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## The Biology Curator

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Title: BCG News Committee Report

Author(s): Thompson, S.

Source: Thompson, S. (1998). BCG News Committee Report. *The Biology Curator, Issue 11*, 1 - 2.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/436>

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# The Biology Curator

*The Publication of the Biology Curator's Group*

ISSUE 11

MARCH 1998

## Diary Dates

### BCG AGM and Seminar

#### Legal Eagles?: Wildlife Collections and the Law

30 April — 2 May 1998, Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh

Contact: Steve Thompson 01724 843533. See Insert.

## Notice of the 1998 AGM

**The 1998 AGM will be held at 12.30pm on Thursday 30th April at the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh. Items for the Agenda must be put in writing to the Secretary by 16th April.**

**Committee would welcome nominations for Committee posts and are particularly interested in someone to co-ordinate campaigns. Nominations for Committee, proposed and Seconded by BCG members, must be put in writing to the Secretary by 16th April.**

**The minutes of the 1997 AGM were printed in The Biology Curator, Issue 9, July 1997.**

## BCG News Committee Report

We have had two committee meetings since my last committee report, so this one is going to be rather longer than usual. (Wake up at the back). Attendance continues to be good but I still live in hope of getting the entire committee to a meeting.

The meetings were held on the 28.7.97, with Steve Garland taking the helm once more due to Jane's . . . unavoidable absence, and on the 27.10.97, following the launch of the Collections at Risk Action Packs at the NHM. Not particularly well attended, but with a number of key people there, and reported in the Museums Journal.

Collections monitoring has taken up a good deal of committee time, particularly in the last 18 months or so, with the production of the action packs. However, this is one of our most important roles, and the packs have come out very well. This is not to say that they should be necessarily seen as the final word by any means and your observations are most welcome. We will not be surprised if the next version of these packs comes out noticeably different to this first one.

Our list of museums to worry about is getting ever longer, and includes Bristol, Leicester, Nottingham, Glasgow, Paisley, Inverness, Scotland in general, Lincoln, Portsmouth, Birmingham, Sheffield, Ipswich and the Horniman. Some of these it, should be said, are probably a passing concern for issues such as the refilling of recently vacated posts. Mike is to be thanked for the work he has put into this area.

## Contents

BCG News.....	1
News.....	5
Collections Research.....	6

**Deadline:** All items for next publication to reach Editors by 8th May 1998.

Orphan collections are still on our agenda, and I have recently met with both Barbara Woroncow and Val Bott regarding options for progress in this area.

Steve Garland continues to promote museums as biological recording centres, and to raise their profile within the drive to establish a national biodiversity network.

Our links with GCG and NSCG continue to be close and, despite a little confusion over the possibility of another joint AGM, we continue to enjoy each others support. BCG also seeks to liaise with other bodies, including UK Systematics Forum over their strategy for systematics research, SMA at the 1997 MA conference, MAGDA (disability forum) at the 1998 MA conference and DoE over licensing for the use of taxidermy specimens, where we gained a major concession for any registered museum that makes use of such material. Our thanks to Jane for getting on to that very promptly, not to say successfully.

Our conference sessions have attracted between forty and sixty people, and Robert Anderson, (BM director), who chaired our last one, was full of praise for it, so we are clearly hitting the right notes there. The 1998 session is to be about the use of museum objects in the future.

Our other meetings continue to be succesful, with attendances of between forty and seventy people. The AGM in Cardiff, jointly with NSCG, went very well and the Vienna trip was fully booked. I believe a jolly good time was had by all. Silly me for not going, but there we are. Future overseas trips are planned for Belfast, Leiden and St. Petersburg, and I don't intend to miss those. The next meeting is to be in Edinburgh, so we expect to see a full complement of curators from the frozen north. See insert in this issue. These meetings all take a great deal of work, and we try to provide the best and most relevant possible events for the membership, so please make every effort to support them.

The August issue of the Museums Journal contained a substantial ( cover ) article on natural history, and a number of our concerns were aired. We are pleased that we do appear to be raising our profile within the profession. You may rest assured that we will continue to promote this trend. Our web page, currently being created, will no doubt help towards this.

The last edition of The Biology Curator (TBC) came with Paul Brown's special paper on the care of microscope slides, which contained a great deal of useful information. We will be happy to publish similar works should the opportunity arise, so, any offers?

Maggie Reilly has had to stand down from committee, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the recent arrival of another pair of tiny feet. (Congrats to Maggie). John Harrison has come onto committee and we feel very strongly that Scotland should continue to be represented, particularly at the present time. To this end, Shona Allen has agreed to see if the role fits, but, ever flexible, we are hoping to be looking at the practicality of joint representation from Scotland, to ease the burden on any one individual or institution.

As you can see, we are pretty busy, but never too busy to respond to feedback from the membership. Let us have your

comments, ideas, criticisms, letters for TBC, whatever. We hope to see you in Carlisle and Edinburgh.

Steve, the Sec.

### BCG Foreign Trips

As you are well aware, the Committee has organised very successful study trips to Europe for the last few years. Future trips are likely to include a return to Leiden in 1999, to look at new developments there, and one to St. Petersburg in 2000.

At present, one for 1998 has not been organised. Suggestions have been Belfast, Spain or Portugal, though the practicability of these has to be investigated. If anyone has any suggestions to make for possible destinations, we would like to hear them, especially if they have connections in the appropriate places.

Steve Thompson

### Collections Monitoring Cell News

#### Collections at Risk Packs

The two *Collections at Risk* packs namely, the *Action Pack for Curators* and the *Information Pack for Museum Governing Bodies*, are now out and available following their launch at the Natural History Museum on 27th October by Professor Steve Blackmore. Contrary to the short note in December's Museums Journal, the packs are available from me on a request basis (address at the end of the section).

The *Curator's Action Pack* contains both direct information aiming to improve the way in which the Group deals with specific cases of collections at risk and also support information designed to assist curators with their ongoing role of collections advocacy. Contents are as follows:

1. Introduction
2. BCG Policy Statement for Safeguarding Collections at Risk
3. Checklist for Curators with Collections at Risk
4. Outlines of BCG Approaches
5. Arguments in Support of Biological Collections
6. Prevention is better than Cure
7. Useful Contacts
8. Useful References

The *BCG Policy Statement for Safeguarding Collections at Risk* is published further on in this edition of the Newsletter. The *Checklist for Curators with Collections at Risk* provides a listing of the type of information the Cell from curators who feels their collection is either currently at risk or may become at risk in the near future. It also emphasises the importance of early notification and the need for curators to ensure that the Cell is kept informed as the