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Review

Paine, C (Ed.) 1992 *Standards in the Museum Care of Biological Collections*. Museums and Galleries Commission, London. 55pp. ISBN 0.948630.18.3

This work consists of two main parts, preceded by a Forward by the Earl of Cranbrook, and an Introduction, and finished with three Tables of environmental data.

Part One on 'Managing Collections' contains nine sections covering standards for: collecting; disposal of specimens; curation and conservation; access; loans out; documentation; research; care of living collections; biological records.

Part Two on 'Protecting Collections' contains a further nine sections covering standards for protection against: theft; fire; flood; physical damage; damage caused by poor construction or maintenance of buildings, furnishings and fittings; poor environmental conditions [RH, Temp., Light]; together with standards for protecting primary records and protecting people from specimens. The last section covers disaster planning.

The Tables give information on recommended levels of relative humidity and temperature for the display and storage of biological specimens, and for biological records, together with the recommended maximum levels of illuminance and ultra-violet radiation for biological materials.

Some of the areas where BCG members could find this book useful include:

1. Helping to persuade governing bodies to make more resources available for the care of natural science collections.
2. Help in drawing up sensible performance indicators and objectives for the care of collections, when these are requested by the funding bodies.
3. Help external auditors assess how an authority is looking after its collections.
4. Even if you do not agree with every standard, most will be helpful in drawing up a collection management policy; often all that will be needed is 'will follow the appropriate standard(s) in the *'Standards...'*

These standards will certainly change as techniques and expert opinions change.

Individuals and institutions may disagree with specific statements, or may feel that the work could be improved upon, but the standards do contain a consensus of current professional opinion of best practice to which every museum might aspire. The 'Expert Group' who largely drafted the standards consisted of 21 active curators and conservators (mostly BCG members) and a further 52 museum professional were consulted on some or all of the draft. The Museums and Galleries Commission intends to publish an updated edition of this book every few years, so anyone who feels strongly about anything contained in the *Standards* should make their views known to Steven Douglas at the Commission.

The work is presented as an A4 spiral bound book in glossy card covers; the rear cover is extended to provide a fold-out finding guide to the various sections, and also forms a handy bookmark. The *Standards* are available from the Museums and Galleries Commission, 16 St Anne's Gate, London SW1H 9AA at £7.00 postpaid. I recommend this book as a useful reference work that should be on every member's desk.

Charles Pettitt

Wanted

Historic, prehistoric, wild and domestic cat samples from Britain and worldwide are requested by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to establish the identity of the Scottish wildcat. SNH's research is testing the hypothesis that no genetically or morphologically distinct wild living cat populations remain in Scotland. DNA analysis is being carried out on prehistoric, historic and contemporary cat samples. To date, carcasses and a live trapping programme have produced 325 samples while a further 120 historic samples have come from specimens in six Scottish museums. SNH are keen to maximise the number of samples and wish to collaborate with any museums with wild, hybrid or domestic cat material **from any time period** and **from anywhere in the world**. If you can help or require further information please contact: Mike Daniels or Dave Balharry, Scottish Natural Heritage, 2 Anderson Place, Edinburgh, EH6 5NP. Tel 031 554 9797 or Fax 031 446 2405.

Disposed bird specimens are wanted by Simon Moore, Hampshire Museums, Chilcomb House, Chilcomb Lane, Winchester, Hants SO10 8RD. Simon needs feathers from any disposed birds to use in the conservation of other specimens. He also has available a small stock of such feathers for others to try their hand with.

The Mammal Society is organising a National Owl Pellet Survey to provide ecological data on the small mammal population. Volunteers are required to collect and analyse pellets on a monthly basis and further details are obtainable from the project coordinator, R.A.Love, 4 Laurel Way, Totteridge, London N20 8HP. Tel 081 445 8989.

Publications

UKIC Natural Sciences Section *Conservation News 51 (July 1993)* carries the first detailed reports from the new section including a note from our own Steve Garland on precautions relating to radioactive minerals at Bolton Museum, information on ongoing studies of resistance to freeze drying and problems in maintaining fluid preserved specimens. This two page section is going to be interesting reading.

Free Books!

Yorkshire Museum is making available free of charge two new publications containing details of important aspects of their entomological collections and two of their collectors. "*Ground Beetles in the Yorkshire Museum*" is prefaced by a life of H.W. Ellis while "*Flies in the Yorkshire Museum*" contains information on Percy Grimshaw. Both works also contain detailed accounts of the relevant collection and can be obtained free from the Yorkshire Museum, Museum Gardens, York YO1 2DR upon receipt of an A4 stamped addressed envelope (postage 70p within the British Isles or 300 gram International Prepaid Coupon if abroad). This laudable gesture deserves recognition and may yet set a trend.

A Catalogue of the Herbarium of the British Flora collected by Margaret Stovin (1756-1846) is the title of a catalogue of the 1900 specimens held at the Dorman Museum, Middlesborough as 20 bound volumes. The publication is intended as an introduction to Margaret Stovin who started her

collection in 1796 and who soon built up a wide circle of botanical correspondents, including Sir James Edward Smith, Nathaniel Winch, Sir William Hooker and the Rev John Stevens Henslow with whom she exchanged specimens. The compilation of the catalogue was undertaken by Mark Simmons the then Peripatetic Biology Curator at the North of England Museums Service, made possible by a grant from the Pilgrim Trust and the support of MGC and the Leisure Services Dept of Middlesborough Borough Council. The publication is bound to raise the profile of this poorly known collection and is available from the Dorman Museum, Linthorpe Road, Middlesborough, Cleveland TS5 6LA, price £9.95 plus p&p.

Discovering Green Treasure: The findings of and work of the NEMS Peripatetic Biology Curator is also by Mark Simmons and summarises his three years work in north east England. 66pp. Available from NEMS, House of Recovery, Bath Lane, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 5SQ. This fascinating report is available free but please send £2.95 to cover p&p.

Handbooks for the Identification of British Insects, Vol 5(3), Adults and larvae of Hide, Larder and Carpet Beetles and their relatives (Coleoptera: Dermestidae) and of Derodontid Beetles (Coleoptera: Derodontidae) by E.R. Peacock. Price £20.

Storkia - is the title of a new journal dealing with all aspects of systematic, biogeographical and evolutionary biology and produced by the Museum, Stadhouderslan 41, 2517 HV Den Haag, The Netherlands.

Larger Moths of the London Area by Colin Plant. A4 hardback, 300pp, published by the London Natural History Society. Special introductory offer £14.95 incl p&p until 31 Dec 1993 then £19.95.

Catalogue of the Palearctic Heteroptera. Edited by Berend Aukma and Christian Rieger will be published between 1993 and 1998 in five separate volumes, each containing a bibliography and index. More than 7000 species are included in about 2000 pages. The subscription is Hfl 500 to be paid in parts upon receipt of the separate