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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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myself took the opportunity to put the propaganda machine into action delivering illustrated lectures relating to our two big campaigns. Conference delegates were also lobbied and leafleted, and we came away feeling that we had made our presence felt. The highlight of the day was actually a reference to our Sunflower Campaign in the Centenary Presidential Address.

On the negative side, the proposed joint seminar with the MA in Glasgow was undersubscribed and cancelled by the MA despite widespread publicity.

For me, it has been a busy year dominated by our two campaigns. Our Neglected Natural Heritage - the Sunflower Campaign has so far proved to be very successful. Coverage in the national press and national radio and support from the MA and other museum bodies, has helped to publicise our plight, leading to a promise of some extra funding. The 'Beetle-down ...' campaign has had a second successful year, including a reprint of 38,000 leaflets, merchandise and another successful Beetle-down ... week of events across the country. The resulting official file is itself proving to be useful ammunition in the fight to save natural history services.

We now operate two 'watchdog' schemes, on 'collections at risk' and 'biology posts lost and created'. Direct lobbying of those in authority has helped to save posts (note - posts not individual jobs - we do not have the role of a trade union) and helped to create new posts - Oldham being the outstanding example. We maintain useful contacts with the Museums Association, MGC, the Conservation Unit, MTI and NFBR.

My personal aim is to continue providing a service to the membership and to curatorial biology by leaflets, lobbying and direct action sanctioned by committee.

It has been a very, very active year for BCG; possibly the busiest yet. Next year is looking just as good and I take this opportunity to thank all Committee members for their hard work.

Derek Whiteley  
BCG Secretary

[Report condensed from an illustrated report delivered to the 1990 AGM, Isle of Man]

## Book Reviews

### **A Guide to the Postcranial Bones of East African Animals**

by Rikki Walker

Published by Hylochoerus Press, Norwich. 1985.  
ISBN 0 9511105 1 9 (PB). xi+285 pp. Appendices.  
Index. Illustrated. £13.95.

There is an apocryphal story concerning an up-and-coming South African archaeozoologist who offered colleagues (all experts in bone identification) a kind of Kim's Game or Witch Doctor's bag-of-bones as a test of their ability and consistency in identifying fossil material from his excavations. Needless to say, of the dozen or so experts consulted, each gave an entirely different set of identifications, causing a great deal of amusement. What the community lacked of course was a set of standards to go by; not all departments had the same quality or quantity of modern or fossil comparative material, and each operated to its own rules.

That kind of operation is on its way out, and not in the least due to the type of publication reviewed here. While not the last word in making fossil or sub-fossil material easy to identify, Mrs Walker's Bone Book sets out in a constant style, illustrations of all the most frequently preserved bones of most of the animals (mammal + reptile + bird) found in eastern Africa. It is essentially a practical book, to be used as a constant companion in the laboratory alongside the material being worked on. It has copious notes and procedural guides to help track a bone through to its final identity, which with a little experience, will bring most up to the level of expert in a decently short time.

A most useful innovation is a set of seven plates showing the mid-shaft profiles of the long bones of everything from an elephant to a Suni antelope. However, I would have thought that they would have been better incorporated in the main text, as in the way they are presented they will become very tatty very quickly. Perhaps an inspired afterthought?

For anyone working in the field of identifying African animal bone, this is a must. It might be worth buying even if your interests lie outside Africa, but involve looking at eg interglacial exotic mammals. And at the price, who can lose?  
Arthur Cruickshank, c/o Leicestershire Museums