



NatSCA

Natural Sciences Collections Association

<http://www.natsca.org>

NatSCA News

Title: Book Review: Merchant Rex: A Guide to the Restoration of Antique Taxidermy Specimens

Author(s): Moore, S.

Source: Moore, S. (2006). Book Review: Merchant Rex: A Guide to the Restoration of Antique Taxidermy Specimens. *NatSCA News, Issue 9*, 52.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/258>

NatSCA supports open access publication as part of its mission is to promote and support natural science collections. NatSCA uses the Creative Commons Attribution License (CCAL) <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/> for all works we publish. Under CCAL authors retain ownership of the copyright for their article, but authors allow anyone to download, reuse, reprint, modify, distribute, and/or copy articles in NatSCA publications, so long as the original authors and source are cited.

Book Review

Merchant Rex: A guide to the restoration of antique taxidermy specimens
Norman Cottage Publication. ISBN 1 902 474 104. Price £9.00.
- Simon Moore, Senior Conservator of Natural Sciences,
Hampshire County Council Museums, Libraries & Archives Service

Rex Merchant's book on the Restoration of Antique Taxidermy Specimens has just appeared, published by himself and at a cost of a mere £9, it covers how to assess damage, to repair groundwork, rectify problems with birds and mammals (quoted as animals), fish, case repair and various other associated items. Unfortunately the book is full of errors and gives the impression that it has been produced in a hurry. The final chapter (more than half of the book) is devoted to a useful list of taxidermists with thumbnail details. His list is rather selective since he mentions himself but other contemporary taxidermists such as the late Don Sharp or others still living – Derek Frampton, James Dickinson, Emily Mayer, Mark Winston-Smith, Sean Douglas or Jack Fishwick to mention but a few are omitted! I nearly missed the entry for Ward, Rowland as it is listed after Wright and Wyatt.

His citation ethics are also highly questionable! Apart from a brief mention of Christopher Frost's "outstanding book" as an addendum at the end of chapter 10, he has cited no other sources at all: Christine Taylor's *Directory of Hampshire Taxidermists* (1997), (Ed.) Sue Herriott's *British Taxidermists, a historical directory* and material from websites, to name a few, are not mentioned anywhere although he has obviously lifted their research text, almost word for word. It is very handy to have all this information collated in a small pocket volume, but there is not even a reference or bibliography list, which the reviewer finds highly unethical. The fact that he is making money from this and has an author's copyright notice at the start of the book AND a copyright marking on each page with his name, is unbelievable hypocrisy!

The (plagiarised) part could be really useful but some of it is outdated (Guermonprez collection transferred from Bognor Regis Museum to Portsmouth about 30 years ago!). The technical part could be really useful too but it suffers from inaccuracies concerning the present legality of bird egg possession, COSHH regulated fumigants &c. Poor use of English (effected vs. affected), with occasional syntax errors doesn't help: it would appear that the author didn't ask a competent reviewer to examine the text. The author appears to be an authority of self publication and has even written a book on the subject (*Publish books my way: a personal account of writing, designing and marketing my own books*, a Norman Cottage Publication, 2000) so it is strange that the present work is so amateurishly presented with its titles merging into the cover photograph.

Overall the work is shameful: it could have been a really useful and worthwhile, handy reference book. To this end I hope that it might run to a second (and immediate) printing with a radical overhauling of the text so that it looks more professionally written, with more careful research and updating, a list of cited sources and a proper list of acknowledgements before he has the effrontery to copyright his own work to such an extent.

I have just heard that Rex Merchant has been shown the error of his copyright ways and decided to withdraw the book and recall sold copies for a refund; this being the case I hope that he will reissue it in time, bearing in mind the many criticisms, and produce what could turn out to be a really useful book.