865 this wonderful collection was passed to a museum. The Natural History Museum, Tring, has recommended I write to you as you are compiling records of collections.

Along with all Robson's other great works it is probable the egg collection was not marked with his name.

I realise this is worse than looking for a needle in a haystack, but I would be grateful if any of your members could tell me if they have any knowledge of Robson's collection.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J M Ross
10 Penlee Road
Stoke
Plymouth PL3 4AU
Telephone 0752 563910

In the Press

THE LIVING WATERS OF KORUP RAINFOREST

The World Wide Fund for Nature have just published THE LIVING WATERS OF KORUP RAINFOREST by BCG Committee member Dr Gordon Reid of the Horniman Museum, London. This is a preliminary account of the results of a tough, three-month-long, scientific expedition to the steaming jungle of Korup National Park, Cameroon, West Africa. The expedition, organised by the Museum in conjunction with the Cameroonian and British Armies, has drawn a lot of media publicity and there have been colourful articles in a recent issue of GEOGRAPHICAL MAGAZINE and in the latest edition of WWF NEWS. The fact that twenty expedition members contracted a particularly severe form of malaria has also produced comment in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL!

Reid's formal report, now out, is a hydrobiological survey, with an emphasis on the fish and fisheries of the rivers and streams which flow through the rainforest. As well as highlighting problems in conservation and development, there are interesting accounts of rare and scientifically undescribed species and a wealth of original observations on the complex and unsuspected ecological interrelationships between the rainforest and the life in the rivers which drain it.

The report is called THE LIVING WATERS OF KORUP RAINFOREST, WWF Report 3206/A8:1, 70 pages, 29 colour plates, cost £10, available from The Korup Project Office, WWF (UK), Weyside Park, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1XR.