

NEWSLETTER

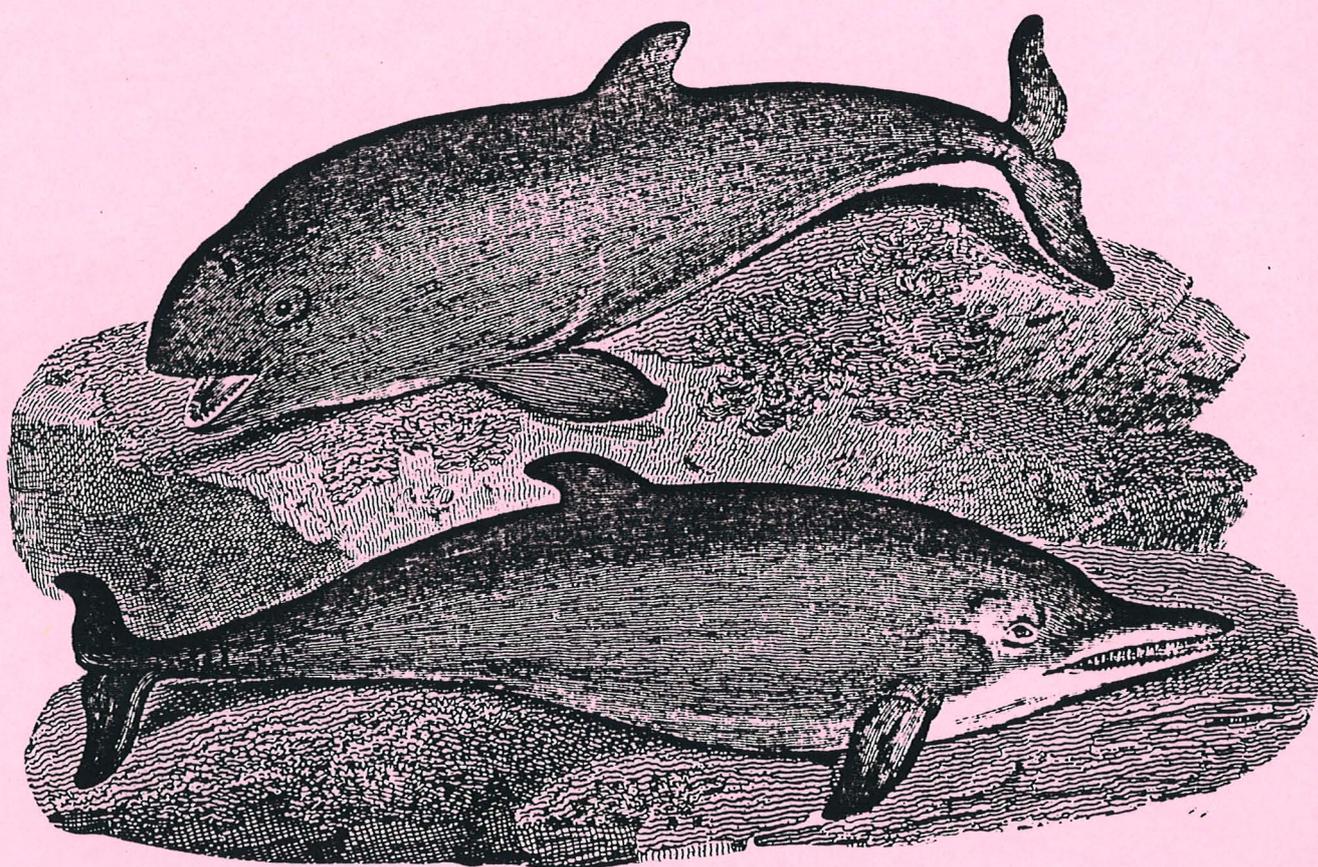
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Volume 4 Part 4

Feb 1986

Biology Curators' Group



The aims of the Biology Curator's Group are:

- (i) to facilitate the exchange of information between individuals concerned with the management of biological collections and records, their research, conservation and interpretation.
- (ii) to present the view of curators of biological collections.

Copy dates for future issues based on three copies per year:

31 August for October issue

31 December for February issue

Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Committee of the Biology Curators' Group.

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Cover Design - So long and thanks for all the fish.!

BIOLOGY CURATORS GROUP

NEWSLETTER

vol. 4 no. 4

1986

Editor : Steve Garland

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ISSN 0144 588 X

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EDITORIAL

PLEASE PAY YOUR SUBS NOW - THANKS.

Now is the time for me to thank all the members of B.C.G. who have worked so hard to provide copy for the Newsletter over my four years as Editor, for I have decided to resign this year. New ideas, approaches and fresh enthusiasm by my replacement should see the Newsletter off into a new era; hopefully B.C.G. too. Many thanks also to Derek Whiteley for great assistance with getting the issues out and for helping to generate many of the articles.

There is a strong feeling on the B.C.G. Committee that the Group should put together a strategy for future developments and policy. It is felt by many that, after more than ten years in existence, now is the time to sit up and say "Where do we go from here?" What aims and policies do you think that the B.C.G. should pursue during the next decade?

If anyone fancies a spell on the Committee, then use the nomination forms in this issue. Last year there was actually an election through over-subscribing of places; but don't let this discourage you. Surely it is a healthy sign for the Group that members want to be involved. If you don't get on Committee then the next best thing is to get involved by contributing regularly to the Newsletter!

Finally, if everyone who owes articles gets them written by the end of April it will make my replacement's job much easier to start with! I won't mention names, but here are a few clues: British Museum (Nat. Hist.) charges for enquiries; Marine zoology journals; Egg thefts; Book reviews (come on, even if you got a boring one you must have read it by now); also a couple of featured institutions! I'm sure there are also others whose names I have momentarily forgotten!

Thanks again for all the help.

Steve Garland.

B.C.G. NEWS

The Cardiff Conference report has not yet emerged, but is with the printers and should be ready in the near future.

Grosvenor Museum, Chester: The collections are in the process of dispersal to other institutions. It is hoped to summarise the details in a future Newsletter.

Sothebys are reported to have said that they will stop selling protected species material, which can only be legally bid for by Museums and licensed persons.

Special Publications Officer: Committee has decided to recommend the adoption of this additional post in view of the extra load placed on the Newsletter Editor by recent occasional publications.

Cardiff Conference 1986 - CANCELLED - (∴ it won't precede the report on the previous one!)

Working Party on Natural Science Collections Resources

The Williams Report was due to be approved for publication at the Museums Association December meeting. B.C.G. Committee has not yet been able to examine the Report.

British Museum (Natural History): Before using the B.M.(N.H.) as an identification service, please note that you must now expect a charge for the service. You are best to check with the relevant person there first. B.C.G. Committee were very concerned about this development and our views will be expressed at a future Specialist Groups meeting. G.C.G. have also expressed their concern.

Subscriptions: Committee voted to recommend a rise to £6.00 individual and £10.00 institutional for 1987. Any subs for 1986 remaining unpaid after the A.G.M. will be charged at the new, higher rate (if approved).

Advertising: Adam Wright has generated income of £75.00 from advertising; a fine achievement.

FENSCORE are having discussions with the Royal Society for money to replace Bill Pettitt.

National Federation for Biological Recording is holding its inaugural conference at the Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge on 14 to 16 April 1986. see the details enclosed in this Newsletter.

The Federation has also produced its Newsletter number 2, (January 1986)

Notice of Annual General Meeting - 1986

The Annual General Meeting of the Biology Curators' Group will be held at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday 16th April 1986 at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge.

Agenda

1. Apologies.
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 19th April.
3. Secretary's Report (to be circulated).
4. Treasurer's Report (to be circulated).
5. Editor's Report.
6. Special Publications Officer - new post proposed by Committee.
7. Election of Officers and Committee.
8. Date and place of next meeting.
9. Any other business (any business under this heading should be notified in writing to the Honorary Secretary at least four weeks before the meeting).

Present position: (year of first election in brackets)

<u>Chairman</u>	Peter Morgan (1985) retiring
<u>Secretary</u>	Penny Wheatcroft (1983) willing to stand for re-election
<u>Treasurer/Membership Secretary</u>	John Mathias (1980) retiring
<u>Editor</u>	Steve Garland (1982) retiring
<u>Committee</u>	Geoff Hancock (1985) willing to stand for re-election
	Tony Irwin (1985) " " "
	Graham Walley (1985) " " "
	Geoff Stansfield (1984) " " "
	Ian Wallace (1984) " " "
	Adam Wright (1984) " " "
	Charles Copp (1983) retiring
	Geoff Halfpenny (1983) "
	Rosina Down (1983) "

The Committee has the power to co-opt. Present co-opted members are Martin Brendell (BM(NH) Liaison); Eric Greenwood; Di Smith (G.C.G. representative).

The full Committee consists of 9 posts of which three are to be filled this year.

Nominations: Nominations for Officers and Committee members must be supported by two members of the Group. Nominations, in writing, must reach the Secretary at least two weeks before the Annual General Meeting. A signed statement that the nominee is prepared to stand would also be preferred.

Penny Wheatcroft,
Hon. Secretary,
c/o Public Services Dept., BM(NH), London.

Course on Pest Control in Museums

For the third year running the Institute of Archaeology of the University of London is running a course on Insect Pest Control in Museum Collections. In preparation for my role as tutor on the course I have been compiling an extensive bibliography on the subject and collecting information on pest control methods used in museums.

Most natural history curators will be aware that a new species of Dermestid beetle Anthrenus sarnicus was described in 1962 and that this species has subsequently been found infesting museum collections at the BMNH. I would be interested to hear from any other museums where this species has been found together with any information which might suggest how it has been introduced. I would also be interested to hear from museums which have found sarnicus in their collections (mounted specimens).

I am aware that Martyn Linnie of the Zoology Department of the University of Dublin has also circulated museums asking for details of pest control methods.

Members of BCG might find the attached references useful. That by Nigel. Armes describing his research project at the BMNH on the biology and control of sarnicus is particularly interesting.

Armes, Nigel, J., 'Aspects of the biology of the Guernsey Carpet Beetle, Anthrenus sarnicus Mroczk., and control of dermestid pests in museums. Preprints of the 7th Triennial Meeting of the ICOM Committee for Conservation held in Copenhagen. 1984 13.1-13.3.

Edwards, R. (1969). Anthrenus sarnicus Mroczk. (Col. Dermestidae). The present status of this insect in the British Isles. Entomologists mon Mag. 105, 119-121.

Mroczkowski, M. 'Anthrenus sarnicus sp. n. (Coleoptera Dermestidae) from the Island of Guernsey. Ann. Mag. nat. Hist. series 13.5 697-700 (1962).

Woodroffe, G.E., (1967). Anthrenus sarnicus Mroczkowski (Coleoptera Dermestidae) in Britain. J. stored Prod.Res. 3. 263-265.

The University of London Course will run from 28th July to 1st August 1986. Further details may be obtained from James Black, Co-ordinator, Summer Schools, Institute of Archaeology, 31-34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY.

Geoff Stansfield

Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. 105 Princess Road East. Leicester LE1 7LG.

1986 is International Bat Year.

The Fauna and Flora Preservation Society have made up a small (6'x2'x3' panels) travelling exhibition which it is offering free, one to each bat group region. These normally cover six or so counties, so viewing time in any one county will be limited.

It was also offering the exhibition at £100 to interested parties (supporting boards to fit Marler Hayley type supports, £50 extra), but the response has been so poor that the original price cannot be held to. To do so requires a minimum of six orders. Leicestershire Museums Service is good for one. How about you ?

If interested, please contact Jan Dawson by the end of March. If I receive six or more orders, I will alert the FFPS and get them to contact you direct. If I don't, I'll let you know.

Jan Dawson
Leicestershire Museums
96 New Walk
Leicester
LE1 6TD

UNIVERSITY MUSEUM OF ZOOLOGY
CAMBRIDGE

TELEPHONE
CAMBRIDGE 58717 (STD Code 0223)

DOWNING STREET
CAMBRIDGE
CB2 3EJ

Steve Garland,
Editor, BCG
Bolton Museum
Le Mans Crescent,
Bolton

10.02.86.

Dear Steve,

I am seeking help with a technical problem and thought of approaching BCG members for suggestions. We use a large proportion of spirit specimens in our displays, and to this extent I suppose are unusual. It may be therefore that other people have not come across our problem, which is this:-

We make our own pots using glass sheets joined with Aquaseal, the aquarium sealer. This makes a neat, attractive job and has proved highly satisfactory. Just recently however we have discovered a snag with the lids of those pots containing alcohol, in our case the majority. The bodies of the pots cause no trouble because Aquaseal cures in (damp) air before the contents are inserted. The lids, however, must cure in the presence of alcohol vapour and this apparently inhibits them. The Aquaseal does not cure properly and the seal remains soft.

We have been experimenting with ways to prevent this. On the basis that Aquaseal only cures in the presence of water, we assumed that the alcohol was dehydrating the air so made efforts to introduce very damp air to the sealing pots. Unfortunately this did not help. Now we are trying to put a temporary cover over the alcohol using Clingfilm. This can be withdrawn from the pot after the lid is stuck down, through a 1/4 inch diameter hole left in the lid. This hole is sealed with a cover slip in the usual way. We have great hopes for this method and preliminary trials are encouraging. However we would be interested to know if any other members have a) come across this problem and b) whether they have found any alternative solutions or better sealants (preferably transparent).

I look forward to hearing from members about this or any other useful tips for curation and display of spirit specimens.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jennifer A Clack
Assistant Curator.

GROSVENOR MUSEUM

CHESTER TEL: 0244 21616 .

27 GROSVENOR STREET. CHESTER CH1 2DD

In 1984 the Grosvenor Museum, Chester, accepted a bequest of a collection of approximately 3,000 British Bird Eggs, housed in a 24 drawer mahogany cabinet. Unfortunately, there was no one in post as Natural History Assistant at that time and the Museum was unaware of the implications of accepting an undocumented collection of bird eggs under the new Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981).

Since my appointment I have verified from the widow of the collector that the specimens were mainly collected between the years 1909-1940, but unfortunately her husband left no written records of the contents and associated data, therefore rendering this collection almost valueless scientifically. Nevertheless this collection (apart from a bit of dirt) is in excellent condition and provides a fairly comprehensive range of the common British species.

The Grosvenor Museum feels it is now no longer consistent with its collections policy to maintain this collection, having already transferred our own bird egg collections to Manchester Museum on long term loan. It is my aim therefore to find a suitable home for this collection having firstly established a legal status for it.

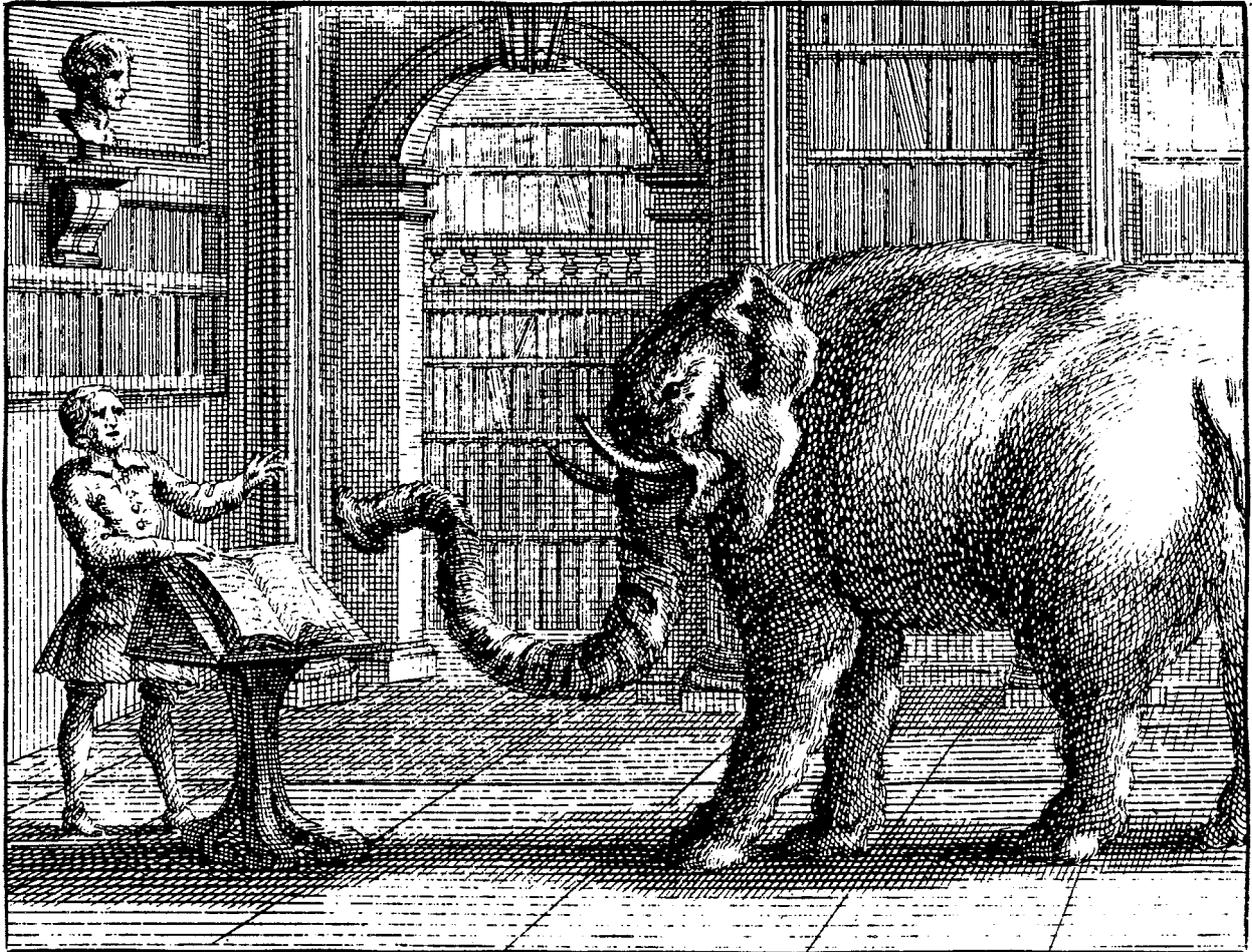
The widow of the donor is prepared to give a sworn affidavit that the specimens were collected prior to 1956 and maintained by her husband until his death in 1984. I have been in touch with Department of the Environment regarding this matter, and they have stated that although they cannot obviously guarantee that a sworn affidavit from the widow would satisfy the courts it is very unlikely to be challenged, especially if they were held by a suitable institution such as a museum or university.

I am obviously aware that other museums have faced similar problems over the last couple of years regarding Bird egg collections, but to me it seems criminal in itself to destroy this collection when a possible use for it may be found.

I would therefore welcome enquiries from any suitable institution who considers that they may have a legitimate use for this collection. I would also welcome any advice, possibly gleaned from similar experiences, regarding this question of what to do with unprovenanced bird egg collections held in museums.

FIONA MACKENZIE
Natural History Assistant
February 1986

NATURAL HISTORY BOOKS bought and sold - catalogues issued



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P. Fourdrinier. scul.

WHELDON & WESLEY LIMITED

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New book on International Wildlife Law

International Wildlife Law By S.Lyster, published by Grotius Publications is now in stock at the University of Leicester Bookshop, Mayors Walk Leicester. Price £13.95.

CITES Identification Manual

Would any member who has purchased copies of the CITES Identification Manual, published in 5 volumes 1 Mammalia; 2 Aves; 3 Amphibia, Reptilia, Pisces; 4 Parts and Derivatives 1; 5 Parts and Derivatives 2; at 250 US dollars (cost includes updating service), please write a short review for the BCG Newsletter.

RSPB policy not to use mounted birds in exhibits or for education

- reponse to Steve Garland's note BCGN 4 iiii (1985)

The RSPB's policy not to use mounted birds for exhibitions and education is of long standing and explains why mounted birds are not to be found in RSPB exhibits at Sandy, Loch Leven and other places. This has always seemed to me unnecessarily restrictive and an over reaction. Displays of detached feet, wings and bills is surely no solution.

In responding to a recent application to the World Wildlife Fund for grant aid towards the cost on an exhibition at the Rutland Water Visitor Centre, the use of mounted birds was also queried. The sponsors of the exhibition (The Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation) felt that the use of well mounted specimens of wildfowl were essential both as an aid to identification but also to emphasise the aesthetic qualities of birds.

I think that it is important for museums to stress that they do not kill birds for their exhibitions and that all specimens used are road or other casualties. It is my contention that museums can use such material to put accross a very effective conservation message. They can also make the point that study collections are essential in the study of bird biology and in preparing illustrations for books on birds.

G.Stansfield

Department of Museum Studies, University of Leicester. Jan 1986.

OTOLITHS - AND MY FATHER (Allan Frost)

It must be seventy-nine years ago that, after a bathe off Charmouth Beach, in Dorset, my father and I went along the coast towards Lyme Regis to what is known locally as the Landslide. It had other names, such as Black Ven and was even then semi-active.

The Lias - the lowest series of rocks of the Jurassic system - covered the beach towards the sea in the form of light grey nodules. Further back, towards the cliff, which in earlier years had erupted and slid into the sea, it was black and semi-liquid, being volcanic.

It was in this area that my father was deeply interested. He was a geologist, a Fellow of the Geological Society and an F.L.S. - and I, a boy of ten.

At his suggestion I tapped many of the light grey nodules on the beach and, to my delight, many of them split beautifully, revealing near-perfect Ammonites. There were, too, many Belemites scattered on the shore. My father later called my attention to a large rock which, on being rolled over, showed a bone-like protrusion. Working on this with a cold chisel, a tooth with a piece of bone began to appear. After further work during the following days, the jaw bone and some teeth of an Ichthyosaurus became excitingly clear.

While I was absorbed in this, my father was quietly making a discovery which was to bring a unique advance, not only in knowledge of the world's fishes but one which was to prove of deep interest to doctors and surgeons engaged in the study of the human ear.

In that soft Lias, while I was chopping out the teeth of the Ichthyosaurus, he came across a fossil fish's head and his study of Otoliths was to absorb his interest for years to come and make his name, not only in Harley Street but in the British Museum.

It is only in recent years that I have come to realise what a remarkable man my father was. His book 'Otoliths' was published in 1934 and his unique collection, taken from all corners of the globe and from innumerable species of fish, all classified, was a most absorbing task for any one man to undertake.

I did not realise it then, but now that I have limitless time, the whole setting has been brought vividly alive to me again.

While he must have been totally engrossed in this study, he was suddenly called to sit daily by my bed in No. 8 General Hospital, Rouen, climbing in the most atrocious weather up the hill to the monastery, which must have been taxing enough, without having to watch me fighting for my life after multiple wounds on the Somme on the 4th March 1917.

Thereafter I made a life for myself until the burden of the many wounds breaking down has made it imperative that I reside in a Home. I have a room to myself and seem alone for endless hours. A month or two ago, I must have been half awake, lying in my bed and still on my back on account of both ankles being extremely painful, when I imagined that my father was actually sitting by my bed in the same position that he occupied in Rouen.

.3.

It may have been momentary, but it brought home to me how costly that time must have been to him and really why I feel even now, that I at last appreciate his generosity with that time, which appeared to me to be given without thought of his great work left temporarily incomplete.

I must now explain that the fossil fish he found led to his study of Otoliths, which are floating bones at the back of a fish's skull - and indeed in the inner ear of all vertebrates. They are different in shape and fluting in all species of fish and my father discovered through all the many classifications, that they have not altered in many thousands of years.

I have had a couple of pages of the author's copy photographed, together with some relevant letters that he had left in the book, which illustrate adequately what a task he undertook. I also append a photograph of him, taken before he became old.

Gerald Frost

©

November 1985

Aprox. 720 words

St. Mary's Home
New Buckenham
Norfolk.



TELEPHONE
WELBECK 2349.

The ninth of June. 1938.

130, HARLEY STREET,
W.1.

Dear Mr. Allan Frost,

I was delighted to see in the Times that the Natural History Museum has secured your fine collection for this country. It would have been dreadful to contemplate their loss.

I wonder if you would offer your Retzins books to the Librarian at St. Bartnolomew's, and mention my name.

Also to the Director of Ferens Institute,
Middlesex Hospital.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

2. Those of the division Labriformes are specialized, the most generalized form being that of *Labrus mixtus*, distinguished by the prominent rostrum and antirostrum, the large excisura, the ovate shallow cauda, and the hinged appearance of the inner side. In some species the latter feature is absent and there is a straight anterior part to the cauda, and the excisura is smaller and rounded (e. g., *Cheilinus*). An aberrant form occurs in *Iniistius*.

3. The otoliths of the Scaridæ generally resemble those of the Labridæ, differing in their greater height and more rectangular appearance. In certain species the anterior rim is modified, and a narrow triangular excisura is present at the antero-dorsal point (e. g., *Pseudoscarus viridis*).

4. In the division Trachiniformes in those species examined the sulcus is sigmoidal, uniform in width, and is not divided, the cauda being upwardly inclined; an exception is *Parapercis*, in which the otolith is of the Percid type.

5. The otoliths of *Notothenia* are of the Labrid type.

6. In *Callionymus* the sagitta combines features of the otoliths of the Labridæ and Trachinidæ.

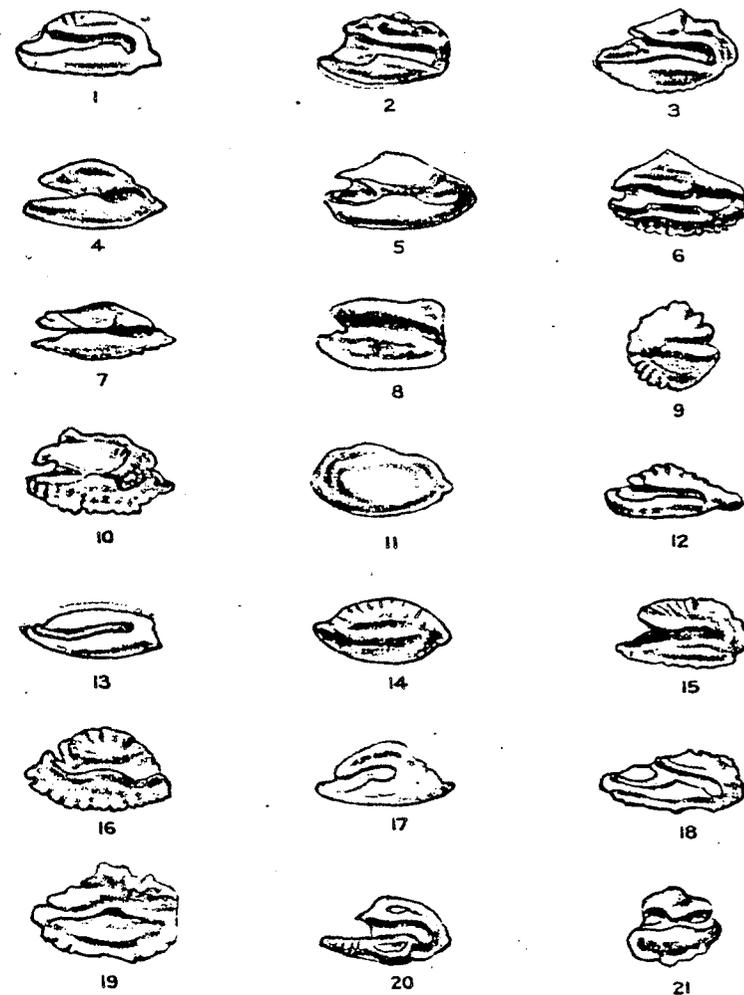
7. In *Trichodon* the shape resembles that of *Iniistius*, but differs in the sulcus.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVII.

- Fig. 1. *Chironemus marmoratus*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 2. *Ditrema temminckii*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 3. *Chromis chromis*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 4. *Labrus mixtus*, $\times 3$. — wrasse
 Fig. 5. *Cheilinus fasciatus*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 6. *Epilulus insidiator*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 7. *Lachnolaimus falcatus*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
 Fig. 8. *Julis lunaris*, $\times 4$.
 Fig. 9. *Iniistius niger*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 10. *Scarus abildgaardii*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 11. *Ammodytes tobianus*, $\times 7$. — sand wh.
 Fig. 12. *Parapercis colias*, $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$.
 Fig. 13. *Trachinus draco*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$. — wrasse
 Fig. 14. *Uranoscopus scaber*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
 Fig. 15. *Notothenia macrionensis*, $\times 3\frac{1}{2}$.
 Fig. 16. *Pseudoscarus viridis*, $\times 3$.
 Fig. 17. *Callionymus lyra*, $\times 4$.
 Fig. 18. *Eymbiotoca jacksoni*, $\times 2$.
 Fig. 19. *Champsodon guentheri*, $\times 5$.
 Fig. 20. *Hypsypops rubicundus*, $\times 2$.
 Fig. 21. *Trichodon trichodon*, $\times 6$.

FROST.

Ann. & Mag. Nat. Hist. S. 10. Vol. I. Pl. XVII.



G. Allen Frost, del.

OTOLITHS OF THE SUBORDER PERCOIDEA.

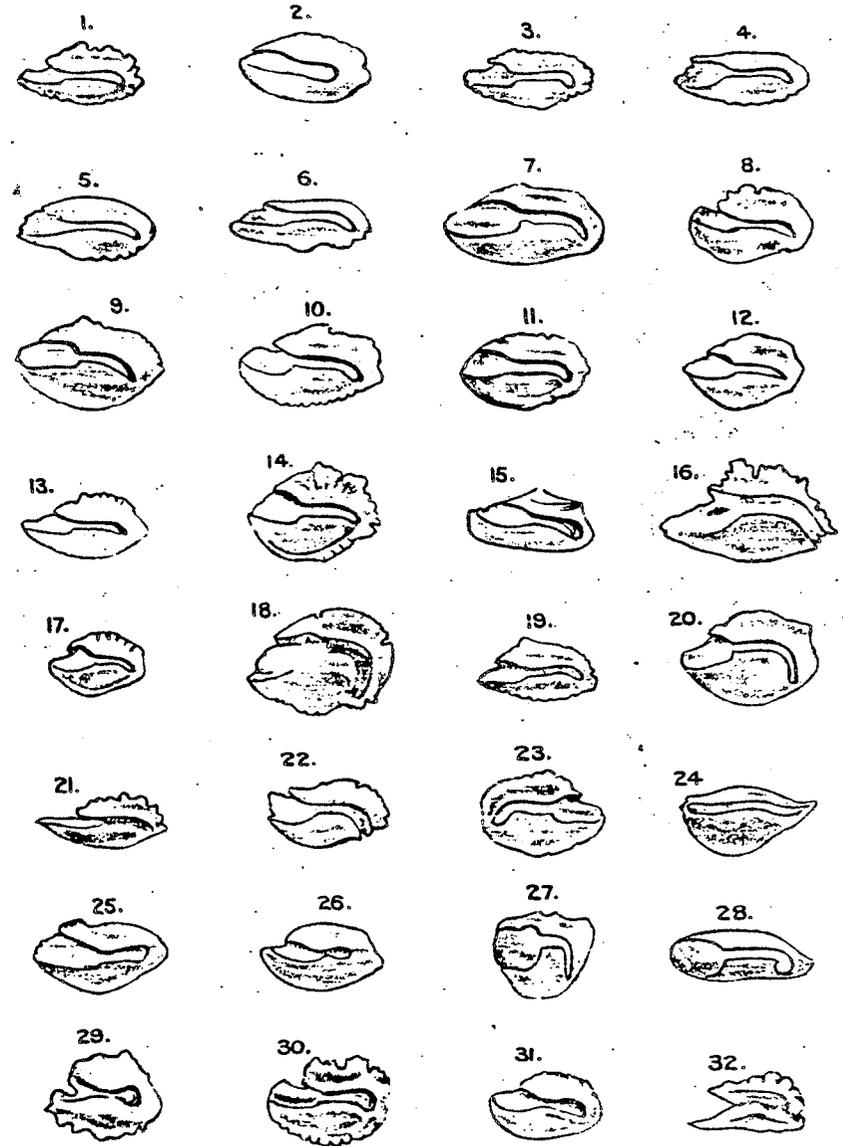
being large and ponderous, without rostrum, antirostrum, or excisura, and the ostium is flush with the surrounding parts.

Aberrant forms: *Sillago*, *Brama*.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE V.

- Fig. 1. *Perca fluviatilis*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$. — *hersch*
- Fig. 2. *Acerina cernua*, $\times 2$. — *wulf*
- Fig. 3. *Morone labrax*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$. — *basin*
- Fig. 4. *Kuhlia marginata*, $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 5. *Arrapis georgianus*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 6. *Pomatomus saltatrix*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 7. *Centropomus undecimalis*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 8. *Drepane punctata*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 9. *Lutianus chirtah*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 10. *Gerres rhombus*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 11. *Smaris australis*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 12. *Mæna vulgaris*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 13. *Pagellus centrodontus*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$. — *basin*
- Fig. 14. — *erythrinus*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 15. *Sargus vulgaris*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 16. *Dentex undulosus*, $\times 1$.
- Fig. 17. *Cantharus lineatus*, $\times 2\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 18. *Pagrus pugicephalus*, $\times 1$.
- Fig. 19. *Micropterus salmonoides*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 20. *Hæmulon elegans*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 21. *Trachurus trachurus*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 22. *Trachurops crumenophthalmus*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 23. *Tilapia zillii*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 24. *Sillago sihama*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 25. *Apogon melanotania*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 26. *Cepola rubescens*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 27. *Aplodinotus grunniens*, $\times 1$.
- Fig. 28. *Cynoscion nebulosus*, $\times 1$.
- Fig. 29. *Mullus barbatus*, $\times 4$.
- Fig. 30. *Ephippus faber*, $\times 1\frac{1}{2}$.
- Fig. 31. *Paettus argenteus*, $\times 2$.
- Fig. 32. *Brama raii*, $\times 3$.

FROST



6. Allan Frost del.

Sentence for youth who took museum rare eggs

A STUDENT who took a collection of rare birds' eggs worth "tens of thousands of pounds" from a Tyneside museum to start his own collection, was given six months' youth custody at Newcastle Crown Court today.

The court heard how Zafar Iqbal Mohammed, 17, of Condercum Road, Newcastle, took the eggs after a number of visits to the Hancock Museum in the city.

The court also heard that 16 osprey eggs had been broken.

Research

Mohammed pleaded guilty to removing articles from a place open to the public, and that on a day between August 8 and August 14 he removed 441 birds' eggs from a collection at the Hancock Museum.

Mr. Glen Gatland, prosecution, said the maximum sentence for his offence was five years' imprisonment. The difficulty in trying to value the eggs from the museum was that there was no legitimate market for them, he explained.

Valuation was difficult to determine because the eggs were of little intrinsic value, but the birds from which they came were either extinct or very rare.

The osprey eggs, he said were from a bird now protected, and 16 were taken. Had they been sold by a professional dealer they would have been worth tens of thousands of pounds.

They were often used for research pur-

Student took rare eggs

From Page One

poses at the Newcastle University, Mr. Gatland added.

People came from all over the world to study the collection, at the Hancock Museum, and any person could go to the museum and ask to view them under supervision.

On June 20 Mohammed visited the museum and expressed interest in a red kite skin which was about to be stuffed and mounted.

Jammed

Mohammed then asked to view the osprey eggs, signed the visitors' book with a false name and address, and asked if he could return to photograph the eggs.

He visited the museum on three occasions before he took the eggs, Mr. Gatland said.

On that occasion, he had viewed the eggs under the supervision of a part-time porter who was called away to deal with a jammed vending machine.

Mr. Gatland the prosecution could not say whether this distraction was the work of

an accomplice or whether it was fortuitous, but Mohammed took the eggs and left.

When the porter returned, 441 eggs had been taken from the cabinets, some of which had been locked.

Most of the eggs were recovered but none of the osprey eggs. They had been damaged.

Passion

Mohammed admitted the lock on one cabinet and told police he took the eggs because he did not want to take them from nests and he wanted the best collection.

Mr. William Hannah, for Mohammed, said he was a young man of "impeccable bark ground" and had never been in trouble before.

He had developed a passion for collecting birds' eggs and had been overcome by temptation and took the eggs to form a collection of his own.

Judge Oliver Wrightson told Mohammed he had committed a deliberate offence and that there had to be a custodial sentence.

Newcastle Evening Chronicle

9 December 1985.

'Scientists clone dinosaurs to fight on after nuclear war' - some thoughts on the significance of genetic manipulation for museums.

The incredible headline quoted in the title was conjured up by sensational journalism in response to the theoretical possibilities of some recent scientific advances. The work in question is the replication of a short segment of DNA extracted from a specimen of the extinct zebra - the quagga, (Nature, 1984 (312) p 282). That work has been followed by a similar success with DNA from a mummy, (Nature, 1985 (315) p 644).

These advances would seem to have significance for museum curators who hold specimens of already, or soon to be, extinct 'recent' organisms. There is of course little chance in the foreseeable future of reconstituting a species but exciting possibilities in evolutionary studies are opened up by gaining access to the genetic code which replication techniques offer. I contacted the genetics department of Liverpool University about how we can best ensure that the genetic potential of our specimens is maintained. I fully expected to be told that all the usual museum storage media and methods would ruin their future usefulness. To my surprise, Dr. Strike told me that the DNA molecule is surprisingly tough.

Alcohol preserved material should be fine. Formaldehyde could cause problems of cross-linkage between DNA and adjoining protein which could make subsequent extraction difficult. Fragmentation of the molecule will take place when a specimen is dried and further slight fragmentation will take place if the item is rehydrated and then dried, for example during relaxing. However, there is usually sufficient intact DNA to be useful in a dried specimen. Hydrolysis of the molecule, particularly by bacterial enzymes is a major problem so the faster the fixation or drying the more useful the specimen is likely to be. One of our problems is that things like hair, skin and cuticle have naturally lost their cell contents before we come on the scene, so to speak. Future scientists may well wish we, and our predecessors had been

a little less thorough in our cleaning of flesh from skins.

Ian Wallace,
Merseyside County Museums,
Liverpool.

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Kathmandu Natural History Museum - notes on a short visit in November 1985

Returning from a trek, we had a few days to explore Kathmandu before leaving for home and included a visit to Nepal's national natural history museum.

The only big problem was finding it ! Thankfully, one tourist leaflet mentioned that it was near one of the big temples which was on the map.

How to get there ? Hire a bike. A bargain at 8 Rupees/day (36p), fairly quick and good for avoiding hassles ! Make sure that it has a good bell. Riding through Kathmandu is a bit like cycling through a ploughed field at the same time as the RAC rally, a circus and one thousand hyperactive double-glazing salesmen.

If you ever have the good sense to visit Nepal then head for the Swayambunath, popularly known as the Monkey Temple. Cycle around the south side of the temple mound and you will eventually see a smallish brick-built building with the words 'Natural History Museum' on the gable end. The hundreds of child 'guides' will not believe that you want to go there instead of to the temple.

The museum was locked when we first arrived at 10 a.m., but a friendly, elderly Nepali cheerfully answered the door and opened it up.

The contents of a Kathmandu museum must create an impression in everyones mind. The first impression was of a small museum with rather old-fashioned displays. The general layout of cases and specimens was reminiscent of the sort of museum that is regarded generally as poor by British curators. However, the interest of the displays to me proved great on closer examination. There were cases exhibiting the more obvious Nepalese butterflies, and others with Nepal examples of the major insect orders and families. The museum staff have been collecting actively and many data labels were very recent.

Vertebrates were represented by mounts of most of the smaller native mammals and a few birds. Thankfully there were none of those awful mongoose and cobra mounts which haunt the souvenir stalls of the Indian subcontinent, as well as many a U.K. enquiry desk ! Many birds on display were study skins. These gave a chance for yours truly to check up on a few identification points not covered in the field guide. Again these were in superb condition and recently obtained.

Unfortunately the only curator present spoke very poor English, and I even less Nepali ("Please may I see your entomological reference collections ?" was not in my phrasebook.!). All in all, a very interesting visit. Don't forget to sign the visitors' book.

I didn't have time to visit the National Museum as well (although it is on the maps). However, as I chatted to a bank clerk one day he asked what I did in England. The answer was followed by considerable mirth amongst all of the bank staff. "After all," they said "it is so funny that you came all this way to see our museum and it only has replicas. You have all the real things in England !" What can you say ?

Steve Garland

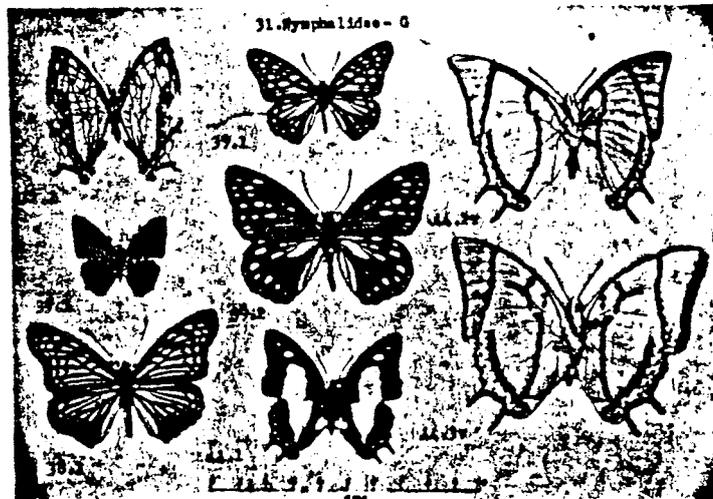
Field Guide to Nepal's Butterflies, by C. Smith
Natural History Museum Bulletin 2.

Natural History Museum. Institute of Science and Technology, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal. Price 63.00 Nepalese Rupees. 1981 (Limited edition of 500). Tribhuvan University Press

This book contains over 200 genera and about 480 species of butterfly. There are keys to families and subfamilies and, in the case of Papilionidae and Pieridae, down to genera. Each species is listed with notes on distribution, flight period and altitudinal range, together with useful notes concerning identification. Small black and white photographs of a selection of species are included.

A basic guide, on a similar level to many regional guides in Britain. However, it was an adequate guide for most butterflies which we observed in November and is the best available (only available) guide for Nepal.

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*G.34.1 *Pseudergolis wedah* (Tabby) This butterfly does not appear to be related, but has similar habits. It could be confused with the Ariadne (G.22) but for its discal row of black spots (and stronger flight). It flies in mainly jungle habitat, 3400- 6600 ft. from April to June.

*G.35.1 *Apatura ambica* (Indian Purple Emperor) The male of this very rare butterfly has a beautiful purple sheen. Only one record is known- from E. Nepal, 3600 ft. in May.

*G.36.1 *Rohana parisatis* (Black Prince) This tiny butterfly darts rapidly around rocks by the streams in East Nepal.

Review: Annual Bibliography of the History of Natural History.
Volume 1
Publications of 1982. British Museum (Natural History) 1985
Price £8.00

This is the first volume of a publication which aims to provide a comprehensive record of literature relating to the history of natural history. It has evolved from a cataloguing system started some 30 years ago in the B.M.(N.H.) libraries to provide that Museum's taxonomists with information about bibliographical and historical papers published in a variety of journals, symposia and conference proceedings. It embraces the earth and life sciences, but excludes 'fringe' subjects such as forestry, biochemistry and speleology, unless they impinge on the descriptive areas of natural history.

Arrangement of the main list of publications is alphabetical by first author, and there are indexes to second and third authors, to persons (biographical studies), to institutions and to subjects. A list of journals cited is also included. The references cited in Volume 1 number 1369, ranging from an Anonymous 'Review of China's science and technology (1949-1979)', to Zuylen's 'The microscopes of Antoni van Leeuwenhoek'. There can be little doubt that the Annual Bibliography is a most useful addition to the library shelves of the Museum Natural Historian. It may perhaps appear overpriced at £8 for a limp-covered 62 pages; however this is consistent with the B.M. (N.H.)'s inflated book prices. Any bibliography's real worth will be judged by the number of times it is consulted - I suspect for the Annual Bibliography it will be considerable. My copy is already dog-eared.

Peter Davis

BOOK REVIEW

Three new Mammal Society booklets

FOXES

by Stephen Harris

1984: Anthony Nelson Ltd, Shropshire, 20pp. ISBN 0 904614 12 3

WOODMICE

by John Flowerdew

1984: Anthony Nelson Ltd, Shropshire, 24pp. ISBN 0 904614 13 1

FALLOW DEER

by Norma Chapman

1984: Anthony Nelson Ltd, Shropshire, 24pp. ISBN 0 904614 14 X

Despite their small size these booklets contain a great deal of interesting and up to date information including details of identification, distribution, breeding, food, behaviour, signs, parasites and diseases and end with a section on relations with man.

The covers exhibit some beautiful colour photographs and the text is augmented with black and white photographs and line drawings. All in all these informative and attractive publications are really good value at only £1.95 each including postage & package.

Forthcoming titles include :Otters, Shrews, Hares, Bats, Moles, Mink

G.H.

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If anyone has duplicate, legally-taken, specimens in their museum deep-freeze, and would consider a donation to Sheffield Museum please contact

Derek Whiteley
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City Museum,
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