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NSCG Newsletter

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Editorial

Now that the season of mellow fruitfulness is once more upon us the fungi books get their annual dusting and perusal as the enquiries ('Is this edible?') come flooding in, mixed with concern about the increase of the wasp spider ('Can it sting?'). The latter enquiry has kept me busy as *Argiope bruennichi*, also known as the St Andrew's Cross spider, has done quite well along the south coast this year. An excellent year too for fungi after last years unseasonal drought. This year's damp but still (just) warm weather has sprinkled people's lawns with a wide variety from three species of ink cap to the snow white field mushroom lookalike (which is a *Lepiota*). A good year too for the nostril tickling stinkhorns (apparently they're edible but I failed to find a recipe in Carluccio's book!) and the inevitable brown Roll Rims (which are definitely not to be eaten!!!). Some more gastronomically-appealing species (mainly wood blewits) have appeared more recently however, and a few of these will probably bypass the collection - 'You're not going to eat THOSE?!', followed, the next day by 'How are you today?', not dead anyway!' the humour goes on.

Chris Collins has certainly been kept busy organising the Cambridge Congress and it was good to see some familiar faces from the Madrid and SPNHC conferences but more of that later. Now that summer is over and the worst of the insect infestations, time to start checking the RH of your stores before it goes off the scale and to check the fluid preservative levels? Finally, the usual moan (again?) - someone out there must have some views on Martin Elliot's paper (page 4 last issue) either supporting him or otherwise but (as usual) I have heard NOTHING!! Remember please that your editor is not expected to do it all himself and apart from a small group of regulars (to whom my heartfelt thanks) and despite frequent requests at committee meetings and elsewhere..... We all have to spread ourselves more thinly each year and even if you feel that your writing style isn't up to the mark I will ensure that it appears as prose worthy of *The Times*. If you find an *Anthrenus* larva munching your Christmas turkey lets hear about it, don't let apathy reign! Happy Christmas readers and writers especially.

Simon Moore

Letter from the Chair

Your committee has met twice since the last newsletter appeared, once at the Cambridge meeting and more recently at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on 14th November 1996.

Firstly a big thank you to all of you who prepared displays and took part in the 'Meet the UK Natural Sciences Conservation Community' workshop at the second world congress

in Cambridge, the displays looked very impressive and we all seemed to be kept busy demonstrating and answering questions.

As a result of the meeting in Cambridge, we now have several new members and I would like to take this opportunity to welcome them and thank them for joining. We are also hoping to attract new members from the conservation courses that are beginning to cover natural science conservation and are planning to introduce a student membership category.

UKIC have agreed in principal to release funds to us for a new poster and leaflet from the now wound up Natural Sciences Section, providing we have charitable status. To this end Maggie Reilly has started to wade through the documentation provided by the Charity Commission and we hope to propose the necessary amendments to the constitution to the AGM in Cardiff. In the mean time we hope to have modified our old poster and have produced a membership handbill (copies available from Nick Gordon) Also at the AGM, due to the staggering of terms of office several committee posts and officers posts, including that of secretary, will become vacant. Please think about standing and of course attending the meeting to vote. In order to improve communications, we now have committee members or co-opted members in common with SPNHC, BCG and GCG committees.

With this newsletter there is a preliminary announcement and call for papers for our AGM and annual meeting, to be held in conjunction with the Biology Curators Group. Julian Carter has arranged an impressive two days, but your contributions are required. Firstly let Julian know that you are interested in attending by returning the form, secondly, sign up to give a talk or present a poster (or both).

Finally the committee has decided to introduce a theme to our newsletters, that of the effects of the ten agents of deterioration on natural science collections. Many of you who attended the two day conservation risk assessment workshop run by the team from the Canadian Museum of Nature that we organised last year and will remember the ten agents. The second step of the risk assessment process involves calculations based on frequency of events and damage done to collections.

The aim of the themes is to build a more informed basis for frequency, type of damage and mitigation and we will be starting with fire. So, if your museum has experienced a fire, please write it up, if the fire was only small scale, smoke detectors picked it up and the fire brigade arrived within minutes; this is just as valuable information as a report of a fire that completely destroyed the entire museum store that had no one on site and no automatic fire alarm. We are also interested in conservation after fires, the effect of fires on storage cabinets and so on. Once we have covered fire we will tackle flood. To remind you the ten agents are:

physical forces, theft and vandalism, fire, flood, pollutants, incorrect temperature, incorrect relative humidity, light and UV, biological agents and custodial neglect. Simon Moore will be awaiting your information, whether it be a snippet or full length article.

So let me finish off by wishing you all the best for the forthcoming festive season.

Kate Andrew, Ludlow Museum.