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made under a range of divisions, each with requirements appropriate to that area of work, eg. AMA (curatorial), etc. Also of concern is the disparity between the holders of the new award and those of the old award. It seems that both groups feel there is the potential for the credibility of the status to be undermined by the other group.

Mentors: This, again, is a system that seems appropriate to the nature of the profession and this scheme. However, the demands on a mentor will be much greater than those on a diploma tutor, because of the much broader range of guidance and supervision required, and the potentially longer timescale. Furthermore, the standards of mentorship will need to be more or less uniform. It is to be expected that the mentors will need some level of guidance and possibly training. With regards to referees, there is an opinion among the students that they should not be required to assess their referees competence and knowledge, and it is difficult to see how this could be viewed as a reasonable demand upon the students.

Timetable: It is not clear what is the timetable for putting this scheme through, particularly with regard to membership approval. It is not even clear whether such approval, by the logical way of the MA AGM, is to be sought. There is certainly a suggestion that Council is seeking to have it cut and dried by the end of July. We do not believe that all the issues will have been sufficiently explored by then.

Costs: It is difficult to see how anything more than a nominal charge could be made, since none of the criteria are to be achieved at the MA's expense. Indeed, one of them, membership of the MA is to the MA's financial benefit, and carries with it the expectation of certain benefit, which includes the status of AMA when all the appropriate criteria have been achieved. Should the fees be substantial, the MA may well be expected to explain where the costs arise.

Code of Conduct: This represents the best opinion of a group of people, (MA Council), at a certain point in time, and also represents MA policy. As such, it is a political document, to which signed adherence is not to be recommended. Furthermore such an action would result in it being a set of

rules not a code of conduct, and would presumably also make it a contract, with the consequent legal implications. Membership of the MA implies a general acceptance of the code, and could be removed anyway if the code was unreasonably infringed.

In general, we feel that this is an important issue, with the opportunity to create something of lasting value to the profession, and one which is unlikely to arise again in the near future. In other professions, a formal professional award, often chartership, is the hallmark of quality. It may be instructive to look at the examples of other professions in establishing this for the museums profession. We believe that the present project is moving in the right direction, and are not trying to suggest that the proposed methods and criteria are wrong. We do believe, however, that any final decision should be avoided until the above issues have been fully explored and their validity and practicability have been demonstrated.

Signed on behalf of BCG and GCG committees by

BCG Chairman	GCG Chairman
Mike Graham	Paul Ensom

REVIEW

MANUAL OF NATURAL HISTORY CURATORSHIP. Edited by Geoff Stansfield, John Mathias and Gordon Reid. Published by HMSO, £45. h/b. 1994. 306 pp. ISBN 0 11 290513 7. b/w photographs and drawings.

The first time I saw this book was in the National Museum of Natural History in Leiden on the BCG Holland study trip. Several jaws dropped to the floor as nobody else had seen a published copy, including several of the authors. However, it is now widely available and should (hopefully) be on every curators' book shelf.

The aim of the Manual is to provide a basic reference for all involved with natural history museums or collections at all levels, including curators, administrators, committee members and trustees. The book focuses on zoological and botanical material, omitting geological collections as these have been covered by recently published monographs, eg Knell and Taylor (1989). It also recognises that it cannot cover everything in great detail so has very full reference lists of more specialised publications.

The Manual has fourteen chapters written by eleven natural history curators: Functions and Organisation of Natural History Museums; Acquisition of Collections; The Preparation and Preservation of Collections; Documentation of Collections; Housing and Maintenance of Collections; Using Natural History Collections; Natural History Museums and Biological Recording; Live Animals and Plants in Natural History Museums; Health and Safety in Natural History Museums; Education and Interpretation in Natural History Museums; Natural History Museum Exhibition; Schools and Natural History Museums; Information Services, Publications and Sales; Working with Other Bodies.

On first opening the book I was struck by the amount of text. This is a wordy tome, packing a lot of information between its covers. The chapters vary greatly in style, some general, others going into specific details, eg in depth chemistry for specimen preparation and preservation. However, I was disappointed with the lack of visuals. There are five sample labels and an MDA card, sixteen drawings of practical storage ideas and one b/w photograph of bound herbaria. I would have liked more visual examples to break up the rather heavy pages of text particularly of different methods of storage, preparation and display of both live and preserved collections. I can only assume that such additions would have added too much to the selling price. There are many recommendations for materials and equipment throughout the manual but a main suppliers' list would have been a useful addition.

This is primarily a reference work, pulling together many aspects of natural history practice. Several of the chapters read as nothing more than subject overviews, probably fulfilling their remit. Sadly, however, there is too little real practical advice for my liking. You will find some such advice in the areas of preparation, preservation, documentation, housing, maintenance and live material but you often have to hunt through a lot of haystacks to find the needles.

How useful a book this is can perhaps be measured by how often it is used on a daily working basis. Apart from reading it for this review I have to date only looked at it again twice. That

may say more about me than the book but I'll let you discover that for yourselves. As a baseline recommendation, for anyone starting up in natural history this is an invaluable publication and should be read from cover to cover. For us old lags there is enough to jog our memories and remind us to change our bad habits.

Steve Woolfall, Grosvenor Museum,
Chester

PUBLICATIONS

Natural Science Collections in Scotland - this is the catalogue produced by the Scottish Natural Sciences Collections Research Unit in 1987. Now slightly out of date but still very useful. Anyone who balked at the original price of £25 can now pick up a remaindered copy for the unbelievable bargain price of £5 (incl postage), from the Publications Section, National Museums of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh.

Checklist of the Cerambycidae and Disteniidae (Coleoptera) of the Western Hemisphere - available from Wolfsgarden Books, P.O.Box 10716, Burbank, California 91510-0716, USA. Price \$84.60 incl. international postage.

World Checklist of Seed Plants - vol 1 parts I and II now available for 260 Swiss Francs from MIM Editions, Lakkorslei 114, 2100 Antwerp, Belgium.

EXHIBITIONS

Natural Curiosity is a new and very interesting small exhibition in the entrance of the Royal Museum of Scotland, Chambers Street, Edinburgh. It traces the history of Natural History in Scotland from the seventeenth century using historic specimens from the Scottish national collections.

Feather, Fur and Fin: a look at taxidermy is a new display at Chelmsford Museums Service tracing the origin and development of taxidermy using specimens of (mainly) birds, fish and other animals which have been included in the specimen conservation programme initiated eight years ago and which it seems, unfortunately, will be the swansong of the South East Museums Service conservators.

Julius Brenchley, Gentleman Explorer is a new exhibition at Maidstone Museum. This tells the story of JB's life and various travels

around the world using the natural and ethnographic objects he collected.

The Centre for Understanding the Environment is the latest development at the Horniman Museum and has been described as one of the most advanced ecological projects of the last ten years. Built from sustainable timber CUE is insulated with recycled newspaper, finished with non-toxic organic paint and topped with a living grass and wild flower roof. [This is crying out for a review, volunteer please - Ed]

Bird Biology: an exhibition about birds - a soaring Ruppell's vulture, *Gyps rueppellii*, has spotted a dead young antelope lying on the arid sands below. It circles above the carcass rapidly losing height and eventually lands nearby, the first scavenger to arrive at this meagre meal. After tearing through the thin skin, the vulture begins to feed on the soft internal organs while a marabou stork, *Leptoptilus crumeniferus*, watches on, patiently waiting for scraps. You could be watching this scene in Africa, but you are actually looking at this first spectacular exhibit in Bird Biology, a new permanent exhibition about the biology of birds, which opened to the public last October.

Bird Biology focuses on three main aspects on the biology of birds - flight, feeding and reproduction. It makes use of the extensive collection of mounted birds of the Natural History Department, many of which were formerly on display in the gallery next door. But instead of serried ranks of every conceivable bird on Earth, this new exhibition shows how the shape, structure, coloration and size of a bird are adaptations to help birds exploit virtually every food source in every habitat all over the world.

Intermingled with the older mounts are many new specimens, which have been mounted specially in dynamic poses to show particular behaviours. So now, you can see a lammergeier vulture, *Gyaepatus barbatus*, swallowing large lumps of bone like a sword swallower, a female wreathed hornbill, *Aceros undulatus*, which has incarcerated herself in a tree nest hole with a wall of mud, leaving only a small slit through which the male feeds her, and the bizarre courtship of the male houbara bustard, *Chlamydotis undulata*, which resembles a feather duster crossed with a headless chicken.

The introduction shows that birds evolved from small carnivorous dinosaurs and the function of the vital combination of feathers, skeleton and eggs which defines birds. It also shows the biggest living bird, the ostrich, *Struthio camelus*, alongside one of the smallest, the vervain hummingbird, *Mellisuga minima*, which is no bigger than the ostrich's eyeball.

The second section, Flight, shows how birds fly and, in particular, how wing shape affects the way in which they fly, whether it be a sparrowhawk in rapid pursuit of its prey or a pheasant taking off vertically to escape a fox. Many birds in a museum are shown sitting on a perch or on the ground, but Bird Biology shows a multitude of birds in flight. The apparently mysterious way in which birds successfully migrate over thousands of kilometres is also investigated. The highlight of this section is a newly mounted female wandering albatross, *Diomedea exulans*, which can be seen gliding over the ocean with her wings stretched fully to their three metre span - a truly magnificent sight.

The third section, Finding Food, aims to show some diversity of the birds of the world by looking at how they are adapted to feeding. By focusing on different diets (eg seeds, fish, nectar etc), it is possible to see how different bird families have evolved either very similar or very different solutions for feeding on a particular diet.

The fourth section, The Cycle of Life, looks in detail at the many different aspects of reproduction from nest-building to hatching from the egg and rearing of the young. In particular it looks at the wide diversity of nests and nesting materials and how these relate to the shape and coloration of eggs. It also focuses on cuckoos and other birds which parasitise the nests of other species and so avoid the labours of parenthood, and contrast them with many other bird species, in which young from the previous year help to rear their siblings.

The final section, Attracting a Mate, completes the cycle of life by showing the different ways in which birds attract mates using songs, brightly-coloured plumage and often bizarre displays. It shows that birds have two main mating strategies - most are monogamous, but a few are polygamous with either males or