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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Author(s): Mathias, J.

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The good news is the cost. Considering their quality, both are well priced; you save £25 by buying the softback version of 'Butterflies' and £14 by buying the softback 'Grasshoppers'. The sound guide (tape) for 'Grasshoppers' is still available at £5.75 and is an essential companion to the book.

Both of these books were reviewed when they came out in hardback. Please refer to BCG Newsletter vol 5 no 5 for 'Butterflies' and Journal of Biological Curation vol 1 no 1 for 'Grasshoppers'.

John Mathias

An Atlas of the Land and Freshwater Mollusca of Northumberland and Durham

by **Ralph Lowe**

Special publication no 4 of the Northumberland Biological Records Centre (1989) ISBN 0-95 09680-6-4. Cost £6.50 from Hancock Museum.

This is an A4, softback, plastic ring-bound book of 139 pages. Its large size belies its meagre content - by this I mean it could easily have been produced at a quarter its length or even less, simply by reducing the size of the distribution maps to more sensible proportions. There are 124 distribution maps at one per A4 page and it would, I feel sure, have been a simple task to reduce these to six per page to make a much more reasonably sized book.

As well as the maps there is a contents page, acknowledgements, introduction and six pages of habitat notes - about a line per species; at the end there is a bibliography and index. Nothing on the distribution of habitats in the area under study; no notes on the species distributions - simply a name and a map; no date categories - it is unclear when the records were made, and by my reading of the introduction they could be post 1934 (when Blackburn published his survey) or post 1965 (when the author's interests were rekindled) there is no real historical review of recording in the area. I would really have expected these to form part of any modern-day atlas.

These points aside, I welcome this addition to the mollusc atlases which are slowly emerging from the regions in the wake of the national atlas published by the Conchological Society in 1976, and under the strong encouragement and support, generously acknowledged in this volume, of Mike Kerney, the

national recorder. The coverage is good (the commonest species are marked off in all but one or two of the 10 km squares) and the species range is impressive (eleven *Pisidium* species are represented), but I would have liked some comparison between these recorded distributions and those of Blackburn in 1934 and even Alder in 1848.

In summary, this book is good as far as it goes, but with even a little more thought and effort it could have gone a great deal further.

John Mathias

Big Mouths and Long Necks

by **Michael A Taylor and John G Martin**

Published by Leicestershire Museums Service, 1990. ISBN 0-85022-287-7. Cost £1.50 (£2.00 by post)

This lively A5 booklet is one in a series of five (so far) on geological (specifically palaeontological) subjects published in association with the dinosaur gallery at the Leicestershire Museum. *Big Mouths and Long Necks* is about the plesiosaurs - what they might have looked like, how they might have lived, how their remains were found, their place in evolution, where they can be seen (a good plug for museum collections here). It is well illustrated and accessible, good for children and adults alike. As a non-geologist, I can recommend a dip into this informative and attractive little book, and suggest it would be a good seller in any museum shop where vertebrate fossils feature in the displays.

John Mathias

WOT A BARGAIN! Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Contact Tim Riley/Derek Whiteley, c/o Sheffield City Museums, Weston Park, Sheffield S10 2TP
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