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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Notes from the BCG Committee meeting of 19th July 1983

The Harrison Museum visit took place on 28th June when only 4 BCG members plus two spouses attended. Four local RSPB members were included in the party with mixed success, as their interests differed from the BCG members. Dr. Harrison is willing to consider a further visit.

(Ed. Do members want to attend this type of meeting and if so why was this date not suitable? Is there a demand for such meetings?)

There are now only 15 copies of the original printing of the Wildlife & Countryside Seminar Report left. A second printing will contain several corrections.

A biological Record Centre Seminar is envisaged for the summer of 1984. Details are still being finalized.

Ms. Bernice Williams has been appointed to the post of the Working Party on Natural Science Collection Resources. She began work in September 1983.

The American journal 'Smithsonian Contributions to Zoology' which has been sent to BCG on an exchange basis over the years is now housed in the Horniman Museum's Reference Library. It is open to the public from Tuesday to Saturday and on Sunday afternoons. BCG members can also gain access on Mondays via the Museum staff.

Bird Egg Displays

It seems to me that Alec Coles' comments on the above topic (BCG Newsletter Vol.3 Pt.6 p.345) calls for some reply. Mr. Coles is right in thinking there is no real evidence to suggest that displays of eggs in museums encourages people to go out and collect eggs from the wild; but there is ample evidence that it encourages them to steal those eggs from the Museum display itself. Clearly though, the reason why Mr. Coles missed this point is because, on his own admission, his museum does not have a display of eggs. I am sure there are many museum curators who could provide horrific stories of public displays of birds eggs which have been repeatedly broken into and items removed over a long period of time.

There is of course another point. Eggs exposed over a long period of time to daylight will fade. Such fading (though varying much from species to species) may be apparent after only ten years or so, and after a century will be bleached almost white. This was the fate of the British Museum's original egg collection, set up in the eighteenth century and finally dismounted in the 1840s or thereabouts. There will therefore be a general wastage over the years of any eggs set up on public display. In an age when fresh supplies of these materials are not, at least in theory, obtainable, it would seem more long sighted to explore the possibility of developing accurate plastic replicas for display, unless the the eggs which Peter Morgan destroys as being with insufficient data (q.v. Report No.2 p5) can be recycled to county museums for this purpose.

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