

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING LABELLED **+ STORAGE AND PROTECTION**

1. Labelling specimens

→ Specimens without data are useless!

Keep basic data on or with the specimen

Use Rotring or Indian ink, pencil or laser printed labels on white 160g m² card

- NEVER use biro or pigment ink

Pin Locality label(s) and Determination label(s) underneath the specimen

2. Locality label(s)

Data on label (font size 4 or 5):

Country (if necessary), County (Watsonian Vice-county (VC) preferable)

Locality name (Town or NNR), grid reference

Date (e.g. 20.vi.2008*), name of collector

Method of collecting, if appropriate (e.g. suction sampling)

short habitat details and host plant if known (if this is too much, write on a 2. label and pin under first label)

* This distinguishes the date from the American system, in which the month is mentioned first

Example:

ENGLAND, VC24, BUCKS

Burnham Beeches NNR,

SU949855, 20.viii.2008,

B. Ismay, suction sample,

Sphagnum, Calluna

→ **Make label as small as possible!**

When adding records to a database or sending them to a recording scheme make sure that the record says whether a voucher specimen exists to support the record.

3. Determination label(s)

Data on label:

Genus and species

Author, sex sign

Determiner's name and date (or year) of determination

Use 'teste' and the name if another expert has determined a specimen, but has not labelled it

Leave all determination labels on specimens, they may be important

4. Storage of specimens

Dry insect specimens should be stored:

- In well closing (air tight) store boxes or cabinet drawers, usually made of wood
 - lined with plastazote or cork
- Do not use plastic boxes for long term storage – static builds up
- Allow store boxes to dry out, mouldy specimens are often useless
- Out of light
- In dry conditions (neither too cold or hot)
- Always store Lepidoptera away from other orders – scales get everywhere
- Regularly check for damage

Wet insect specimens should be stored:

- In tubes with labels inside the tube.
- Plug tubes with cellulose wadding, opening downwards and full of alcohol.
- Store tubes in larger bottles with excess alcohol to prevent drying out.
- Check level of alcohol regularly, e.g. every six months.
- Store bottles in a cool, dry place, avoiding fluctuating temperatures.
- Alcohol is flammable, store it according to insurance regulations, e.g. in a metal cabinet.
- If ethanol, IMS or denatured alcohol is used, you need a licence from Customs and Excise.

5. Curating your collection

- A well curated, ordered collection is easy to use
- Leave space for additions

Dry insect collection

Use a checklist to arrange collection (if one is available) in boxes / drawers:

- above specimens belonging to the same family: family label
- above specimens belonging to the same genus: genus label
- below specimens: species label
- use cabinet points to fix labels to storage box or drawer

Wet insect collection

Use a checklist to arrange bottled collection (if one is available)

- related species in same genus in the same bottle
- related genera within same family beside each other
- arrange families according to checklist (if one is available)

Put a large label inside each bottle indicating contents

6. What can damage your dry insect collection?

Commonest problem: insect pests, e.g. museum beetle (*Anthrenus* sp.), clothes moth (*Tinea* sp.)

- use pest control methods below

Mites or booklice (Psocoptera) mean storage is too damp

- use pest control methods below

Mould means storage is much too damp

- Impossible to get mould off specimens

7. Pest control - Protection

Protect your collection from insect pests with:

- **Naphthalene** (deters, but does not kill pests and is carcinogenic)
- **Paradichlorbenzene** (deters, but does not kill pests and is carcinogenic)
- **Insecticides** (which kill pests) - such as Vapona (Dichlorvos) - may still be available, but are being phased out for health reasons

8. Pest control - Treatment

Treat insect pests in your collection with:

Ethyl acetate

- put box in bag and seal well
- only for small amounts of material

Deep freeze for 3 weeks

- put box in plastic bag and seal well
- will kill all known pests
- let thaw for several days at room temperature before opening bag

9. Why bother with all this?

A good collection has intrinsic scientific value

Voucher specimens support any record made / published

Other workers can check your specimen if taxonomic changes are made

Please make provision for your collection when you cease active entomology or die

Please duplicate national, county or type material in one or more museum

10. SAFETY

Remember, chemicals are dangerous!

Read about the dangers of naphthalene, paradichlorbenzene, organophosphates (insecticides) and alcohol and be careful.