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for generously giving their time and efforts. We hope they enjoyed it as much as we did.

(PS A special mention should be made of Derek Whiteley, thanks to whom we need no longer fear genitalia.)

Steven Thompson
Clitheroe Museum
Ann Nicol
Leicestershire Museums Service
(students on the course)

It would be a worthwhile objective to document Museum holdings of species designated as endangered within the EC, though not all these species are at similar risk on a world scale. It is also feasible to 'adopt' a species whose habitat is close at hand, and to gather information on its autecology or reproductive biology. Annex 3 includes such familiar plants as the Horned Poppy, *Glaucium flavum*, the Sea Holly, *Eryngium maritimum* and the Box, *Buxus sempervirens*. Annex 2 contains the Ghost Orchid, *Epipogium aphyllum*, and Annex 1 mentions the Bog Orchid, *Hammarbya paludosa* and Slender Cotton-grass, *Eriophorum gracile*. One could consider mounting a travelling exhibition which contained examples from these lists. The Liverpool Museum's exhibition 'Wildlife, the Law and You' had a successful tour promoting the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

In the Press

Plants and the proposed EC Habitats Directive

The proposed **Habitats Directive**, a draft of which was published by the European Commission in 1988, is 'potentially one of the most important legal instruments ever written for the conservation of plants'. These are the views of a Plantlife report published by the WWF and the RSPB in April 1990. But what are the implications for Natural History curators?

In the 'Supplementary Annexes' to the proposal for a Habitats Directive, which were published in March of this year, lists are presented of plant and animal species whose habitats are threatened in the European Community (Annex 1, which contains a separate list for the parts of Macaronesia which fall within the EC); of species of animals and plants which are threatened in the Community (Annex 2); and of plants and animals whose exploitation should be subject to a management plan (Annex 3). A list of natural and semi-natural habitats to be protected within the Community forms Annex 4.

The intention in publishing these lists is similar to that pursued by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which designated 62 plant species as being given special protection. Subsequent reviews have added a further 31 species to this list, some of which feature in the EC lists. If collecting (for whatever purpose) is restricted or forbidden within the EC, specimens already in Museum collections acquire an enhanced value. There ought to be a presumption in favour of encouraging work on these specimens so as to avoid having to take further material from the wild.

These are simply draft proposals; there will be a lengthy period of consultation before legislation is finalised, and (as was the case with the Wildlife and Countryside Act) we can expect pressure groups to respond vigorously in their own defence. One thing is clear: European legislation will provide additional scope for Museum curators to justify projects to conserve and document their collections. Perhaps we should also try to influence the content of this legislation, by making representations to the committee of the European Parliament which is considering these proposals. Is anyone interested in taking this further?

Copies of the Plantlife report (which has the same title as this article) can be obtained from Ian Hepburn at the RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy Beds. SG19 2DL.

John Edmondson
Liverpool Museum

Curator (32:2) has a short piece on an inexpensive apparatus for degreasing skulls - in this case small mammal and bird skulls - by F J Jannett and J G Davies. It describes a boxed unit of 36 cells for the bulk handling of 36 skulls or parts of skulls in degreasing and washing liquids. Due care is taken of the data labels, which is vital with mass handling techniques of similar material like this; the whole apparatus lasts for several dozen applications and costs next to nothing.

In the same issue there is a fascinating paper by Karen Wonders of the Department of Art History, Uppsala University, Sweden, on the progress of taxidermy through various phases of development:

'Exhibition Fauna - from Spectacle to Habitat Group'. She covers the eighteenth century entrepreneurial shows by Lever and Bullock, later links with romantic painting and sculpture, the 'tasteful' decorative displays popular with Victorians, trophies, the use of specimens in early photography, the growth of commercial taxidermy and its links with museums, and the development of the 'group method' of arranging specimens. The second part of the paper deals with the evolution of the 'habitat group' method of display, mainly in North America, and how these groups formed a focus for the popularization of natural history and the various 'back to nature' movements in the early twentieth century.

For those who like to theorise on the upsurge in popularity of conservation and natural history and how the average person can 'experience' wildlife as a leisure activity there is an interesting paper in **Biological Conservation** (53:3) by D A Duffus and P Dearden called 'Non-Consumptive Wildlife-Orientated Recreation: A Conceptual Framework'. It is concerned with the change in attitudes in North America from killing wildlife in a regulated way (hunting) and the management values this requires to what the authors' call the non-consumptive use of wildlife (photographing; 'experiencing wildlife' at first hand) and the differences in management philosophy and practice this more enlightened approach requires.

It may seem odd to try to rationalise a recreational activity in this way, but when mega-bucks are involved (in 1981, 3.6 millions Canadian spent 2.1 billion dollars on non-consumptive wildlife-orientated trips; in 1988 whale-watchers generated expenditure estimated at 4.2 million dollars on Vancouver Island) the providers such as national park managers, reserve wardens and conservationists in general need a way of assessing customer satisfaction at 'wildlife encounters'; counting the corpses in the bag doesn't work any more! It makes an interesting read once you penetrate the transatlantic jargon.

'Evaluating Interpretation' is the theme of the July 1990 issue of **Interpretation**, the Bulletin of the Centre for Environmental Interpretation. The whole issue is concerned with how we judge visitor response to interpretative exhibitions through the use of techniques like interviewing visitors in structured or unstructured ways, in groups or singly;

questionnaires; observation of visitor behaviour and using live interpreters who can answer visitors' questions directly. The techniques are summarised on the centre pages with a useful discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of each and an evaluation of what each is likely to cost.

BSBI News (55) has a paper by A O Chater on the financing and publication of local floras which is relevant to all museum curators with hopes of publishing works on any aspect of local natural history. It draws on the returns (52) from questionnaires sent to the organisers of 58 local floras published within the past 20 years. Of particular interest are sections on total sales, print runs, pre-publication offers, costs, sources of funding and procedure. There is also a formula for calculating the selling price of a flora. The paper has a lot of practical information drawn from the real experiences of people who have actually done the job and is all the more valuable for that. But one fact is clear - with careful planning and costing, publishing a local flora need not cost you an arm and a leg; but it won't make you a fortune either.

All those members who attended the AGM on the Isle of Man this year will be interested in the following note from **Habitat** (26:8). 'A plan by the Nature Conservancy Council (NCC) to help maintain and increase the small breeding population of Choughs on the Isle of Man, has been awarded £40,000 by Manx Airlines over the next ten years. The project will develop work already carried out by NCC on the Hebridean Islands of Islay and Colonsay - the only other Chough stronghold in Britain. The grant will go towards the costs of maintaining traditional buildings associated with long-established agriculture based on stock rearing and make permanent their otherwise temporary use as chough nest sites.'

The Conservator (14) has a paper by Haupt, Dyer and Hanlan which may be of interest to biological conservators who like to use traditional materials when renovating old biological preparations - 'An Investigation into Three Animal Glues'. The glues in question are rabbit skin glue, gelatin and isinglass and the test procedures included pH, surface tension, viscosity, film characteristics and mechanical characteristics (elongation) at various relative humidities. There is no 'best' choice between these;