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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

Title: Changing attitudes to 'stuffed' animals

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I was stirred to write this short article after hearing of a recent experience of a colleague of mine at Sheffield concerning the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. It involved the refusal of the R.S.P.B. to allow the use of stuffed birds during lectures involving their society.

The reason is that the R.S.P.B. have signed an International Agreement which recommends that stuffed and mounted birds should not be used in any exhibition. This was a resolution adopted unanimously by the European Continental Section of the International Council for Bird Protection in 1968. It was because many species were felt to be threatened by the collecting and trading in eggs and stuffed birds for use in schools.

The R.S.P.B. uses only model birds, slides, photographs, wings and feathers for lectures.

I would like you to couple these facts with the strengthening public feeling towards "animal rights". It has always worried me that a very high proportion of museum visitors still believe that we kill everything for our displays. (A potential survey ?) I have too often overheard visitors saying " What a lovely bird, but what a shame they had to kill it ". I always try to leap to our defence, but I'm not always there.

However, I wonder if members have any strong feelings on the subject ? Do any museums have displays which they feel justify the use of real animals to the public ? How should we approach the problem and, finally, has any museum natural history section or taxidermy lab yet received the attentions of somewhat misguided, but very real groups such as the Animal Liberation Front ?

S.P.Garland

Comments please for the next Newsletter.

Butterfly Tablets Again*

When visiting the Brooklyn Children's Museum, I was surprised to see a number of 'Dentons Patent Butterfly Tablets' in the Natural History display. Does this mean that the 'Denton' mounting method originated in the USA?

Penny Wheatcroft
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P.S. The Brooklyn Children's Museum logo is obviously a botanist of sorts (see below)

