

**Minutes of the General Assembly of the *European Society of Arachnology* (ESA) held on
Friday, 8th September, 2006 in Edifici Miramar, Sitges, Barcelona, during the 22nd European
Colloquium of Arachnology**

The President (Søren Toft) opened the meeting at 16.15 and began by proposing himself as chairman and Jason Dunlop as acting secretary for the meeting. There was no opposition to this and the President introduced the agenda.

President's report

The President reminded the Assembly that his main purpose was to ensure that colloquia take place on a regular basis, and that with the invitations to be made later during the present meeting this had indeed been done. The President also commented on the increasing internationality of the European colloquia over the last few years – particularly with attendees from India and both North and South America – and felt that this was a very encouraging development which will hopefully continue in future. The President also reminded the Assembly that the price differential for ESA members, compared to non-members, has now been raised to the point that it actually pays to become a member when attending colloquia; thus only a few people come to meetings and remain non-members.

Activities. The President went on to discuss ESA activities and services, reminding the Assembly that all members now get colloquium proceedings – even if they did not attend, but paid their membership *for that year*. This has already been done with the proceedings from the Szombathely and St Petersburg meetings, and should also happen with the soon to be published Blagoevgrad proceedings too.

Website. The ESA website includes new features such as the 'European spider of the year'. In 2006 this was the crab spider *Misumena vatia* which provoked a good level of response with numerous records, even from non-arachnologists. The photograph gallery continues to be expanded, and the President again encouraged members to contribute their own photographs to this collection. Theo Blick extracts nomenclatural changes from the Platnick spider catalogue relevant to European spiders and updates these via the ESA website allowing such changes to be tracked more easily.

The President stated that the plan to scan in old colloquium proceedings and make them available online has not taken as long as expected thanks to advances in book scanning technology. Only six or seven proceedings remain to be scanned, the uncertainty being whether the first ever ESA meeting actually resulted in a publication. The President also raised the possibility of family identification keys in different European languages being made available on the ESA website, particularly as an aid to beginners.

The President introduced a further proposal, in which ESA would try to arrange reciprocal arrangements for payment of membership dues via membership payments to other arachnological societies.

The President invited comments and proposals. Rudy Jocqué asked about the possibility of a list of members and their contact details. The President replied that this had been discussed previously and that some people were unhappy about having their e-mail addresses made generally available. Rudy Jocqué noted that there are ways to avoid having addresses abused, such as replacing the @ symbol.

There were no further comments and the President's report was accepted to general acclaim.

Treasurer's / Auditors' report

The Treasurer (Leon Baert) stated that as of January 1st 2005 there was 834.87 € on account and 1302.36 € in cash; **a total balance of 2137.23 €.**

Incomes for 2005 came from membership fees only and consisted of 480.00 € on account and 755.00 € in cash; **a total income of 1235.00 €.**

Expenses for 2005 consisted of two sets of payments for publishing the extra St. Petersburg proceedings (822.85 and 682.95 € respectively), 285.20 € for publishing issue 14 of the Bulletin, 1000.00 € to support the 22nd (Blagoevgrad) Colloquium and 11.00 € in taxes; **a total expenditure of 2802.00 €.**

Income minus expenditure for 2005 was thus *negative*, i.e. -1567.00 €, such that on the 31st January 2005 there was 143.07 € on account and 427.16 € in cash; **a total balance of 570.23 €.**

The provisional accounts for 2006 show an income, again from membership fees only, of 750.00 € on account and 410.00 € in cash; **a total provisional income of 1160.00 €.**

Expenses incurred so far for 2006 are 9.00 € in taxes and 6.00 € in stamps yielding a total of 15.00 € and a provisional *gain* of 1145.00 €. Thus, as of 21st July 2006 there is 884.07 € on account and 831.16 € in cash; **a total balance of 1715.23 €.**

The Treasurer further noted that twenty-two people had paid during the present Colloquium and that generally of the 166 current members, 92 (or 56%) had paid, compared to a figure of only 20% at this stage last year. The Treasurer added that online registration has yielded 38 members, but only 15 of these had paid; which is problematic.

The President invited comments on the Treasurer's report. None were received and he then invited the Auditor's (Yael Lubin and Volker Mahnert) to make their report. Volker Mahnert stated that the

auditors had found the accounts to be in complete agreement with the statement by the Treasurer and both the Treasurer's and Auditor's reports were accepted by the Assembly to general acclaim.

Secretary's report

The Secretary (Christine Rollard) stated that three new members had joined during the present Colloquium – Iasmi Stathi and Dimitris Kaltsas (both Greece) and Trine Bilde (Denmark) – as well as fifteen people via online registration.

Honorary members

The President stated that ESA regulations allow up to ten honorary members of which we currently have eight. Ferenc Samu formally proposed Jan Buchar from the Czech Republic, in recognition of his many years of work on Central European spiders. The President then invited Joachim Haupt to present further details of Prof. Buchar's life and work.

Joachim Haupt recalled how Jan Buchar's friends call him "Honza" and that many students would recall fruitful discussions with him. His arachnological work encompassed over seventy papers – including collaborations with Konrad Thaler – and that since 1973 Jan Buchar has given over seventy arachnological seminars. He was a specialist for Lycosidae, but showed expertise in other groups of spiders too. He published several books on spiders and worked in laboratories in various Central European countries. He organised a joint Czechoslovak/Polish meeting as well as the 15th European Colloquium in České Budějovice. He was not only an arachnologist, but knew much about insects and wrote about general invertebrate zoology, national parks and an encyclopaedia of life on Earth. Joachim Haupt recalled his remarkable general knowledge.

Jan Buchar was born on February 18th 1932 in Bystré nad Jizerou and attended grammar school in Jilemnice. He studied at the Karlový Universita in Prague, graduating in 1956. As a student he offered bird-watching tours. Joachim Haupt concluded with an anecdote from when Jan Buchar was mapping arachnids in Czechoslovakia. He had set a series of pitfall traps and in one of them discovered a note saying: "I have tried it but it didn't taste".

The President invited comments from the Assembly. None were received and Jan Buchar was acclaimed as an honorary ESA member.

Suggestions from the Assembly

The President invited general suggestions from the Assembly. None were received.

Next colloquia

The President asked for offers to host the next colloquium. Christian Kropf invited the Assembly, on behalf of himself and Prof. Wolfgang Nentwig, to host the next colloquium in Bern, Switzerland in 2008. Christian Kropf noted that Switzerland currently has the highest density of arachnologists. He stated that Bern was a beautiful city – the old town is a UNESCO world heritage site – and although a capital, it remains quite small with a surrounding river, covered shopping arcades and a view of the alps. Christian Kropf outlined various opportunities for sightseeing, including the famous bear pit (bears being the heraldic symbol of the city), the Paul Klee art museum, Einstein's house and the Natural History museum with the famous mountain rescue dog.

Christian Kropf stated that the colloquium would be hosted jointly by the Zoological Institute of the University and the Natural History Museum and that Prof. Nentwig from the Institute would be responsible for the main organisation. Possibilities for cheap accommodation might include booking an entire youth hostel for the duration of the meeting. Suggestions for publishing the proceedings include the peer-reviewed museum journal 'Contributions to Natural History'. Excursions and collecting trips could be held in the Swiss Jura mountains and the Rhône valley; both with interesting spider faunas.

The President invited comments on the proposal. Yael Lubin asked when the meeting would be held and Christian Kropf replied that provisionally this could be the first or second week in September. Yael Lubin asked if that would be all right with the youth hostel and Christian Kropf reiterated that the *entire* hostel could be reserved for the colloquium participants. Ferenc Samu asked if the proposed dates would interfere with academic teaching and Christian Kropf replied that lectures should start later in October. Joachim Haupt asked if it would be too late to collect in September. Christian Kropf conceded that an earlier date would be better for collecting, but that for example *Eresus* in the Rhône valley should still be discoverable.

Ferenc Samu opened a general point about the timing of the colloquium, reminding the Assembly that traditionally it used to be July and asked which dates were most suitable for most members. Christian Kropf stated that the Bern dates were not fixed and the meeting could also be in July. A straw poll of those present was taken and while support for July, August *and* September was found, there was a slight overall preference for August.

The President asked if there were other offers to host future meetings. Maria Chatzaki stated a willingness to host a future meeting either on the Greek island of Crete or somewhere on the Greek mainland, noting that there are beautiful historical towns and that there are a growing number of arachnologists present on Crete, at least one of which now has a permanent position. Maria Chatzaki offered to host a meeting in 2009.

The President reminded the Assembly that under the society's rules we can now decide up to *two* colloquia in advance. He proposed that the Assembly accepts Bern for 2008 and Greece for 2009. This was agreed to general acclaim and the President thanked both invitations.

Elections to council

The Secretary stated that 63 votes had been received, of which 60 were valid. The results for the six vacant positions were: Søren Toft (48), Carles Ribera (43), Jason Dunlop (43), Theo Blick (41), Christian Kropf (37) and Samuel Zschokke (32). These new council members were accepted to general acclaim. Peter van Helsdingen received 19 votes and leaves the council; other candidates received only one or two votes. The President specifically thanked Peter van Helsdingen (not present) for his many years of service on the council and this was acknowledged with applause from the Assembly.

Other business

There was no other business and the President closed the meeting at 17.05.

Changes to Council, etc.

During the council meeting immediately after the AGM, Søren Toft stepped down from running the society and Ferenc Samu was chosen as the new ESA President. Other positions (Secretary, Treasurer, etc.) remain as before, but Søren Toft noted a willingness from Samuel Zschokke (not present) to take on the duties of webmaster. Among the issues discussed was a desire to continue, where possible, the 'European Arachnology' format developed for previous colloquium proceedings with a standard layout, etc. How this applies to the papers from the Sitges meeting will have to be negotiated with the Grupo Ibérica de Aracnología.

Jason Dunlop
Berlin, 26th Sept, 2006