

Making a meal out of your collections

A review of:

Pinniger, D. 2008. *Pest Management: a practical guide*. Collections Trust.

Arsenic, naphthalene and other nasty chemicals used to stop pests from eating our specimens and objects, are now a thing of the past. Today staff must protect the country's cultural heritage by minimising pest infestation into our offices, stores and public spaces. *Pest Management: a practical guide*, by David Pinniger, sets out to describe how we all can do this, efficiently and economically.

Pinniger's introduction outlines the importance of pest management and, significantly, how to approach the problems '*using a holistic approach rather than reacting to each crisis*'. Essentially, minimising any potential of pests by recognising potential high risk areas and discouraging pests by controlling the environment. This chapter also introduces the reader into the '*Top Tip*' and '*Beware*' captions at the side of the main text. These are important pointers that staff need to be aware of and are not lost in the main body of the text.

Pest management gives clear photographs of the most common pests with information about their size, lifecycles and the type of material they attack. Obviously one cannot list all the different insect pests in cultural heritage sites, but it is a good starting point, and refers the reader where to find more specialist help if needed.

It may seem like a daunting task to even attempt to manage and eliminate pests, but Pinniger guides the reader on how to assess collections and buildings in a simple, non-jargon, step-by-step way. The first step is by monitoring for insects, rodents and birds. There are clear and useable examples of a '*pest management log*' and an '*insect ID monitoring sheet*'. These are user friendly guides on how to begin monitoring, and are an essential paper trail, so in the future new members of staff can see what has been done. Only when you know how big your pest problem is can you begin to manage it effectively.

How to avoid and prevent pests is presented in Chapter 4. Food and rubbish behind cabinets are obvious attractions to all kinds of pests, which can be reduced simply through regular checking and cleaning. Pests need certain environments to live; they need certain temperatures and higher levels of humidity. Controlling these can decrease the risk of pest infestation. There are several practical examples on how to physically keep pests out, and Pinniger highlights the different methods used for insects, rodents and birds.

The best method of dealing with pests is to prevent them in the first place. However, sometimes, they can be found on objects and specimens. Pinniger highlights a few chemical treatments, with '*Legal Alerts*' which are useful and important captions regarding legal information about using different chemicals. There is good advice on how to treat objects that have been attacked by pests using different methods, including freezing, heating, CO₂, anoxia, and phosphine. Readers are made aware that they do not need to use all of these methods, only the most suitable method for their particular situation. If you are unsure about how to treat an object or specimen, further advice should be sought (for example, the Natural Science Collections Association [NatSCA] and the Institute of Conservation [ICON] who can assist with advice on how to treat specimens and objects).

The final two chapters illustrate the simplicity of pest management and how it is achievable through easy to read bullet points and a useful '*to do list*'. How to

approach training, documentation and health and safety are outlined and covers everything you need to know.

Pest Management: a practical guide should be read by all staff in the cultural heritage sector. This is not a manual solely for conservation staff. To ensure pest management is practical and achievable, we all need to understand how we can reduce pests in our environment; pests do not just affect one type of collection, all departments' objects and specimens are a potential feast.

Jan Freedman (NatSCA Editor)

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