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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Finally, if you have problems with 'stuck-together' traps or are lucky enough to capture a creature worthy of preservation for posterity, we have found that the glue is softened by using 1,1,1 trichloroethane.

Steve Garland
Bolton Museum

Off the shelf computer interactive for gallery use

Novus Publishing have developed an interactive presentation incorporating touchscreen technology, with visual buttons allowing easy access to information. Presentations can be designed to fulfil many functions such as providing interpretive displays, information points, or educational applications - or simply to view archive material not available to the public. The system can form the focal point of an exhibition or provide a multi-screen major attraction.

Available free, as part of a relevant Novus Presentation, is a computer-based Nature Sketchbook featuring flora and fauna of the British Isles. Information contained in the sketchbook includes concise notes on status, habitats, etc., complete with bird and animal sounds. The nature sketchbook has been specially designed for public use in museums.

Contact: David Roland, Novus Publishing Limited, 48 Rose Hill, Rednal, Birmingham B45 8RT. Tel: 021-457 8008.

Programme

29th and 30th May 1992
BCG AGM meeting at Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle
Meeting the Standards - Making the Grade

The conference will take as its theme the state of Biology collections management and conservation in Britain today. Is the situation improving or worsening, and what does the future hold?

The conference will begin with a retrospective look at the Biology Collections UK report and its effects; come up to date with the Natural Sciences Incentive Fund; look to the future with the 'Standards for the care of Biology Collections' and Collection Management Plans; and ask where we stand with the conservation of our collections when there is no officially recognised body of trained Natural History conservators?

The annual dinner will be on the night of 29th May. Saturday 30th May will offer the opportunity to visit some of the varied wildlife habitats of Cumbria and the Borders.

18th - 20th September 1992

The History of Ornithology

Joint meeting with the British Ornithologists' Union, the Society for the History of Natural History and BCG.

To be held at the University of Liverpool, South Liverpool Conference Centre. Details in Newsletter 5(7) or from Clem Fisher, Liverpool Museum.

1993 BCG AGM

The 1993 AGM will be held in Inverness, probably on 28th May.

Further details in the next Newsletter.

In the Press

The **Journal of the Scottish Society for Conservation and Restoration** regularly carries items of natural history interest. In volume 2 no 3 (August 1991) Mark Shaw discusses the establishment in Scotland of *Anthrenus sarnicus* and *Reesa vespulae*, both significant pests in museum collections. The presence of *A. sarnicus* has been known for some years south of the border, but *Reesa vespulae* is not one of the usually quoted pest species in the British Isles. It was found infesting herbaria and insect collections in Scotland. The article ends with some sensible guidelines on how to trace infestations and how to prevent them.

Volume 3 no 1 (February 1992) reports further work by N Tennant, R Baird and D Littlejohn on 'Bynes disease', the white crystalline efflorescence found on

molluscs and eggs which have been stored in particular enclosed environments. The acetic and formic acids evolved by the woods and adhesives used to fabricate storage cabinets react with agents within the objects to form complex salts - typically a calcium acetate formate hydrate or molluscs. This 'storage cabinet chemistry' is discussed in detail and it is relevant to note an intensification of investigation in this field with the award of a research studentship in the University of Glasgow Chemistry Department to take this further. The project 'Analytical Studies of the Decay and Conservation of Museum Artifacts' has Glasgow Museums as its co-operating body.

In the same issue Philip Howard, taxidermist at the National Museums of Scotland, describes the methods used to prepared specimens for the new fish gallery. Practical details are given on moulding techniques, casting and painting the completed fish.

What could turn out to be a very influential paper was published by Mark Gilberg in **Studies in Conservation** vol. 36 no 2 (May 1991) on the effects of low oxygen atmospheres on museum pests. Laboratory cultures of *Tineola bisselliella*, *Lasioderma serricornis*, *Stegobium paniceum* and *Anthrenus vorax* were exposed to low oxygen atmospheres (0.4% oxygen, the balance nitrogen) at 30°C for three weeks. Complete mortality was observed for all developmental stages. These findings are discussed in terms of offering a viable alternative to conventional chemical fumigation. The experiment used a prepared oxygen : nitrogen gas flow to produce the atmosphere under test, but it is noted that oxygen scavengers are available which can easily reduce oxygen in enclosed atmospheres to less than 0.4% by volume.

Studies in Conservation (36) contains an article titled 'The use of a commercial pheromone trap for monitoring *Lasioderma serricornis* (F.) infestations in museum collections' by Mark Filberg and Alex Roach. The studies were performed in the Australian Museum anthropology collections using pheromone traps made by Fuji Flavor Co. Ltd, 3-5-8 Midorigaoka, Hamuramachi, Nishitama-gun, Tokyo 190-11, Japan.

The authors found the traps to be very useful and were able to detect infestations at an early stage. They were no use for controlling the pests, because only male beetles were attracted. The traps were baited with both pheromone sex attractant and food attractant, but the effectiveness of the food attractant was not evaluated.

Pesticides used included CIG Pestigas 0.4%

Pyrethrins Insecticide, Ficam W Insecticide and Wellcome DIA CON*IGR, none of which I am familiar with. The paper also points out that pheromone research on other museum pests would be valuable, but is not available.

Steve Garland, Bolton Museum

BCG SPORT

Sir Rat: the Final Whistle?

The rat has been silenced! Well, muffled anyway. I've never been one to hold back but I have to admit that the latest batch of news from the league contains some very sensitive stuff: items which really shouldn't be allowed to go any further than these four damp and slimy walls. Items passed to me in the strictest confidence. You know the sort of things - succulent, juicy, embarrassing and libellous! I'm just sorry that I can't share them with you. Well, not unless you promise that they'll go no further. OK, then this is for your eyes only.

What about young David Alias then? Up before the beak for nobbling the under-pitch heating system at Lakeland Town - allegedly? All for a good cause apparently. Fed up with playing on a filthy brown mud covered pitch he wanted to see the return to natural frozen grass during the winter months. Retaining the appearance of 'Green peas' I think he said, but I could be wrong. He realised that longer studs would have been simpler but not as environmentally friendly - allegedly. I can't help thinking that his case would have been stronger if he hadn't been filmed doing it for Match of the Day.

While on the subject of the environment, how many of you consider industry to be part of the sports scene? Well, it would seem that the Scots do. A board room leak at Celtic allegedly suggests that a new team structure is afoot to bring the two together. I can't see it working myself. All that heavy machinery cutting up the pitch. Facilities to accommodate team reserves alongside ship welders may be required, whilst during a match extra hooters are sounded for 30 minute tea breaks and union meetings. I ask you! ... Hang on this doesn't sound too bad! I wonder what the Rangers service will make of it. Who knows, if it catches on we might find Steve Coppel a manager of the people's palace!