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4. Nucella lapillus (L)

The famous sinistral specimen. A bandless white shell numbered on the lip 546. 41.1 with an old label in Bean's hand 'Purpura lagillus Sinistral Var. Found by Jessy Bean Scarboro'.

5. Cantharidus clelandi (Wood 1828)

Box of specimens and more in plastic bag with an old label in Bean's hand "'Trochus millegranus, Ireland, Philippi. The large specimen Figd. in Hanley's Marine Conchology''.

The shell figured probably came from J. D. Rose-Cleland of Bangor, County Down, Northern Ireland who first found the species in Britain but it is not now possible to identify the actual shell figured. The box of specimens has an old label (whose?) with it "'Trochus millegranus Oban Bay 25F. ''

Ian Massey
Museum of Natural History
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VERTEBRATE RECORDING SCHEMES AT SHEFFIELD MUSEUM

A common problem shared by a number of local biological records centres involves the accumulation and dissemination of information on vertebrates other than birds. Whilst many districts or counties are well endowed with enthusiastic botanists, ornithologists, and to some extent entomologists actively involved in fieldwork and recording projects, the number of field mammalogists, herpetologists and ichthyologists tends to be relatively low. Such a situation existed in the Sheffield area less than a decade ago, when any attempt to assess the status of our local mammals, reptiles, amphibians and fishes was based on scant and sometimes misguided information. However, owing to determined efforts by the staff at Sheffield City Museum, and members of the Sorby Natural History Society (S. N. H. S.) and their close working relationship, this situation has now been reversed.

In the hope that other B. C. G. members who are at the same stage now as we were ten years ago, may be encouraged to tackle these groups, I have outlined the methods used to gather and publish data, with particular reference to the relationship between the museum

and local naturalists. An account of the survey of the local avifauna has also been included as it differs slightly from the other schemes. Taking these in chronological order.

Birds

Initiated by a former member of the museum staff, David Spalding, acting as tutor for a course of studies on Birds of the Sheffield area, sponsored by the University of Sheffield Department of Extramural Studies, in co-operation with the Workers Educational Association. The main objective of the course which began in 1966, was to prepare an account of the local avifauna which might serve both as a guide to those who know a little of Sheffield's birds and a work of reference for the more experienced observer. Members of the course were enrolled from both the general public and the Sorby N. H. S.

Information was largely extracted from published and unpublished literature, and supplemented by field work undertaken by course members and local naturalists.

Publication of the project (Smith ed. 1974) was financed jointly by the museum and the Sorby N. H. S., each taking a proportionate share of the books relative to the financial input.

An additional bonus for the museum's record centre was the incorporation of the raw data sheets used to prepare the manuscript.

Fishes

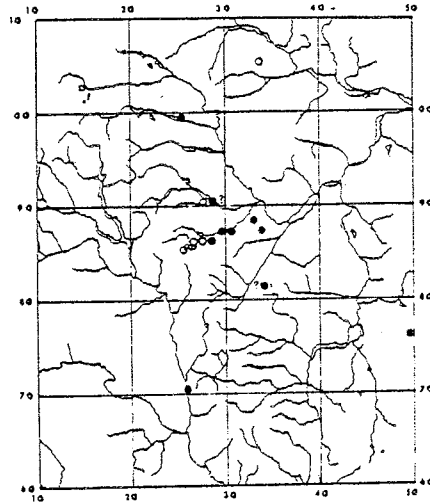
To gain further information on local freshwater fishes the City Museum undertook a survey during 1972 and 1973. A display publicising the survey was constructed in the galleries, and returnable record forms were available from the museum. Record forms were also distributed to angling clubs and tackle shops. Requests for information were published in the angling press and personal contact was made with several local reliable anglers. The most useful way of obtaining records, however, was found to be talking to anglers and filling in record forms on the spot. This occupied the weekends of P. B. Mander, the survey's principal organiser.

Results were published in the journal of the S. N. H. S., the Sorby Record (Mander 1973).

Further records obtained during the period 1973-5 prompted the publication of 1km² distribution maps with a condensed text and outline illustrations for each species. The 'popularisation' of this report in the

Museum's own 'Information Sheet' series enabled it to be easily digested by the local public. At 10p it still rates as one of the best-sellers at the Museum bookstall.

Additional 'spin-off' from this publication included further records and even specimens from anglers and naturalists, who are keen to 'fill in the gaps' on the distribution maps. Thus, weight is added to the argument supporting the publication of "provisional" distribution maps.



Dace

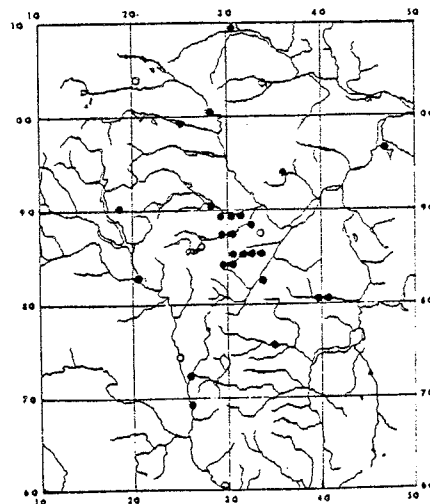
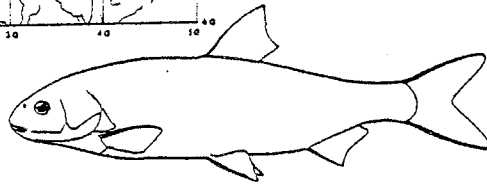
Leuciscus leuciscus (L.)

Indigenous. Limited local distribution.

Habitat. Prefers small rivers and streams.

Adult length 15-25 cms.

Food. Invertebrates.



Stone Loach

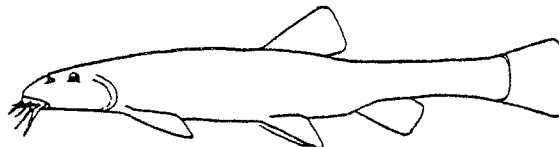
Noemacheilus barbatulus (L.)

Indigenous. Used to be common and widespread. Now found only in cleaner rivers and dams.

Habitat. Clear stony streams and rivers.

Adult length 8-12 cms.

Food. Bottom-living invertebrates.



Amphibians

The survey of local amphibians probably involved a greater degree of co-operation between the museum and the natural history society, than the aforementioned surveys. Whilst the scheme was museum initiated, local naturalists were actively involved checking observations, searching for new ponds, and entering details on data cards.

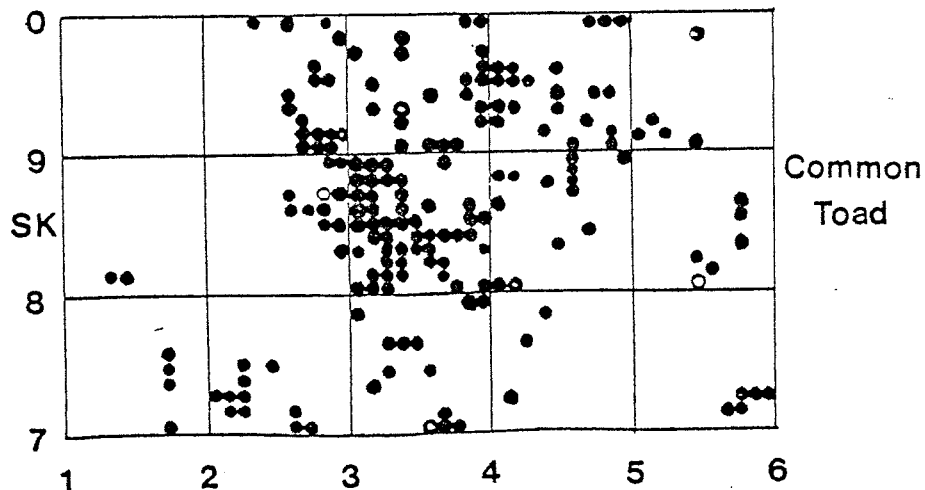
A public participation project known as "Spot the Frog" was initiated by the museum in 1975, for which the general public were invited to contribute records. A gallery display comprising photographs and specimens together with a base map to which coloured sticky circles could be added helped to publicise the survey. The public were able to watch the coloured dots increase as their own sightings or 'spots' were added to the map. Back-up publicity was also gained from the local press and B. B. C. local radio.

A returnable record slip was made available, for which attendant staff were trained to enter species and provenance details, while interviewing the public, in the absence of curatorial staff.

Regular appeals were also made for records in the monthly newsletter of the S. N. H. S. A concurrent "Reptile and Amphibian Survey" was launched by the society in March 1975, and a key to local species combined with a returnable recording form was issued to all members providing a stimulus to record observations.

Results obtained in 1975 were encouraging, and both surveys were continued during 1976 and 1977, by which time some 1300 individual records had been received.

A paper analysing the distributional and habitat data, and the relationship between amphibians and man, together with distribution maps on a 1km² basis was published in the Sorby Record (Whiteley 1977).



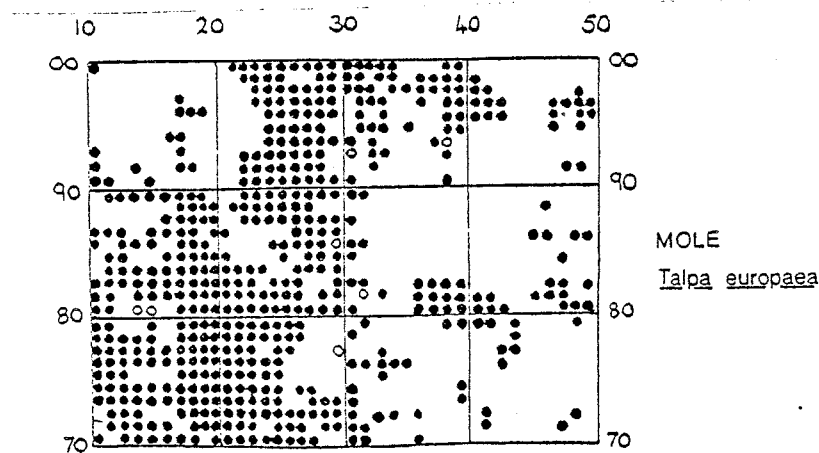
Mammals

By way of contrast, the Sheffield mammal mapping scheme was initiated by myself in 1974 in the role of 'Mammal Recorder' for the S. N. H. S. Recording techniques included regular appeals for information via the society's newsletter, returnable recording sheets, and illustrated lectures on the identification of mammals.

On joining the museum's permanent staff in 1975 further opportunities arose to expand and accelerate the survey. Not the least of these was the use of the museum's recording 'software'. The B. R. C. 80 column 'pink' card had been adopted as a standard for individual records some years ago. Although relatively tedious to fill in, they had distinct advantages when the final analysis was made. Thus, habitat, grid reference, date, sex etc. for each species could be extracted simply by manually arranging and re-arranging the file. This may sound tedious, but in practice was as easy as extracting aces from a deck of cards. Further interest in mammals was created by holding regular seminars and workshops at the museum, using specimens to demonstrate identification characters and field techniques. Topics such as the identification of small mammal skulls and teeth found in owl pellets and discarded bottles always proved to be popular with local naturalists, particularly youngsters. Regular tuition ensured a reasonable degree of accuracy in reporting observations.

Contact with neighbouring museums, university departments, health authorities, and other local recorders was useful. Records were exchanged on an annual basis to facilitate clerical work.

The project was very successful, and by December 1976 some 7,000 records had been collected and added to the museum's files. Once again, use was made of the Sorby Society's journal, and a set of provisional 1km² distribution maps with status notes on each species was published (Whiteley and Whiteley 1976).



Reptiles

A survey of the area's reptiles has been operating for two years, on similar lines to the mammal survey and results will be published in 1979, thus completing the present phase of vertebrate recording in Sheffield.

To conclude, both the museum and the local natural history society have gained a great deal from an almost symbiotic relationship. It is safe to say that either party could not have achieved so much, without the help of the other. The Natural Sciences section at the museum have only limited manpower (2 non-specialist curatorial staff) whilst the local society has an army of observers in the field each weekend, but limited financial resources for major publications. If museum staff are prepared to spend some time organising, tutoring and training local naturalists to identify, observe and record unworked groups of plants and animals, the results can be highly rewarding, as I hope our experiences at Sheffield have demonstrated. In return the local society benefits from the use of museum funds and facilities. Use of the museum's collections for identification sessions have led to a greater understanding and awareness of the resources that the museum holds for naturalists. This in turn prompted an increased supply of specimens to expand the collections. For example, in the year following the publication of the mammal survey, our reference collection of Mountain Hares grew from 1 to 6, simply because local naturalists realised that the specimens could be put to good use.

The importance of the role of the regular society publications cannot be underestimated. The local newsletter was used to publicise surveys, issue returnable recording sheets and identification keys, and report on interim results. Thus the right people were reached at no extra cost to the museum. Likewise the Society's journal provided a vehicle for disseminating results (an important function of any records centre) and provided interesting reading material for subscribers.

Above all, by integrating the museum into the activities of local societies and similar institutions, the probability of greater co-operation is higher. Although I have only mentioned local recording schemes for vertebrate animals, similar activities involving invertebrate animals, plants and sites of natural history interest, involving co-operation with several societies in South Yorkshire and Derbyshire are having the same degree of success.

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(all are available via the author)

Derek Whiteley
Sheffield Museum

REMINISCENCES OF A PUNK NATURALIST!

1962 saw the opening of Doncaster's new glass and concrete supermarket-style museum, the old affectionately remembered establishment, with its bee hive and none too healthy zoo, having been demolished to make way for a new supermarket-style technical college. Just months before the civic opening the staff, fewer in those days, panic-stricken by the shortness of time, slaved at 'E' type pace and burnt oceans of midnight oil to fill endless runs of huge display cases. Initially, displays were installed with care and dedication and consultants were engaged to advise on finer points of design and lighting - later, cases got the 6" nail and evo-stick treatment! Considering the incredibly short time the exhibition programme took to complete, the displays were of a high standard, effective and ingenious. The aim however, was to re-display at a more composed pace, incorporating a greater element of interpretation and local relevance. When a leisurely 13 years later, the present staff got round to assembling information for a new series of mammal displays; it came as something of a shock to discover that almost nothing worth knowing was available on local mammals! Distribution surveys and investigations into the history, ecology, diet, breeding biology etc of local species were launched, little realising what work would be involved