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but it is a voluntary and non-statutory scheme. In our view public museum collections could include nationally funded, local authority, university and armed services museums. The position of independent museums would need further consideration because most do not receive regular public funding. Nevertheless the considerable benefits they receive from their charitable status might mean that they too should be included in the new statutory concept or alternatively they might be encouraged voluntarily to subscribe. And the concept of public museum collection should finally reinforce the presumption that museum collections are indeed inalienable cultural assets. The MGC would not wish to see a situation where it became impossible for museums to exercise sensible collections management decisions, for example by transferring material to another public museum collection, but it should become impossible for governing bodies to asset strip and flout conditions agreed with benefactors. We are currently awaiting the reaction of Government which is consulting its lawyers so I can't tell you what their opinion of our advice is but that has really brought you up to date with a broad survey of the legal background to museum collections and how we think it could be improved and what we are doing to try and achieve that.

The Work of the Wildlife Liaison officers

Bryan Robertson, Lothian and Borders Police.

I am Sergeant Bryan Robertson, and I'm the Co-ordinator for the 9 Wildlife Liaison Officers for Lothian and Borders Police, a job I have been doing for seven years, part time. Indeed, everybody in Lothian and Borders Police and, for that matter, in Scotland, who is a Wildlife Liaison Officer is doing it part time. For my part, I've got a full time beat sergeant's job in East Lothian. To do my Wildlife Liaison job I've got to beg, borrow and steal time, finance, whatever expertise is needed, and that's the only way it's getting done. However, I have no real complaints there, though I am a bit envious of Steve and one or two other forces in England, with four or five full-timers. Perhaps it's fair comment to say in this environment there is more than one way to skin a cat, and the job is still getting done in Scotland.

So, what are we? Well, in some quarters Wildlife Liaison Officers are referred to as a virus. We come from unknown origins, where circumstances permit, we expand and spread and we tend to cause havoc wherever we go. Perhaps that's true for some people and I'm pleased about that. As far as origins are concerned, it is a wee bit unknown but I like to put forward the idea there are two origins. Let's go back to 1982 when the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act came out. Literally overnight somebody threw this wad of potential offences at Chief Constables and said 'here get on with it, it's up to your officers to deal with all these potential offences, taking eggs, plants whatever'. This was really a problem for Chief Constables – how do they deal with that?

At about the same time, there was a case down in the south of England, which went drastically wrong in court and caused a fair bit of embarrassment for the police force concerned. There was a bit of a post-mortem to decide what went wrong and what we are going to do with it. To his credit, a former Assistant Chief Constable, Terry Rands, who was interested in wildlife to begin with, took this on board. The norm is to identify the lowest rank involved in a case, which has gone wrong, and point the big finger and say 'you're it, you're to blame'. Mr Rands did not take this attitude. He quite rightly identified the fact that it was totally unacceptable to expect constables to be out there, 'jacks of all trades', specialists in traffic, drugs, community involvement and now wildlife. So from my point of view, he is the grand daddy of us all. He decided that the way his force was going to meet the challenge was to identify somebody who, though not a specialist in wildlife nor a specialist in wildlife law to begin with, but would learn more about the various acts that the police force was going to get hit with and build up a reservoir of expertise. And so the WLO was born!

We have increased from those days. My force has nine officers this year, though up until last year we only had two. Strathclyde has one for every Division, and so it increases all the time. By and large this is being caused by public and media interest. There is a problem out there. When we get some meaningful figures, it seems to indicate that things are getting worse but I don't personally believe that. I think it is because we are becoming better at recording things and getting the message across. Wildlife crime is another thing for the police to deal with. It is a typical area to work in, in that there are seldom any witnesses out there, but that is not to say that we can't take that challenge, try and do something about it, and keep the public informed. We want to do a better job than we have been doing in the past and I think we are.

I'm going to show you some slides which will better explain, perhaps, some of the areas we do get involved with. Before I do that I must warn you that there is the very odd gruesome slide to be found so if you could just bear with me. I mentioned earlier that it is part of our job to build up a knowledge of not just the law but of experts. Where are they? What can they do for us? I would like to think I've got a good working

relationship with the museum staff here. Just through my job in general I come across dead specimens. I'm quite happy to donate them, let the museum benefit and let the public benefit and therefore I've got no qualms about coming in and getting statements, species identified whatever.

There was a problem regarding sand martins [slide] on a nice piece of salmon water here [slide]. The ownership of the water changed hands and the new owner decide he wasn't interested in various planning acts, the Wildlife and Countryside Act, indeed anything whatsoever. He just wanted to improve the fishing. So he put a huge piece of machinery in the middle of the Tweed, dug out all the pebbles from the bottom and shored up this sandy bank, which he reckoned had collapsed. He carried this out in May, a couple of years ago. The adult Sand Martins were flying in and out but the people on site had no idea of what they were doing. They were simply following instructions from some well-healed and titled person living elsewhere. We went down, got some of the boulders back away from the bank, dug in and managed to prove that there were several nests entombed by this activity. I was helped by people who were non-birders, so I brought the nest and the eggs into the museum here, got them identified and got a witness statement from your colleagues.

We have got to be alert to all sorts of things. We get informed by the public and we find cases ourselves. There are many ways we actually come across wildlife offences. For example, I'm sure you've all got this type of magazine or paper in your area, with adverts in. Lo and behold, in one there was someone selling a stuffed otter. I followed that one up, but I couldn't prove the cause of death for the animal. What I could prove was the fact that it was for sale, it was advertised for sale and that in itself is an offence.

A somewhat different case is seen here. [slide of a dead badger] To begin with, this sounded like something terrible had happened in some woodlands some 15 miles from here. This had been found by somebody going for a walk. What you don't see in the slide is the back end of that badger all churned up, apparently eaten. The story came with the added extra that some lads had been up in that area with lurcher type dogs. The inference was that somebody had been training a young dog to catch and kill badgers. We have an excellent relationship with a forensic veterinary pathologist nearby and for the princely sum of £30 we established that the animal had been tied up with a noose but had died of natural causes and a fox or something had come along afterwards and had a bit of supper out of it's back end. As far as the noose was concerned, some local kids, about ten or twelve years old, not the ones with the dogs, had found this badger before us, tied a string to it and dragged it around the woods playing with it, as you do. I've included this one to highlight that not all is doom and gloom out there. We are always happy to take on board public reports, but quite often they are totally unfounded. This is a crow trap, something which is prevalent at this time of year. They have caused some problems but these are hopefully being addressed. It is quite legal for gamekeepers and land users to put out these traps. They are specifically intended to catch crows so that they take away the pressure from the birds that they are trying to cater for. The problem was that in the past there was very little legislation to cover these things. All sorts of species were getting captured and basically just dying a horrible death. In one case, further north in Scotland, a golden eagle managed to fly into one of these funnel traps, and died from starvation. Since the turn of this year there has been new legislation in force. These things are legal under a general license, but there are now one or two stipulations that must apply. This will be a great help to us in order to deal with people who set these traps out in the open and just fail to check them on a daily basis.

This is another type of trap [slide] that is to be found out there, totally legal, and it's again designed to catch crows, (Hooded Crows, Carrion Crows). The idea is that the target species comes along, lands on the perch, the perch collapses and the crow is caught. Whilst that is legal and I'm quite happy with that, the thing is open to abuse. This is the same type of trap, [slide] just a somewhat different design. That's a feral pigeon captured in one of the compartments and there is no way that device is going to catch a Carrion Crow. However, it is suitable for catching a goshawk, as indeed it did. A member of the public found it, released the bird and reported it to the RSPB, who in turn reported it to me. The padlock on the central compartment is where the pigeon was, to stop the public releasing the feral pigeon in the first place. Myself and a couple of RSPB investigators went out, sat out in the woodland for about an hour, quite a short watch, until we got someone going back to the site and we submitted a report against the gamekeeper on that estate. This is just one example of something that is legal but regularly abused, and is an area we are actively involved in, certainly in Scotland.

Another field we are very much interested in is the poisoning of our wildlife. I think most people are aware that red kites are being released in Scotland, and have been for several years now. Already this year in Scotland we've had at least one poisoning of a red kite, and it's happening in every UK County on an almost monthly basis. There have been poisons blatantly laid out in the open within 10 miles of where you're sitting at present, and it's my job to do something about it. It is a horrible thing and it is also a dangerous field for us to work in, with health and safety issues of paramount importance. The method is to shoot a rabbit or pigeon,

lace it with anxines (pesticides that are being used as poisons), and leave them out in the open. Crows and foxes are usually the intended targets but whatever comes along and eats it is going to die, be it hedgehogs, red kites, eagles, whatever. In this area, south and central Scotland, the common Buzzard has been a success story. They are now breeding almost everywhere, which is great, but they have also become probably the biggest targets. They are dropping like flies to poison, shooting, trapping, and so on, and they are not even a major hazard. I was speaking to a gamekeeper yesterday and he is adamant the buzzards do not cause a major problem, but they are still getting slaughtered.

Here is another trap [slide], not a very good view of one, but again, a legal trap, designed to catch stoats and weasels. The idea to put it in a place where it is not going to catch the non target species. Excellent, no problem. However, put the same trap on a pole, preferably surrounding a pheasant release pen, and then you're going to catch something like a Long-eared Owl. Owls are, without a doubt, interested in pheasants within their release pens, even if they are not catching many, but that could just as easily been a Sparrowhawk, Goshawk or something like that.

This is one that Bob and Andrew might remember from their past and caused a fair bit of debate by way of identification. Everybody agreed at the end of the day as to what it was, and indeed it was a juvenile Honey Buzzard. The number of breeding Honey Buzzards in the UK is small and the number of times they breed in Scotland is tiny but this could have been a Scandinavian bird that had flown over. It was actually found shot within a mile of my home. When I heard about that I had some very unprofessional thoughts.

We also have a problem with finch trapping. It's one of these pastimes dotted about the UK, which seems to centre on certain areas, including, I'm afraid to say, old coal mining communities. Certainly in Scotland, that is a fact. It's quite legal for people to breed finches and show them, and I've got no difficulty with that, but it is quite often the case that the best bird is one freshly caught from the wild, as long as you can tame it enough so that it doesn't kill itself flying about in it's box on the day of the show.

Going back to something that Steve has just shown you, egg collecting. There are still hardened groups of people within the UK who are determined to do this. Already on Mull this year, a sea eagle's nest has been robbed. It is incredible, but it is something we've got to be alert to. I suspect we will be involved in these cases for some time to come. Perhaps in another generation or two it will have died out, but certainly this hardened core will stop at nothing. We, the police, are dependent on experts. In other words, someone from the RSPB, helping out the police with identification of eggs and collections of eggs. As you can imagine it is going to take some time to deal with something like that, and it does happen. Sometimes there is no catalogue of identification, and to prove a case from scratch you've got to identify every egg and have people prepared to go into the witness box and say, yes, that is the egg of such and such.

People have touched on taxidermy. This was a bird found in someone's freezer [slide], and was obviously destined to become a taxidermy specimen at some later stage and was awaiting transportation. I have all sorts of things in my freezer from time to time. My wife put her foot down at the otter I had a fortnight ago. This chap had the hawk and the reason I've put this one in is because whilst we were searching this chap's house, we found this species (and not *Homo sapiens*)(?) so he got caught on two accounts there, and shame on you if you can't identify this!

To finish off with, this is what we are trying to protect in the wild at this time of year, clutches of Peregrine Falcon eggs. In East Lothian, which is just east of you, is a nest site which is traditionally the first clutch to hatch in Scotland and they are just at the point of hatch now, so we're giving that a fair bit of extra attention. With any luck they will be something ready to fly off in a few weeks time. Thank you very much.

Health and Safety Issues.

Allan Young, Royal Museum of Scotland.

Perhaps I should explain my role in RMS. I appear in the programme here as the Health and Safety Officer that's not quite how I see myself. My department, which is Administration, co-ordinates health and safety activity and I will try to say a bit about how we manage health and safety in the course of my talk this afternoon. What I intend to do is very quickly to outline the key legislation relating to health and safety, particularly as it applies to the work of biology curators.

The Health and Safety at Work Act is a key piece of legislation. It was introduced after a fairly extensive commission review in the early seventies and it has been compared in its importance with the Factory Act of 1833 which puts it fairly high in terms of legislation. The significant thing about it is it is an enabling act. It does not deal in a great deal of detail with the minutiae of legal management. It sets a framework within which regulations can be made to deal with a range of activities and that is the way the framers of the Act saw it being taken forward. They