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## Biology Curators Group Newsletter

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ASC has been asked to organize a workshop on training and job opportunities for systematists/curators worldwide, at the 1990 meeting of the International Congress on Systematics and Evolutionary Biology to be held July 1-7, 1990, at the University of Maryland. For a circular describing the meeting, contact Cheryl Blackman, Room 1123, Microbiology Building, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742, USA.

ASC has recently published two new books which will be of interest to BCG members. A GUIDE TO MUSEUM PEST CONTROL, edited by Zycherman and Schrock, is available for \$36.00 (plus \$9.00 for overseas airmail postage) and SYSTEMATICS: RELEVANCE, RESOURCES, SERVICES, AND MANAGEMENT: A BIBLIOGRAPHY, by Knutson and Murphy is available for \$9.00 plus \$3.60 for overseas airmail postage.

Sincerely,

Dr K. Elaine Hoagland  
Executive Director  
Association of Systematics Collections

Dear Sir,

MGC Annual Report 1987-88

In your recent newsletter (Vol 5, No 1) Derek Whiteley drew attention to the small amount of money spent by the MGC on biological projects in 1987-88. It is only fair to point out however, that grant-aided projects listed in our annual reports (eg capital grants to provide new stores) tend to be described in general terms and can benefit natural history collections together with a range of other types of collections. In addition, it should not be forgotten that we fund the English Area Museum Councils which provide grants towards biological projects, undertake subsidised conservation work and support surveys of natural history collections (although these are not listed in our annual reports). The Conservation Unit has also been active in supporting conferences concerned with the conservation of natural history collections. Notwithstanding these points, there IS a lack of money spent on biological projects and the reason for this is chiefly a paucity of applications (good or bad!).

The recent publication of BIOLOGICAL COLLECTIONS UK has highlighted the desperate plight of many natural history collections. The MGC intends to react positively to this report and we are convening a meeting of interested parties to discuss the best way forward. We shall of course be inviting representatives of the BCG to this meeting.

Yours sincerely,

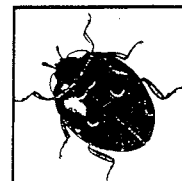
Chris Newbery  
Deputy Secretary  
Museums and Galleries Commission  
7 St James's Square  
LONDON SW17 4JU

# DERBY FINAL *Evening Telegraph* **Beetle off to see the things that bug you**

**T**he nationally-based Biology Curators' group is launching a campaign this week entitled, *Beetle Down...* to your local museum.

Museums throughout Britain are organising special exhibitions and events to make people aware of the varied work that goes on in natural history museums.

At Derby City Museum the National History staff-keeper Bill Grange and assistant keeper Mick Moyes — have prepared a special exhibit. It focuses on the



identification of household pests, which form a high proportion of inquiries from the public.

The display features a mock-up of a corner of a kitchen complete with a selection of realistically nosed insects and other

small bugs — some of them harmful pests, others harmless intruders.

Cockroaches munch through biscuits, clothes moths devour a sock, a spider crawls up the wall — and the blowflies on a dish of cat food are particularly revolting!

Another exhibit shows how specimens and habitat models are prepared for displays, featuring freeze-drying and other modern techniques, and which are hoped to be used in the proposed Derby Nature Museum of Allestree Hall.

The museum is open 10 — 5 Tuesday — Saturday, admission free.

## BETTER-DOWN AT DERBY CITY MUSEUM

Beetle-down came at an opportune time for us. Nick Moyes (Assistant Keeper) and myself in the Natural History Section here were in something of a despondant mood as it looked (and still does) that a project to create a new 'Derby Nature Museum' at Allestree Hall, just north of the City, was to be 'axed'. We had been working enthusiastically for the last two and a half years on some far-reaching and exciting plans; but in May the Conservatives took over from Labour in the local elections.

No official decision has come to us at the time of writing, but murmurings in the press and other reported remarks lead us to fear the worst. In addition a top councillor who visited the Museum recently was heard to mutter, as he swept through the Natural History Gallery, "I don't see the point of putting stuffed birds on show". Admittedly, the quality of displays in the existing gallery are not terribly inspiring - what we had planned for the new project was light-years away in concept.

Beetle-down gave us the opportunity to present what we are all about to the public. We immediately thought of an exhibition. Instead of a temporary affair, we decided to mount a small 'permanent' display within one of the existing cases in the natural history gallery of the main museum, as part of a general upgrading of a rather unexciting and obsolete room.

We rejected a straight systematic account of our work and decided to 'focus down' on a particular aspect. 'Beetle-down' sparked off the idea of dealing with the identification of household pests. Enquiries in this field make up a significant proportion of those coming from the general public, and many are passed on via the Environmental Health Department. It was a good subject to cover, we thought, as it highlights our close relationship with the local community, dispelling any 'ivory tower' image.