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## The Biology Curator

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Watsonian vice-county numbers are given for each specimen in addition to a modern county name, so satisfying both camps. Other expected categories in the catalogue are collector, date and accession number. The catalogue is clearly produced and easy to read. However, there seems to be an error on page 23 where two specimens of *R. chrysoxylon* (syn. *R. mercicus* var. *chrysoxylon*) are misplaced under *R. mercicus* in the alphabetic list. This has been taken into account in the index and both pages are referred to but, in addition, a cross-reference at both catalogue entries would have been useful.

The analysis of the dates of collection of *Rubus* specimens at Liverpool Museum will reflect that found in herbaria across the country, the study of this group of flowering plants peaking in the late Victorian era. For many herbaria this publication will be useful for comparison of specimen data with those at Liverpool. However, unless the nomenclature of the collection to be compared has been updated then direct comparison will be impossible. Access would be needed to other publications, such as those already mentioned, to cope with the many synonyms and nomenclature changes found in this group of plants. It could be interesting, if not already done, to find out if the species are still extant where their original locations still exist.

Museums need to communicate information on the collections in their care both to fellow workers and the general public. This can be done successfully by exhibitions but natural history reference collections present special problems. Specimens often occur in great quantity and are physically fragile. Published catalogues can adequately fulfil this communication role and offer the advantage of greater permanence over exhibitions but their appearance is rare. This is why Liverpool Museum is to be congratulated on the production of a complete catalogue of the over 2,000 bramble specimens in their care.

Patricia Francis, Bolton Museum and Art Gallery

**LEICESTERSHIRE DRAGONFLIES.** Steve Grover and Helen Ikin. 1994. 64pp. Paperbound. ISBN 0850223598. £6.50. Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service.

In recent years dragonflies have become relatively popular insects and this increasing interest in the group has

led to the publication of accounts of the dragonflies of several counties. Leicestershire, the latest county to receive such treatment, has twenty-two certainly recorded dragonfly species (about half the number on the British list) together with the largest current county membership of the British Dragonfly Society. The aim of the book is to further stimulate interest in the dragonflies of the county, primarily by facilitating their identification (adults only) and showing from where within Leicestershire they have been recorded. The text is 'user friendly' with technical terminology fully explained and employed sparingly.

Short introductory sections outline the life histories of dragonflies, include a chart showing the period in the year when the commoner species may be seen on the wing, and briefly discuss conservation and the recording of Odonata. The major part of the book deals with the sixteen species known to breed in the county. Each of these is given a two-page spread that includes a distribution map of 1km squares in which the species has been recorded (the number of 1km squares is used to calculate a 'rarity score'), the total number of records, habitats depicted symbolically in order of frequency, a verbal account of status and distribution, identification features and flight period. Identification is aided by the provision of annotated colour illustrations which, although lacking artistic refinement, are admirably clear and emphasise the characteristics of each species. Interesting features include graphs showing the increase in recent years of the numbers of records of the Emperor and Migrant Hawker dragonflies, and a pie diagram of the numbers of five species visiting gardens. The six Leicestershire species for which breeding has not been confirmed are treated in less detail but two pages of ink drawings should ensure their identification. A simple but adequate identification key is provided to all twenty-two species.

There is much information in this book, but the scant reference to particular Leicestershire localities is disappointing. More details about the richer sites, with species lists, would have been informative and given a lead to novice observers on where to look. Admittedly, this information could be extracted from the distribution maps, but only after laboriously matching dots with places on the ground.

An erratum sheet inserted by the publishers lists thirteen errors. Unfortunately, there are several others, principally inconsistencies in type-setting which give the book a rather untidy appearance. Also, throughout the book, all species' authorities appear in parentheses irrespective of whether or not the species remains in its original genus. These shortcomings, however, hardly detract from the usability of the book, and it should certainly achieve the authors' aim of encouraging others to take a closer look at the Odonata of Leicestershire.

R.A. Askew

### ***Insect Collection News* - a review of some articles.**

For those of you who do not know about this Newsletter, it is edited by Ron McGinley at the Department of Entomology at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.20560, USA. He can also be contacted on e-mail: mnhen011@sivm.si.edu

### **1 - New Technology And Museums**

One excellent article was originally published in the *Bulletin of Entomological Research* (83: 471-474, 1993) by Scott E Miller. It discusses the role of new information technology in entomology, but is of relevant interest to anyone involved in managing databases of collections, research or biological recording data. It is a fact that there are now one and a half million computers connected to the international network system called INTERNET. This is estimated to include about fifteen million users in over fifty countries. User levels have been doubling annually.

The article discusses many issues that are already being mentioned in the UK. I have recently been involved in several discussions concerning the availability of biological recording data. These discussions have often revolved around charging for data access and copyright of data. This article takes a very different view. I will quote a few interesting passages.

*"The vast amount of information becoming available at low cost on the Internet is also changing the economics and politics of information management. It is no longer viable to hoard information and try to sell it, because most or all of the information is available somewhere else at no charge. In recent years, some institutions have*