

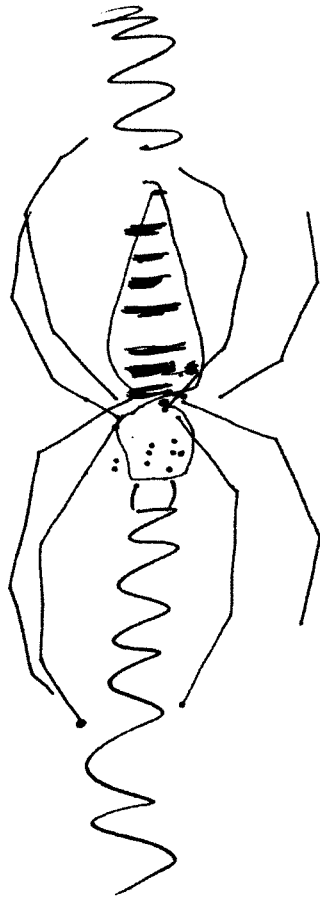
**Proceedings of the
18th European Colloquium of
Arachnology**



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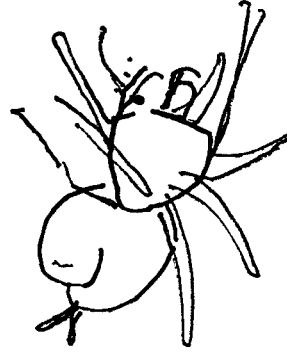
„Birth of a spider“ by Alojz Petráš

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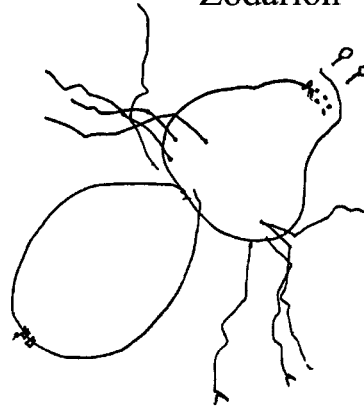
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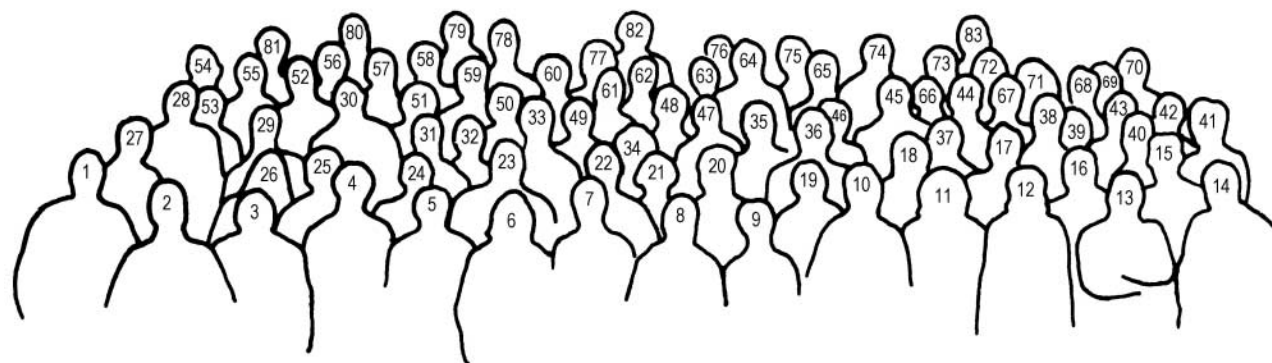
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PREFACE

It was a rainy day when the first participants turned up in Stará Lesná, a small village at the foot of the High Tatras, in order to join the meeting of European arachnologists, the 18th European Colloquium of Arachnology. This time the colloquium was held in Slovakia, jointly organised by the Institute of Landscape Ecology and Institute of Zoology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Arachnological Section of the Slovak Entomological Society, and Société Européenne d'Arachnologie. Altogether 98 arachnologists and 29 associate delegates from 26 countries attended this meeting. Most of them came from Europe, but a few from as far away as Japan, Siberia (Russia), U.S.A., Kazakhstan or Israel.

The clouds were gathering when Mgr J. Svatoň, president of the Arachnological Section of the Slovak Entomological Society and Ing. J. Oszlányi, CSc., head of the Institute of Landscape Ecology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences welcomed the participants and promised rainy weather.

But we did not mind the rain while staying indoors and listening to the lectures. In total there were 50 lectures and 33 posters presented in 8 sessions during 4 days. 36 of them are included in this special volume of *Ekológia*. The contributions concerned different aspects of arachnology: phylogeny, taxonomy, life-history, faunistics, spiders in agroecosystems, behaviour, ecology, biology, genetics, etc. and various arachnid taxa, including solipugids, Acari, and pycnogonids. The main topic of the colloquium was „Biodiversity and conservation of arachnids of wetland habitats“ which was organised as a two-day workshop (see the other volume). All this showed that the research of arachnids among European arachnologists is diverse and dynamic.

The rain became a nightmare on Tuesday when the 1st Arachnological games were planned to take place. Suddenly, the rain was gone and most of the participants took the opportunity to play volleyball, tennis or miniature golf. The best volleyball team came from the Czech Republic, one of the best tennis players came from Sweden, and the best miniature golf team came from Austria.

On Wednesday we went on an excursion to the Pieniny National Park as a part of the workshop. Now it became obvious that the rainy weather was just to comply with the workshop topic, wetlands. When rafting on Dunajec river we had wet-land both above and beneath us. The weather was, however, completely different on Saturday when many participants went on the post-colloquium excursion to the National Park “Slovak Paradise”. This National Park displayed its magnificent natural beauty, but also its challenging (if not frightening !) trails. I guess I heard some of you calling: “If this is Paradise, then I would rather go to Hell.”

A senior Slovak painter, Alojz Petráš, installed a collection of original paintings, plastic arts and mosaics, representing his own vision of spiders. There was a poll for the best picture. The picture „Birth of a spider“ won the competition and is included in this Proceedings.

During the Colloquium dinner three blind-folded arachnologists (each with a guide) were asked to draw a spider. Their excellent drawings are included in this Proceedings too. Other arachnologists showed their taxonomic and sampling skills. Yet another group, together with their families, put together a spider picture made of dozens of puzzle pieces.

I would like to thank the Honorary committee, the Organising committee, the International Advisory Board members, the sponsors, colleagues who reviewed the manuscripts, and K. Sunderland, for their diligence. Last but not least, I am greatly indebted to all of you, both arachnologists and the associate delegates, for providing such a social and pleasant atmosphere during the colloquium. The pleasure was all ours, the organisers'.

Stano Pekár

ECOLOGY (Bratislava)

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