

The newsletter of the European Society of Arachnology

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From the President

Dear Members of our Society

Many of us attended the 29th European Congress of Arachnology in Brno. This was a very inspiring and attractive event and I want to take this opportunity to thank Stano Pekár, Jana Niedobová, Vladimír Hula and their team very much. I also would like to thank our leaving council members Samuel Zschokke and Theo Blick for their excellent work and service to our Society over many years. At the same time I would like to cordially welcome Gabriele Uhl as a new council member.

At the General Assembly of our Society in Brno we discussed a wide range of issues and made important decisions regarding the profile of our Society, in order to maintain its scientific and other functions for the future. The new by-laws of our Society were accepted unanimously. By a majority-vote, we also accepted a moderate increase of the membership fees to ensure that we remain financially healthy. This should be viewed in connection with much reduced conference fees for ESA members that are proposed from the next European conference onwards, thereby ensuring that it is attractive to become a member of the ESA. This is important because the successful activities of the Society depend upon having a broad membership.

The Society supports attractive annual conferences and student awards. We offer reduced membership and conference fees and there is the possibility of waived fees for those under particular economic circumstances. We would like to increase our support for students attending other arachnological conferences, but such financial support is only possible if our Society attracts and maintains a sufficiently high number of regularly paying members.

Other, unique 'products' of our Society include the promotion of the 'European Spider of the Year' and the 'European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research'.

ESA also supports the Araneae internet key for the identification of European spiders. Suggestions for other elements that the Society could support are always welcome.

Wolfgang Nentwig, president of ECA

Please contribute

We invite all members of the Society to contribute news and announcements to the Newsletter!

Congress Report

By Sara Goodacre & Marco Isaia

The 29th European Congress of Arachnology was hosted by Stano Pekár and his group at Masaryk University, Brno, who coorganised the meeting together with the Czech Arachnological Society. The organising team also included Jana Niedobová and Vladimír Hula from Mendel University, Brno, in addition to Yuri Marusik from the Russian Academy of Science. A fantastic team of helpers helped make the event run smoothly. These included Petr Dolejš, Martin Forman, Lucie Havlová, Pavel Just, Ondřej Košulič, Tomáš Krejčí, Eva Líznavá, Ondřej Machač, Šárka Mašová, Radek Michalko, Lenka Sentenská, Radek Šich and Zdeněk Škopek. We are very grateful to all of the team, and to the large number of additional volunteers, who hosted us and made us all feel so welcome in Brno.

The congress began in the evening of August 23rd with a welcome reception at the congress venue, which was in one of the large lecture theatres at the



The logo of the congress combines characteristics of the venue and the fields of study in symbols. The three different colours of spiders correspond to the Mendel's discovery of the genotypic ratio (1:2:1) for heterozygotes in the F1 generation. Different spider postures represent different fields of current research in arachnology (ecology, behaviour, physiology, taxonomy). Authors: M. Řezáč, P. Saska, S. Pekár, S. Komínek.



Faculty of Economics and Administration of Masaryk University. It was an excellent way for the more than 170 colleagues and friends from 40 countries to begin to gather and to prepare for a week of fun – scientifically as well as socially.

The conference was opened on the following morning by our host, Professor Stano Pekár, who welcomed participants most warmly to the congress. There was also a wonderful opening address given by Professor Jan Buchar of the Charles University of Prague, an honorary member of the scientific organizing committee (and also honorary member of our Society!). Professor Buchar spoke about past Arachnological Society congresses and the friendships and working relationships that have always been a strong part of this academic community. This was followed by a colourful presentation by Dr. Vlastimil Růžička of the Biology Centre in České Budějovice, who spoke further on the theme of friendships amongst arachnologists. These have persisted for long periods of time and continue to cross many geographic borders. This talk was illustrated with wonderful congress photographs taken over the years by Christian Komposch.



The Congress Organizer Stano Pekár (left) with Jan Buchar (right).

The scientific program itself was split over four days of talks, and comprised 4 plenary talks, 66 oral presentations and 81 posters that encompassed a wide breadth of arachnological research. There were no parallel sessions, which meant that the entire audience could hear all talks, and the talks were divided into 13 thematic sessions. In addition there was an Arachnid Film Showcase, at which we saw several amazing films of spider behaviour. A film by Lukás Pich, showing a wolf spider female and her young, was voted the best of these excellent short films.

Each day began with a plenary talk, and was followed by a wide range of contributed talks, many of which were given by students. The talks were split into a broad range of subject areas such as morphology, taxonomy, physiology, ecology, sexual

selection and faunistics. There were also sessions on specific topics such as predator-prey interactions, ecosystem services and biogeography, to name but a few.

In between these varied talks – be they plenaries or contributed sessions - there were opportunities to relax whilst having coffee or lunch, or to wander over to the posters and read more about current research that is ongoing in the arachnological community.

Other opportunities to relax included the wonderful event on the first evening at the Mendel Monastery and Museum. We drank Becherovka and ate wonderful food in the gardens next to the monastery and had the opportunity to look inside the museum at the evidence of Mendel's work. As a geneticist by training (Sara) I can only say what an amazing opportunity it was to see the workings of the man whose name is given to the Mendelian patterns of inheritance I teach to students on a daily basis.

Arachnological Science

The plenary talks given throughout the conference illustrated the breadth of research covered at the meeting. Perhaps appropriately, given that Brno is home to the monastery where Gregor Mendel worked on the theories of genetic inheritance, the first plenary included a wealth of molecular genetic data. This talk was given by Wim Damen, from the University of Jena. Wim presented exciting data on the use of molecular tools to study spider development, and explained how an understanding of arachnid biology will help us to understand the evolution of different development patterns across diverse animal groups.

Other plenary talks covered subjects such as sexual selection, the relationship between genes and ecosystem function and the evolution of spider personality. The plenary talk given by Gabriele Uhl was a beautiful presentation that described experiments aimed at understanding the evolutionary bases for the maintenance of particular mating strategies. Jordi Moya-Laraño's elegant talk revealed new insights that may be gained about complex food webs by modelling the complex interactions that occur within them. Jonathan Pruitt's vibrant presentation demonstrated the different behavioural tendencies that spiders can have, and showed us how the persistence of social spider colonies can be determined by the 'personalities' of the spiders of which it is composed.



Arachnologists Can (Still) Party

This year's Arachnological Society congress would simply not have been the same without a 'Russian party'. This year did not disappoint and the party took place on the evening after the mid-congress excursion. The food and drink brought by Yuri Marusik, his wife and colleagues was absolutely amazing, and a fantastic complement to the spirits from all over the world that were brought by other congress participants. The accompanying music played by a DJ seemed perfectly in tune with the mood of a multinational audience of arachnologists, each with their own special dancing style. The dance performed by the 'cardboard' girl was particularly special (for more information about this ask Peter Jaeger).



Having fun at the Russian Party at the main Congress Venue.

Excursions

Perhaps the fun filled Russian party atmosphere was fuelled in part by the activities of the preceding hours, which had involved much fun at one of three mid-congress excursions. Some people had chosen to go spider hunting to look for the stunningly beautiful *Eresus moravicus* and other Moravian



Arachnologists in the Pannonian forest-steppe region of Dëvin.

specialties, whereas others had opted for one of two excursions that would involve cultural elements such as wine tasting or a nearby World Heritage Site. I (Sara) was on this last trip and thoroughly enjoyed visiting the summer house of the Liechtenstein family, taking a trip by boat along a canal to a castle ruin and taking in the views from the top of a minaret. On our return there was a sense that everyone had had a beautifully relaxing day and were ready for refreshments, Russian party style.

Congress Dinner and 'Kubb'

The congress dinner was held at the end of the penultimate day of talks, and allowed us all to experience some good food and company, accompanied by gentle Jazz music, in a very relaxing atmosphere. Conversations drifted on into the later hours outside; it was a lovely evening.

One of the topics of conversation was the 'Kubb' match held on the second evening of the congress, at which we had learned all about throwing long thin wooden sticks at small square wooden blocks, whilst absolutely trying not to hit the large wooden block (the 'King') until the final moment when the King became the target - but only when throwing backwards. Is this clear? I'm sure the instructions appear as straightforward to the reader as they were to all the participants. Suffice to say that not all wooden sticks went where they were intended, which I think only added to everyone's enjoyment of the evening, and there was an eventual winning team, which was applauded by everyone.

Awards ceremony

The awards ceremony was held after the final day of talks. This is always a highlight of the congress meeting, where the excellence of the science presented by students that we have encountered during the week is celebrated. The talks and posters were all of a very high standard and the judging committee had a difficult task to select winners, which were as follows:

Ecology & Behaviour - oral presentations

1. Lenka Sentenská, Czech Republic
2. Eva Líznařová, Czech Republic
3. Andreas Fischer, Germany

Ecology & Behaviour - posters

1. Thiago Kloss, Brazil
2. Marlis Dumke, Germany
3. Elena Piano, Italy





Participants competing for the Arachnological Cup during the Arachnological Games, held in the courtyards of the dormitory.

Taxonomy & Genetics - oral presentations

1. Stefano Mammola, Italy
2. Luka Katušić, Croatia
3. Liana Lasut, Switzerland

Taxonomy & Genetics - posters

1. Guilherme Gainett, Brasil
2. Nik Lupše, Slovenia
3. Matyáš Hiřman, Czech Republic

Congratulations to all the winners!

Most importantly however, there was an additional award this year to the best Kubb team. Each member of the winning team (named Thug Griefswald) was presented with an engraved mug – I am sure there will be fierce competition for these at subsequent meetings now that our competitive spirit has been ignited!

A final thank you

Our thanks go to the organisers of this congress – particularly to Stano Pekár – for hosting us all so well and for providing such a good environment in which to talk about the spider science that we love – and to enjoy being with our friends again. There was a huge round of applause at the end of the final meeting that sums up our collective feeling – thank you to all the team for everything you have done - we will all no doubt be back next year.



A round of applause to the Organizers!

News from ESA general assembly

By Efrat Gavish-Regev

The President (Wolfgang Nentwig) opened the General Assembly by presenting the Society activities during the last year. Wolfgang described the society's support to the annual congress and the 'Spiders of Europe' website as well as to students and European Arachnological Society projects. This was followed by a minute's silence to remember two members of the Society who passed away this year: Peter 'Otto' Horak and Wojciech Starega.

The results of the elections to the council were presented. Wolfgang Nentwig (President), Jason Dunlop (vice President), Christian Kropf (Treasurer) Sara Goodacre (Newsletter), and Marco Isaia (Newsletter) were all re-elected and Gabriele Uhl was elected as a new member. The other members of the council are Ferenc Samu (vice Treasurer and Facebook coordinator), Maria Chatzaki (News Secretary), Efrat Gavish-Regev (Membership Secretary), Holger Frick (Webmaster) and Stano Pekár (former congress organizer).

As part of my duties as the Membership Secretary (Efrat) I presented the membership development from 2007 till 2014. Active member numbers (including paying, honorary and waived-fee members) was 123 in 2007, increased dramatically in 2008 (180), but declined considerably in 2009 and 2010 (100, 82 respectively). During the last four years, due to the new membership payment policy (i.e. membership will be discontinued where fees are not paid for three consecutive years), there was a constant increase in the number of active members (99-151 from 2011 to 2014). This increase was accompanied by a decrease in the number of non-paying members. From 116 in 2011 to 43 non-paying members in 2014. No final information is available yet for 2015, however before the congress, there were 135 active members in addition to 61 non-paying members, with some payments that are still



expected. Among the 135 active members of 2015, 17 are honorary members, five are waived-fee members, 22 have student membership and the rest have regular membership.

As there are now established methods for paying membership fees (e.g. through Paypal), no fees will be payable through any other societies. Due to the time it takes to the payment information to be processed, the treasurer and the membership secretary requested members to let me (Efrat) know personally when payment has been made by Paypal, in order that up to date records can be maintained.

The next report (as of 31/7/2015) was made by the Treasurer (Christian Kropf) who presented the current balance (SFr 4517.94). Christian explained that this figure is larger than would normally be expected and is due to a payment of membership fees collected through the BAS in the last few years (SFr 2671.60). Christian also asked members that pay via bank transfer to pay the fees and charges.

The treasurer's report was accepted by the auditors Christoph Muster and Jakob Walter. The auditors made a specific comment regarding finances, namely that the income of the Society may become insufficient in future years to sustain the activities that it currently supports.

The President called for applications for the 2016/17 'European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research' (see details below) and reminded the members that suggestions for other initiatives that the Society could support are very welcome. One example is the new reciprocal arrangement with the American Arachnological Society (AAS) to provide eight one-year-AAS-memberships and four waivers for AAS meeting registration costs and ESA will provide four-one-year-EAS- memberships and two waivers for ECA meeting registration costs.

Two votes were held: approval of the new by-laws of our Society (majority accepted by vote), and raise of our fees that is needed in order to maintain the current ESA activities. The members voted in favor of raising ESA fees to 30 Euros for regular members and 15 Euros for student members (majority accepted by vote).

The next report was presented by the new Webmaster (Holger Frick) who presented the new website and thanked Samuel Zschokke, Søren Toft and others for their significant contribution to the media activities. The new website will become fully functional over the coming months.

The Newsletter coordinators (Marco Isaia and Sara Goodacre) reminded the members that the newsletter will be produced after the congress and that all contributions from members are welcome.

Theo Blick confirmed that 'Arachnologische Mitteilungen' (English subtitle 'Arachnology Letters') continues to be the vehicle for conference proceedings. The deadline for submission of congress publications is September 30th 2015.

The assembly finished with the announcements of the coming European and International meetings (See details below).

Finally, a vote of thanks was given to Stanislav Pekár Jana Niedobová, Vladimír Hula and their team for making the meeting such a success and the president hoped to see all members once again at the next congress.

Announcements

- European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research in 2016/17 (deadline 31st October 2015).

The Council of the European Society of Arachnology decided to declare focal years of biodiversity research of or for a country or region. Such years may be performed at 2 year intervals upon application to the ESA council and should be characterized by some specific effort, scientific cooperation and/or a granted research project. Though the society cannot provide additional money, it offers a platform to advertise a European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research through publication via its website.

In 2014/15, the first European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research is devoted to Greece, one of the most important biodiversity hotspots of Europe.

The call for the next European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research, 2016/17 is now open. This call is for a 2-year period of biodiversity research focused upon a country or region. Applications for this award should describe a specific effort, scientific cooperation and/or a granted research project in the area of biodiversity research. Currently, the Society cannot provide financial support, but it offers a platform to advertise the research, which may help to promote specific projects. Send your application for 2016/17 (a one page description is sufficient) to the President of ESA (wolfgang.nentwig@iee.unibe.ch) by 31st October 2015.



- The European Spider of the Year initiative (ESY) needs you!

By Christoph Hörweg, Milan Řezáč and Peter van Helsdingen

The German Society of Arachnology (Arachnologische Gesellschaft, ARAGES) started the 'Spider of the Year' initiative in 2000, in order to promote the study of spiders in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. The first spider chosen was *Argyroneta aquatica*, the water or diving bell spider, which is also the emblem of the society. In 2005 Belgium and the Netherlands joined in this effort and from 2006 onwards there has been had a "real" European 'Spider of the Year' with 71 voting members from 21 different countries. At the moment 81 arachnologists from 24 European countries are involved.

This appeal is intended to ask you all – as members of the ESA – for your support. Why not use this particular spider species as a "model" to promote spiders and/or your research in general in your country and beyond? Everyone has some resources: it's easy to inform the public within a presentation, within a newspaper or a public journal; to provide a link to the ESA website: www.european-arachnology.org/esy/esy15/; to write a short article for the own homepage, and so on – there are many possibilities. For curators or people working in museums perhaps a small showcase in within an exhibition (or a highlighted item in an existing exhibition) is possible.



Showcase plus information (as poster on a roll up) on the Spider of the Year 2015 in hall XXIV of the Natural History Museum of Vienna.

For those who attended ECA 2015 in Brno you may already have contributed to the discussion that started there – thank you for that! It shows that the discussion is ongoing and that as a group we can have far greater influence than if working as individual countries. It is also important to coordinate and accumulate our efforts to gain as much scientific input as possible. One intention of ESY was - and still is - to get spiders findings reported and to have information on current distributions. This is a challenging task, but still with an untapped potential.

We are very grateful to all members for your comments and ideas about how we can achieve these aims. Please send your input to christoph.hoerweg@nhm-wien.ac.at. We will collate all information in order to allow a full discussion. We propose to do this at a special symposium at the next ECA 2017, in Nottingham, UK. Please therefore send us information about all your efforts – we want to document these so please also send links or pdf-files of your actions. Thank you and may the Spider of the Year be with you!

- The 20th International Congress of Arachnology (ICA 2016)** will be hosted by Paula Cushing, and held in Golden, Colorado. From July 2nd-9th. This will be a joint meeting between AAS (American Arachnological Society) and ISA (the International Congress). Paula gave a presentation to the ESA general assembly at which she warmly invited all members to participate in this meeting in Colorado. It will take place amidst the 4th July celebrations and will no doubt be a fantastic opportunity to meet with many colleagues and to learn more about arachnid science in a beautiful setting.

For more info check the official congress website: www.arachnology.org/20th-ica-2016.html



The logo of next ISA Congress, a joint meeting of the International Society of Arachnology and the American Arachnological Society. The Congress will be organized by Paula Cushing (Denver Museum of Nature & Science, USA). The Far West is waiting for us!



- **The 30th European Congress of Arachnology** will be held during the last few days of August 2017, in Nottingham, United Kingdom, and hosted by Sara Goodacre. Sara warmly invites everyone to attend this meeting, which will be the first in the UK for nearly 20 years! Nottingham lies in central England (the 'midlands') and is well connected by rail and bus to a range of airports. It is home to a large University, which is situated on a large, green campus.

The city is famous for being home to the legendary 'Robin Hood', as well as other famous inhabitants such as the writer DH Lawrence and the inventor of medical MRI imaging, Sir Peter Mansfield. It lies close to the Peak District National Park, which offers many opportunities for walks and wildlife watching.

able to explore the surrounding area. Throughout the meeting there will of course be many opportunities to sample traditional English ales and equally refreshing cups of tea.

- **The 31st European Congress of Arachnology:** open

- **The 21st International Congress of Arachnology:** open

- **The 32nd European Congress of Arachnology** will be held in Greifswald, Germany, organised by Gabriele Uhl and Peter Michalik.

See you in Autumn 2017 for the 5th issue of the Newsletter of the European Society of Arachnology!



Next ECA Congress (2017) will be held in Nottingham, not far from the Peak district National Park and the Sherwood Forest.

It is also home to Sherwood Forest, within which you will find a 1,000 year old oak tree known as 'The Major Oak', which is supposed at one time to have sheltered Robin Hood. This tree was voted England's 'Tree of the Year' in 2014.

The Congress will take the same format as in previous years, with 4 days of scientific talks and a mid-congress excursion, during which time participants and accompanying persons will be

