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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Title: The Bird Collection of the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter

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The bird collection at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, has long been recognised as one of the finest in the country. Containing approximately 9,000 specimens the collection represents a valuable reference and research resource. The collection is world-wide in coverage and of particular interest are the collections from the Americas and Australasia. Although the majority of the specimens have come to Exeter direct from individual collections a large number are from the collections previously housed in other museums. This reflects the collecting policy of the RAMM, in the past. Exeter was still actively collecting foreign material at a time when many other museums were disposing of it. The present collecting policy is somewhat different. Foreign material is 'passively' collected i. e. by donation only and not by purchase or other active methods.

The majority of the collection is in the form of study skins. These are housed in one room in standard cupboards on metal racking. Each cupboard contains drawers of differing sizes enabling even the largest birds to be incorporated into the system. Each specimen is protected from dust and adjacent specimens by means of polythene tubing. Mounted specimens are by their very nature more difficult to store conveniently. Various rooms containing cupboards and boxes house this part of the collection. Within this system the birds are theoretically arranged and named according to the B. M. (N.H.) catalogue. Since the original sorting in the 1940s many more specimens have come into the museum. The existing system was not always adhered to with the result that many birds are in the wrong place. In addition nomenclatural changes and alteration of taxonomic positions have further diminished the ease of retrieval and hence the usefulness of the collection.

This haphazard arrangement is also reflected in the various lists and catalogues pertaining to the collections. The accession registers contain the all too familiar 'see attached list', what list? The 'master catalogue', constructed by Willoughby Lowe in the 1940s has not been kept up to date with either acquisitions or disposals.

In order to restore this collection as a useable resource, I have embarked upon a complete re-storage and re-cataloguing project. Much of the collection, including all of the study skins, have recently been fumigated by Rentokil using Methyl Bromide. Continuous 'protection' is afforded by the use of a combination of PDCB and Thymol paper. It is hoped a further fumigation will take place in the near future enabling the remaining material to be absorbed into the main collection. Exeter is at present investigating the possibilities of installing its own fumigation chamber. Such an asset will help clear the backlog and provide for the immediate cleansing of new material in the future. Infestation will then be reduced to the absolute minimum. For economic reasons storage will follow the existing system for the present. The possible removal of the entire collection to an adjacent building precludes expenditure on storage at this stage.



*Astrapia splendidissima* Rothschild  
*Astrapia stephaniae* Finsch et. Meyer  
*Astrapia rothschildi* Foerster  
*Parotia sefilata* (Pennant)  
*Parotia carolae* Meyer  
*Parotia lawesi* Ramsay  
*Pteridophora alberti* Meyer  
*Cicinnurus regius* (Linn.)  
*Diphyllodes magnificus* (Pennant)  
*Diphyllodes respublica* (Bonaparte)  
*Paradisaea apoda* Linn.  
*Paradisaea raggiana* Sclater  
*Paradisaea minor* Shaw  
*Paradisaea decora* Salvin et. Godman  
*Paradisaea rubra* daudin  
*Paradisaea guiliema* Cabanis  
*Paradisaea rudolphi* (Finsch)

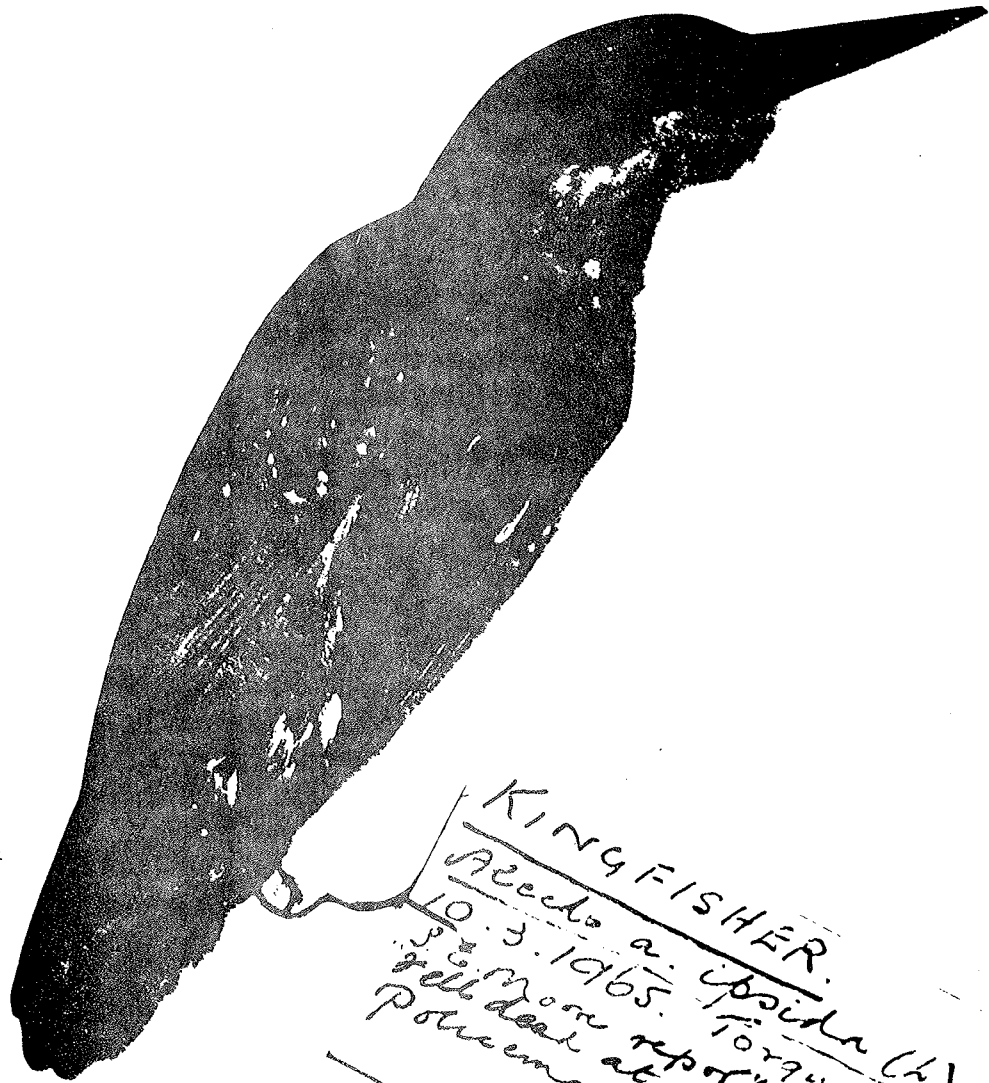
Many of these specimens are accompanied by data. Others, notably zoo specimens and those imported for the plume trade, are not.

The collections of Ptilonorhynchidae and Paradisaeidae are made up from donations made by the following people:-

Cooper, Dr. H. J.	Lyme Regis
Downall, Miss	
Frood, Dr.	Topsham 1907
Gunn, Mr. T. E.	Norwich 1941
Heath, Mr. J.	Bristol
Hynes, Mrs D. M	
Ipswich Museum	1960
James, Mrs.	Knowle, Devon 1948
Lightbody, Mr. J. H.	Budleigh Salterton 1919
Lyons, Mr. P. E.	London 1947
Maxwell, Mr. P. H.	London et. Torrington 1939, 1940, 1946, 1949
Milton, Mr. A. M.	1940
Nicholls, Mr. R. P.	Kingsbridge 1915
Norwich Castle Museum	1956
Peard, Miss.	London 1938
Peek, Sir W. Bart.	Rousdon 1907
Peel, Mrs C. M. V.	1932
Pickard, Col. R.	
Primley	(Paignton) Zoo 1940
Rashleigh, Mrs	Okehampton
Rowan, Mrs H. B.	Hemyock 1931
Smee, Mr. W. J. N.	Exeter
Stamfordham, Lord	St. James' Palace 1916
Veitch, Sir H. J.	Chelsea 1924
White, Mrs	
White, Vc. Adml. R. W.	Exeter 1924
Whiteley, Mr. H.	1940
University College of the South West	1906

Anybody requiring further information about the above or the collection itself, or indeed anybody able to supply information to me, is welcome to write to:-

Kelvin J. Boot,  
Curator of Natural History,  
Royal Albert Memorial Museum,  
Queen Street,  
Exeter.



KINGFISHER.  
Alcedo a. cyanea (L)  
10.3.1965. Torquay.  
3 1/2 moon report by  
Bill deak at feet of  
Potterman.