

I. EDITORIAL

Many countries nowadays have made strict rules (and rightly so) for collectors, partly for the protection of the flora and fauna and to thwart unscrupulous exterminators of butterflies and orchids, partly, we suspect, also as a check on industrial espionage. Obviously, administrators behind their desks have no inkling of what dedicated botanists (and zoologists) are doing in the forest. Especially when the scientists come from the so-called 'rich' countries the civil servants ask themselves why anybody would like to exchange a nice chair in an air-conditioned office with a lot of paper work for a most uncomfortable, hard log under a leaky fly in an insect-infested, humid, scary forest. Since they themselves certainly are not going to take a look there for themselves, they suspect other motives, and until they find out what these are, scientists are under suspicion and should be kept on a leash.

Sometimes the requirements border on the ridiculous, as a few instances that have come to attention show:

Unicates must be left with the host institute and can only be had on loan. Well, one could live with this, although especially these collections are often the most interesting.

Holotypes may also not be exported, but must be left with the host institute. As if a specimen in the forest would carry a sign 'Hi there, I'm the type of an undescribed taxon!'

If material (apparently accidentally exported) is appointed as the holotype of a new taxon, it must be returned to the host. What Institute is going to do that? Take the usual case where a duplicate of a specimen collected by Mr. A in country Y of the Herbarium of country X now deposited in the Botanical Institute of country Z is appointed by Mr. B as the holotype. You must be a civil servant to think that you can legally force B's Institute to 'donate' the specimen to Y!

An appointed counterpart, whoever he may be, may join the expedition at any time for any period at the full expense of the foreigner, incl. daily allowance and traveling costs to get there. This seems sensible and useful, but instances are known where such visiting counterparts regarded their presence as a holiday and refused to take a step into the real working world. One enjoyed it so much that he came several times!

However, since we are at their mercy, we should try to abide by the rules as much as possible. Anybody intending to collect in a foreign country (the regulations of your own country you probably know well enough to be able to deal with them) should contact a Director of a major institute there and ask for guidance. Send a clear outline of aims, subjects, dates, names of foundations and institutes that support your collecting trips. Be sure to suggest a local counterpart you know, or who is recommended to you, Mind that for most tropical countries you will only get your visum and export license if you are able to show that you have the backing of a local Institute and local counterpart.