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The Biology Curator

Title: National Biodiversity Network -Update

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Source: Garland, S. (1996). National Biodiversity Network -Update. *The Biology Curator, Issue 7, 2 - 3.*

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/496>

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scheme may be set up in the Yorkshire and Humberside region, which, if fruitful may be expanded at a later date.

The committee have been cooperating with Wiltshire Constabulary over the fate of a major egg collection which they had confiscated, prosecuting the owner. It is expected that a satisfactory conclusion to this business will be reached in the near future.

The next four meetings, from the Paris trip in November to next years proposed Vienna trip, were discussed and are being taken forward. See the events timetable elsewhere in this issue. Ideas for further meetings were also discussed, as were "Stage 2" meetings. These are intended to be small meetings at a higher level of specialism than our normal meetings, but the ideas proposed so far have, for various reasons, failed to come to fruition. Nevertheless, suggestions for these and other meetings, as well as offers of venues, will still be welcomed by committee.

Finally, an eye is being kept on our reserves which are currently decreasing, although this is in part due to the fact that there have been a number of out-of-the-ordinary expenditures this year.

As ever, we are endeavouring to keep the membership up to date as involved as possible in the activities of the group. If there is anything that you would like to suggest or feel should be brought to the attention of the committee, please get in touch with one of the committee members. Thanks.

Steve Thompson

Orphan Collections Report

After much debate and many re-writings, a more or less final draft of this report has now been produced. This runs to four sides of A4, plus associated material, and comprises an introduction, a review of the current situation, possible routes for action, and a summary and recommendations.

An outline of this report and the surrounding issues was presented at the MA Conference at the beginning of October, in a session covering this and the collections at risk initiative. The session was most successful, attracting around forty people, with as many from outside the subject as inside, and including AMC officers and museum directors. There was considerable discussion after the presentations, and the feedback from the audience was entirely positive. Any negative comments were confined to what we had left out, and these issues are in fact ones that we have covered in our investigations. I feel the response was most encouraging, and that we have a mandate for taking the initiatives on.

Some changes will probably need to be made to the report following the feedback at the conference. The final report will be published in this journal and in *The Geological Curator*, as well as in other appropriate places. If anyone would like to see the current draft of the report, please get in touch with me at Scunthorpe Museum, Oswald Road, Scunthorpe, North Lincs, DN15 7BD. (01724 843533). Your comments will be most welcome.

Collections at Risk: Can you help?

As you probably know, the Collections at Risk Cell is currently embroiled in a major overhaul. In a nutshell the aim is to move from the traditional reactive approach of writing letters of concern in response to immediate threats and instead, and where possible, take up a more proactive role by submission of views and comments to museum governing bodies at the consultative stage of any proposals likely to threaten the well being of a collection. This isn't going to happen overnight, however, initiatives towards this are currently being developed. In order to maintain the momentum achieved so far, whilst also continuing to deal with current collections at risk, it is vital that the cell expands beyond its present number, i.e. just me. What is required are people to spend a small amount of time reading through material, either relating to new initiatives or to specific cases and feed comments back to me — two, three or four heads are better than one. A cell comprising individuals spread across the regions would also be useful.

I don't need to sell the importance of the cell's work to you, many of you already have experienced collections at risk, while unfortunately, many more of you will in the near future. So if you feel you'd like to help, don't delay, pick up the phone today.

Mike Palmer
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William Brown Street
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Please can you make a note of Mike Palmers change of telephone number since the last issue of 'The Biology Curator'.

NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY NETWORK - UPDATE

The meeting on 24 September 1996 gave feedback from the regional consultative meetings. There is no room here to go into detail, but the bid will be put forward in early November. Local Records Centres will be able to take part in the project by forming local consortia of organisations. These consortia will have to achieve certain accredited standards and sign-up to agreed terms and conditions. BCG hopes to be involved in developing both accreditation standards and the terms of operation, but it is not certain who will develop these yet!

My main worry concerns the unambitious targets set by the project. By June 2000 it is planned to have only 20 centres "sorted", with another 30 to 35 done by the end of 2000. This will still leave gaps. What happens if over 20 are ready to participate immediately is not clear. I suspect that there will be problems!

My advice to centres in museums is to start talking to partners for possible consortia. Try to prepare yourselves for the project in case the bid is successful next spring. If you are in an area where conflict is more frequent than co-operation, the bid organisers assure me that it will be a

priority to target "problem" areas and to mediate to enable consortia to be developed.

Steve Garland
BCG Biological Recording Cell

Local Information, Local Collections

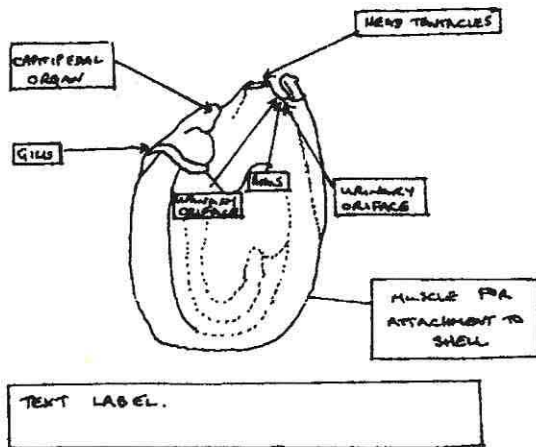
A BCG one-day seminar examining the links between collections and biological recording. Speakers will examine the role of collections in the underpinning environmental data, and its many uses such as the biodiversity and the ubiquitous Local Agenda 21 initiatives. The need for new collections to be made to support new environmental records will be discussed.

Anyone interested in contributing to this meeting please contact Graham Walley at the Nottingham Natural History Museum, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham NG8 2AE. (Tel: 0115 928 133/Fax: 0115 928 3692/Email: gw@notmusanthist.demon.co.uk)

The date planned for is Thursday 30th January 1997 at Wollaton Hall.

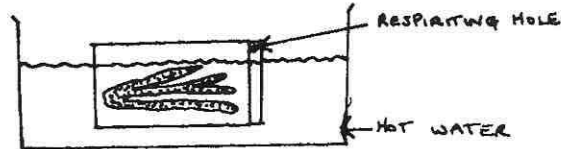
PROCEDURE FOR CURATING OLD GLASS MUSEUM JARS

If the jar has a complex system of outside and inside labels it is advisable to do a quick sketch to ascertain the position of each.



First the lid is removed from the jar, either by easing off gently with a scalpel or by softening the seal in warm/hot water (not boiling). It is important to make sure that the respiring plug in the lid is removed or pushed out, otherwise the jar might explode due to pressure from the vapourising preservative. Don't allow water in!

The specimen is carefully withdrawn from the jar and placed in a holding tray with liquid until required. Outside

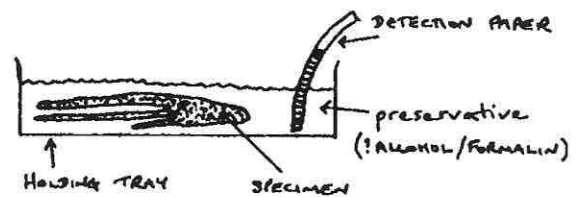


labels associated with the specimen are soaked off and dried. Once dry put in a box for safe keeping.

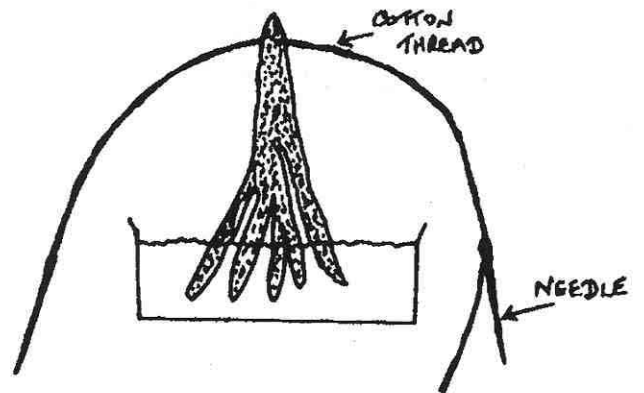
The jar and lid are then cleaned using a scalpel or soft kitchen abrasives and left to dry. Take all traces of paint off.

At this stage whilst the jar is drying, some of the following procedures might be undertaken:

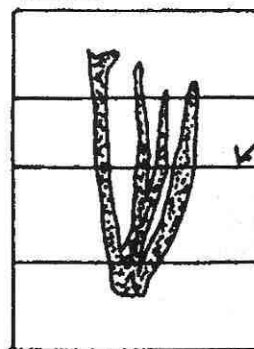
(i) the preservative is checked using detection paper. In many cases it is often not apparent what preservative has been used. (Simon's gravity method, detection papers, Alizarin preps).



(ii) the specimen is rehydrated using sodium tri-phosphate or Decon 90 method.



TIED AROUND PLATE



SEWN OR TIED DIRECTLY ONTO PLATE

