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The Biology Curator

Title: Amsterdam, Etc.: BCG Visit to the Netherlands - the inside story

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Source: Garland, S. (1995). Amsterdam, Etc.: BCG Visit to the Netherlands - the inside story. *The Biology Curator*, Issue 2, 8.

URL: <http://www.natsca.org/article/578>

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AMSTERDAM ETC.

BCG Visit to the Netherlands - the inside story

Steve Garland, Bolton Museum

Does your life hold no meaning any more? Is there a void - a gap - something basic missing from your very existence? - So you didn't go on the BCG trip to the Netherlands eh!! This proved to be the usual mixture of mind-blowing museum collection experiences and a good chance to catch up on all the gossip, and to destroy the professional characters of anyone unfortunate enough not to be on the trip or who popped out of the bar for a moment!!

The visits to the museums in Amsterdam and Leiden were superb. Some of the stores contained many fascinating and historic specimens. I discovered that the Chairman knows a Blue Whale's penis when he sees one, although I couldn't find any botanists who could identify the specimen in alcohol labelled 'Groote Taja' beyond "it's a plant". It was indeed a Taja of really great proportions!

Many of the stores were of familiar design, but there was nothing for sale in the bars or on the streets of Amsterdam that could exceed the high achieved when walking out into the Vertebrate store at Leiden! A floor made from oversized perforated-zinc, about four floors up, provided a memorable experience. While my brain was still reeling I think hallucinations must have begun as I seem to remember a cupboard opening and there being an elephant and two giraffes inside; then another that was full of Crowned Pigeons!! Wow man!!

I was in a small party who enjoyed the zoo so much that we got lost. What is 'turn left after the sloths' in Dutch? The animals here all looked in tip-top condition. The reason is probably that it is right next to the museum. A slightly ill animal always perks up miraculously when the taxidermist appears with a tape measure and bag of borax!

The evenings were our own, so we explored the delights of the city of Amsterdam. We tried many things; beer, pool, table football!! We even visited the Sex Museum (and the Erotic Museum - Ed), for purely professional reason, of course. The labels were easily



"In his minds eye he could see herds of Wildebeest roaming across the African plains" Osteological storage, Amsterdam.



Mounted bird storage, Leiden

understandable (at least I think there were labels!). There were lots of photographs, displayed using a variety of mounting techniques. There were also one or two exhibits of human dummies that I can't remember seeing in the latest Gems catalogue! The audiovisual exhibits were fairly eye catching. And all done in the best possible taste; well nearly. This should be an interesting one if they go for MGC Registration!

We also observed some interesting display techniques on the streets. I really must try lighting some of our exhibits with a red light and UV light combination, because this would seem to be popular with at least fifty percent of the public!?

The return ferry journey saw the Group dividing into cinema buffs and disco enthusiasts. However, this could only happen after the Committee had dutifully met in a quiet (quiet?- Ed) corner to make a few important decisions (floating voters!). The dancing went on into the night, while outside the ferry passed through flocks of migrating Redwings heading south and calling gently in the darkness.

Many thanks to all the people in the Netherlands who organised a marvellous range of visits and kept us fed and watered. Also thanks to Kathie Way for organising what was not just a study visit, but yet another chapter in the BCG history books!

Report on Study Visit to Amsterdam Zoological Museum.

Thursday 3rd November 1994.

Charles Pettitt, Manchester Museum, The University of Manchester, M13 9PL

After some twenty hours on coach and ferry, we arrived at the Museum about 10.00am. After coffee, the Director, Dr. Wouter Los, welcomed us in the Museum Library under the watchful eye of a portrait of Carl Linnaeus. He gave us a general introduction to the Museum and the collections. The Zoological Museum, Amsterdam is part of the Research Institute of