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Partnership with local and national specialists to improve the taxonomic veracity of local collections and to catalogue existing collections

Partnership with local specialists to provide archival facilities for documents associated with local collections and local recording (e.g. personal notebooks)

Recording schemes and local museums should develop partnerships so that local and national specialists work together with museums to develop the taxonomic skills of new cohorts of recorders, using local collections and local facilities.

Local museums, and especially their governing bodies, should be more aware of the vital role they could and should play in interaction with field naturalists and biological recording initiatives. In most cases museum professionals already have a duty to promote the use of collections in their care and most museums have, or should have, collection policies. It would be advantageous if museum accreditation could take account of this important aspect of the role of museums in society. Only by reinforcing the need for museums and the relevance of the collections that they hold to the society that they serve, will we be able to continue to justify the existence of and demand for resources for museums.

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Colour Change in Cabinet Skins

As a professional bird illustrator, I have used the collection at Tring for many years for reference, and have

become interested in the question of the alteration of plumage colours in cabinet skins.

There are nowadays a large number of illustrators using the collection at Tring, and there is a continuing assessment of racial differences based on small variations of plumage colour. I would like to raise the issue of trying to establish exactly what colour changes take place in skins, and what impact this might be having on all the work that is going on.

Thinking about this has led me to re-read the article published in 1947 in *British Birds*, Vol XL, pages 322-325 by Reginald Wagstaffe and Ken Williamson on "Cabinet colour changes in bird-skins and their bearing on racial segregation". This is really quite alarming, in that substantial colour changes in even recently collected material were detected by comparison with freshly dead birds. Presumably some changes take place soon after a skin is prepared, and some over a much longer period of time. I guess that the slow-down in collecting in recent years will render much comparison impossible, and which of the historic skins really retain validity? Much of the collection at Tring is already old - what will it be like in 50 years time?

I wonder if there are any recent studies by museum workers anywhere on this topic? It could certainly be interesting to compare freshly dead collected material from Africa, for instance, to existing skins, to determine what changes have taken place. In critical groups like greenbuls and warblers it might help to have a note actually published near the relevant plates to alert users to the situation.

I would be very interested to hear the views of BCG members, and whether they think it would be useful to initiate some research or debate. It may well be, of course, that much has been published within the museum world about this subject, and I would certainly be interested to get details.

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Did Richard Buxton ever collect any *Rubus* specimens?

The artisan botanist Richard Buxton (1786-1865) author of the *Botanical Guides to the Flowering Plants about Manchester* (1849, 1859) actually studied the Manchester *Rubi* for no less than seven years. Buxton although only a clog-maker by trade realised that his knowledge of local botany actually exceeded that of 'more learned men'. Perhaps he was referring indirectly to botanists such as L. H. Grindon (who also produced a *Manchester Flora* in 1859) and J. Sidebotham? A few specimens of a very limited number of bramble species were collected by Grindon and Sidebotham during the 1840s from the Manchester area and are housed at Manchester Museum (MANCH) mainly within the Charles Bailey collection. It should be noted however that a collection of *Rubus* stem leaves presumably of local brambles is to be found in Grindon's herbarium of cultivated plants (MANCH) which would probably have been used in botany class demonstrations. These local exiccatae fall short of a complete representation for the *Rubus* accounts