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Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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Legal Niceties

Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981:
The Quinquennial Review
(Information from DOE News Release no 493)

The outcome of the quinquennial review (which is required by the provision of the 1981 Act) was made public in September 1987. The number of native species protected from being taken from the wild, injured, killed or destroyed is increased by 48 animal species and 31 plant species, bringing the total number of species now protected to 177. The additions are to schedules 5 and 8 of the Act and include:

- * full protection for wild cat, dormouse and pine marten
- * full protection for all cetacea using British waters
- * extension of protection afforded to viviparous lizard, slow-worm and grass-snakes to make it an offence to kill or injure them
- * full protection for a number of plants which are known from one site only, such as sand crocus and pygmy weed.

The two species removed from the protected list are the chequered skipper butterfly and the carthusian snail.

The full list of additions is given below (the odd notation of common names comes straight from the press release). More information on the plants can be found in BSBI News no 47 (December 1987) p19.

Schedule 5 (animals)

Anemone, Ivell's Sea
Anemone, Startlet Sea
Apus
Beetle, Violet Click
Cat, Wild
Cicada, New Forest
Dolphin (all species)
Dormouse
Leech, Medicinal
Marten, Pine
Mat, Trembling Sea
Moth, Viper's Bugloss
Porpoise, (all species)
Sandworm, Lagoon
Shrimp, Fairy
Shrimp, Lagoon Sand
Turtles, Marine (all species)
Vendace

Walrus
Whale (all species)
Whitefish

Schedule 8 (Plants)

Adder's-tongue, Least
Cabbage, Lundy
Colt's-foot, Purple
Cottongrass, Slender
Crocus, Sand
Cudweed, Red-tipped
Fleabane, Alpine
Fleabane, Small
Gentian, Fringed
Germander, Cut-leaved
Goosefoot, Stinking
Grass-poly
Hawk's-beard, Stinking
Helleborine, Youngs
Horsetail, Branched
Hound's-tongue, Green
Marshwort, Creeping
Milk-parsley, Cambridge
Naiad, Holly-leaved
Pennyroyal
Pigmyweed
Ragwort, Fen
Ramping-fumitory, Martin's
Restharrow, Small
Rock-cress, Alpine
Rock-cress, Bristol
Speedwell, Fingered
Star-of-Bethlehem, Early
Stonewort
Strapwort
Viper's-grass

Skeletons in the cupboard

There must be many botanical collections in museums up and down the country whose curators are unwittingly breaking the law. How can this be so?

Try out the following check list. If the answer to any of the questions is "yes", then you should read to the end of the article!

- 1 Have you Coca specimens in your herbarium? If so, is it possible that any of them are *Erythroxylon coca*?
- 2 Now examine your collection of medicines. Do you have any morphine tablets?
- 3 Many museums have collections of economic botany samples. Do yours contain any poppy heads, perhaps with grooves scored in them?
- 4 There may well be a bottle of Dr Bowe's Liniment in a medicine chest. Did you know that it contains morphine?

The point of all these questions is simply that many museums have collections which contain Class A and Class B drugs (otherwise known as Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 drugs). Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, possession of any of these drugs is an offence (even if there is no criminal intent).