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Two new Keepers for the Natural History Museum

The Natural History Museum in London has appointed two Keepers for its departments of Entomology and Zoology.

The posts, which have become vacant as a result of staff retirement, have been taken by Dr Richard Lane and Professor Colin Curds.

Dr Lane was Head of the Vector Biology and Transmission Dynamics Unit in the Department of Medical Parasitology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. His own research field concerns the role of sandflies in the transmission of leishmaniasis, a debilitating, disfiguring sometimes fatal disease affecting 12 million people worldwide. He returns to the Museum after an absence of eight years, having previously worked in the Entomology Department as Head of the Medical Insects Department. He took up his post on 1 February 1992. Dr Lane is 40.

Professor Colin Curds, a protozoologist, originally joined the Museum in 1971 from the Water Pollution Research Laboratory. He was appointed Deputy Keeper of Zoology at the Museum in 1976 and has held the post of acting Keeper since 1989. He took up the permanent position in November 1991. Previous research experience includes the investigation of protozoa as indicators of freshwater pollution and the role of protozoa in aerobic waste-treatment processes. He holds a visiting chair in Environmental Protozoology at the University of Mexica City. Professor Curds is 54.

News from Sheffield

Following Derek Whiteley's appointment as Principal Keeper in March 1991 the section changed its name to the Natural History Section. Derek's former post of Assistant Keeper (Zoology) has been designated a 'monitored vacancy' (i.e. frozen) for at least 14 months.

In July Steve Toher and Jeremy Brown joined the staff as 'Temporary Entomologists' supported by a RECAP grant administered by Y.H.M.C. using M.G.C. Biology Collections U.K. money ('Sunflower Money'). Steve and Jeremy have identified, rehoused and listed over 15,000 British Lepidoptera, now stored in new units. Smaller RECAP grants have allowed curatorial work to continue on Diptera and Coleoptera collections, by independant specialists.

In September Natalie Barlow joined the section as Trainee Assistant.

The City Ecology Unit still remains an integral part of Natural History following its restructuring in October; Ian Rotherham became Principal City Ecologist. Jean Glasscock joined the Unit as Assistant Ecologist (Contracts) in December, to assist with the consultancy part of the Unit's activities. Jean was formerly a Scientific Officer in English Nature's Derbyshire Office. Three other posts were created or redesignated within the Unit, but these remain vacant for the time being.

Derek Whiteley

Information

Sticky Traps - a possible attractant

The sticky traps now widely used in museums for pest monitoring purposes are also used in industrial sites for monitoring cockroaches and pests of flour and other stored food products. Where such economically important pests are concerned, sufficient research has been performed for pheromone attractants to have been developed. This increases the chances of pest detection considerably. Unfortunately, as far as I am aware, no such pheromone attractants are available for museum-type pests.

After examining a large number of traps recently, a feature of some catches struck me. On a number of occasions, a spider, or other large creature, had become trapped and was surrounded on the trap by spider beetle, psocids or silverfish. Somehow they must detect the dead creature because the rest of the surface of the sticky tape was usually clear!

I am, therefore, making a tentative suggestion that it may be worthwhile to bait the traps with dead insects; a valuable use for those corpses of discarded fieldwork specimens or even those successfully swatted bluebottles! I would be interested to hear of any results, positive or otherwise.