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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Short Notes

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SHORT NOTES

Local Biological Record Centres

I feel certain that I am not alone in the problems of having 'to sell' a newly started Biological Records Centre to local naturalists and natural history societies. A major problem is to quote definite examples, when describing the roles and successes of local B.R.Cs. please help by sending examples of the following types of roles to me. Geoff Stansfield has very kindly agreed to help collate the examples so that they can be made available to all involved in local B.R.Cs.

The three main areas for which we need examples are -

1. That Planning Departments do take biologically important sites seriously. An example would be the re-routing of the Bewdley by-pass to avoid the marsh at Wilden. The rather more general, co-operation, consultation, preparation of data for structure plans, appear to evoke a cynical reaction from many people. Hence the need for specific examples.
2. The failure of local naturalists to make information available to a B.R.C., County Trust, or N.C.C. officer, so that sites are destroyed or damaged, because no one knew they were there.
3. 'Spin offs' from local B.R.C.s, which could include the finding of new sites of importance, new species, etc.,

I hope that colleagues will contribute to the plea for help, and so help all of us with B.R.C.s put a more convincing case to the sceptics and lukewarm naturalists.

J. M. Campbell,
Department of Museum Services,
Oxfordshire County Museum,
Fletcher's House,
Woodstock,
Oxford OX7 1SN.

HAVE YOU ANY BIRDS FROM NEASDEN?

A small natural history display has recently been prepared for the Grange Museum, Neasden (London Borough of Brent) with the assistance of Eric Simms and Leo Batten who have both been working in the area for some years. The display consists almost entirely of two-dimensional material and looks in detail at four areas within the borough - a private garden in Dollis Hill, Gladstone Park, the Welsh Harp Reservoir and Birchen Grove Woodland (a schools' nature trail). When the display is completed there will also be an audio-visual unit using birdsong recorded in the borough by Eric Simms.

Although there is no professional member of the museum staff dealing specifically with natural history we hope to include information on the subject in our collections. The museum building includes a reading room where material from the local collection can be consulted - this collection, recently transferred from the Central Reference Library includes a small amount of natural history material.

One area which provided an enormous number of bird specimens for the Victorian taxidermist was the Welsh Harp Reservoir. This was constructed in the 1830s to supply water to the Grand Union Canal. James Edmund Harting's 'Birds of Middlesex' (1866) mentions 46 species of waders and 21 species of visiting wild fowl at the reservoir and includes the comment that a sketch of the reservoir has been included as the frontispiece 'from the fact that so many rare and beautiful birds have been at various time observed there'.

We would be very interested to track down specimens from the area which have found their way into museum collections and would be grateful for any information those working with such collections can offer. The reservoir has been known as the Kingsbury Reservoir, Brent Reservoir and the Welsh Harp Reservoir (after a nearby pub) and was constructed by the Regents Cnanal Co. Part of it lies in the parish of Hendon (now London Borough of Barnet). Specimens may be listed under any of these names.

Valerie Bott, Museum Keeper,
The Grange Museum,
Neasden Lane, London NW10.

International Crane Foundation (U.S.A.)

The Foundation requires details of all mounted and scientific skins of several Grus species held in provincial museums. Full details appear in the Museums' Bulletin, Vol 16, No. 5 August 1976, page 53.

Shropshire and North Wales Natural History and Antiquarian Society Collection

Specimens from the collection need to be traced. It was apparently given to Shrewsbury Borough Museum in 1885 but material has since been dispersed. The collection contained 40-50 Australian birds including types of Anas (Mareca) castanea (Eyton) which the International Commission for Zoological Nomenclature are trying to trace. Can museums please check to see if they received any material, most likely mounted which could have come from this source. The specimens were donated by a Major Wakeman or as is now thought Major Wakefield.

Peter Morgan,
Keeper of Vertebrate Zoology,
Merseyside County Museums.

BTO Moulting Card

Dick Hendry of Glasgow Museum would be interested to hear from anyone using, or who wants to use, the BTO Moulting Card. If there is sufficient interest he would be willing to organise a short training session during the B.G.C. meeting at Bolton.

Peregrine Falcon eggs, post 1945

Dr. David B. Peakhall, Canadian Wildlife Service, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0H3 Canada ref. WLU 61 Raptors, is mapping the thinning of eggs of the larger falcons and requires information on post 1945 clutches of F. peregrinus biarmicus, jugger and cherrug. Details of length breadth and weight of each egg should be sent to him.