

Preface to the Proceedings of the 29th European Congress of Arachnology, Brno, 2015 August 24-28

At the 28th European Congress in Torino I was approached by the society president, Wolfgang Nentwig, with the question whether I could organise the next congress because the society had not received an invitation for 2015. I was surprised and astonished at the same time by his request and had to think for a couple of days about it. I have to admit that I was planning to organise a congress in a near future. But 2015 was very near – only 11 months to go. After checking out the possibilities I decided to make it.

Before this congress there have been two international arachnology meetings organised in the Czech Republic over an approximately 20-year period. In 1971 there was the 5th International Congress of Arachnology in Brno; and in 1994 there was the 15th European Colloquium of Arachnology in České Budějovice.

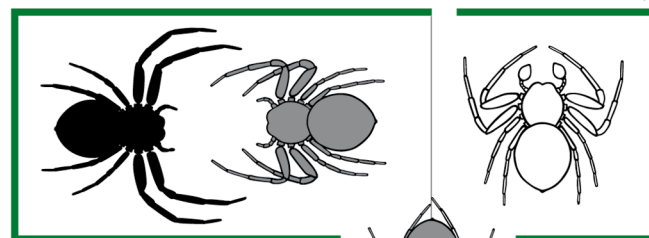
I assembled a team composed of three co-organisers (Vladimír Hula, Jana Niedobová, Yuri Marusik), two secretaries (Ivana Tarabová and Hana Bezděková from the TA-Service), the photographer (Radek Šich), English editor (L. Brian Patrick), editor of publications (Šárka Mašová) and a number of helpers (Guadalupe Corcobado, Lucie Havlová, Ondřej Košulič, Eva Líznarová, Radek Michalko, Ondřej Michálek, Lenka Sentenská, Zdeněk Škopek). A couple of other members of the Czech Arachnological Society gave a helpful hand (Petr Dolejš, Martin Forman, Pavel Just, Tomáš Krejčí, Ondřej Macháč).

The 29th European Congress of Arachnology was jointly organised by the Masaryk University, Czech Arachnological Society and Mendel University. It began on Saturday morning with an intensive two-day workshop on IUCN Red Listing – concepts and tools, led by Pedro Cardoso. There were about 10 participants from all over the world. The other workshop announced, Experimental design and modern data analysis, was cancelled due to insufficient interest. Most of the participants, however, turned up on Sunday afternoon. They were greeted by a young blond (cardboard) lady, who became a regular participant over the week.

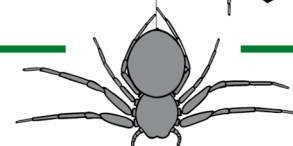
During the Opening Ceremony the honorary committee member, Jan Buchar, gave a short commemorative speech on the congress from 1971; sadly 3 months later Jan passed away (see the obituary in this volume). Then Vlastimil Růžička reminded us the atmosphere of the České Budějovice colloquium. And finally, Peter Dvořák, the vice-rector of Masaryk University, spoke about the university.

Brno is the city of Johann Gregor Mendel, the father of a modern genetics. In 2015 we were commemorating 150 years since he gave a lecture about the results of breeding experiments at the meeting of the Natural History Society in Brno. And therefore the main emphasis of the congress was on Mendel's legacy: the first plenary lecture was on developmental genetics (by Wim Damen), there was a major session on arachnid cytogenetics, the Opening Party was at the Mendel museum and the logo of the congress was inspired by Mendel's discovery of the genotypic ratio (1:2:1) for heterozygotes in the F1 generation (the three different colours, while the different spider postures represented ecology, behaviour, physiology and taxonomy).

29th European Congress of Arachnology



August 24-28, 2015, Brno



The congress was attended by 169 participants and accompanying persons from 36 countries across the globe, with a dominance of local (Czech) arachnologists (23 %), followed by Germans and Slovenians. The programme had a traditional structure: scientific sessions were held over four days, followed by a social programme in the evening. One exception was the Arachnological Games (we played the Kubb in teams) followed by a barbeque at the Starobrnó restaurant. In comparison with the previous congresses the ESA assembly was held on Thursday. The main task of the assembly was to approve new by-laws of the society.

The scientific programme included 13 sessions. Although there was a proposal for two symposia prior to the congress – one for 'Ecosystem services and adaptation' and 'Diversification of spider silks: how and why do new silk phenotypes evolve?' – none was eventually organised (due to low interest in the topics). The largest sessions were on Behavioural ecology, Ecology and Cytogenetics of arachnids. Altogether there were 61 oral communications and 75 posters. The sessions were arranged to avoid parallel sessions. Beside sessions, there were four plenary talks, at the beginning of each of four days of talks. Wim Damen from the Jena University in Germany, opened the congress with his talk on how genes control segmentation during ontogenetic development in a theridiid spider. Gabriele Uhl from the University of Greifswald in Germany spoke about various facets of mating behaviour in the cannibalistic spider, *Argiope bruennichi*. Jordi Moya-Laraño from the Experimental Station of Arid Zones in Spain presented a simulation program on eco-evolutionary dynamics in complex food webs. Finally, on the very last day Jonathan Pruitt from the University of Pittsburgh in the US, presented results on the personality of spiders.

On Wednesday there were the mid-congress excursions. Participants could choose to take one of three trips. Luckily, the weather was nice. One was a collecting trip in the Pavlovské vrchy Hills protected area and nearby areas which are located south of Brno. Participants could see some rare arthropods, including spiders on dry grasslands. At the end of the trip they visited Křivé jezero Nature Reserve, a water meadow between two rivers. The largest group of participants took the cornucopia trip that included bits of everything: spider collection, sight-seeing and wine tasting. They went to Mikulov town which is located at the foot of Pavlovské vrchy. In the



1 Konrad Wiśniewski, 2 Henning Haase, 3 Arthur Deceae, 4 Iván Prazsak, 5 Davide Ruiu, 6 Luiz Filipe Bartoletti, 7 Paula Cushing, 8 Nik Lupš, 9 Artem Sozontov, 10 Inese Cera, 11 Seppo Koponen, 12 Marjan Komnenov, 13 Heli Humme, 14 Ondřej Machač, 15 Robert Tropek, 16 Hana Svojanovská, 17 Matjaž Gregorič, 18 Shakira Quiñones-Lebrón, 19 Lenka Kubcová, 20 Miguel Richard, 21 Věra Opatová, 22 Fabian Hofmann, 23 Ren-Chung Cheng, 24 Matjaž Kuntner, 25 Gabreile Uhl, 26 Stanislav Korenko, 27 Wolfgang Nentwig, 28 Zdeněk Škopek, 29 Ravid Steimpress, 30 Ralsen Kaya, 31 Igor Armiach, 32 Eriksen Yagmur, 33 Ondřej Michálek, 34 Ulla Thyssen, 35 Søren Tøft, 36 Francesco Ballarín, 37 Lenka Sentenská, 38 Liana Lasut, 39 Igor Gajič, 40 Marco Isaia, 41 John Haymoz, 42 Lucia Kuhn-Nentwig, 43 Holger Frick, 44 Christoph Hörweg, 45 Daniel Gloor, 46 Lenka Petráková, 47 Lukasz Trebicki, 48 Augustine Niba, 49 Jiří Král, 50 L. Brian Patrick, 51 Wim Damen, 52 Christo Deltshev, 53 Christian Kropf, 54 Tamás Szűts, 55 Mariia Fedoriak, 56 Elisabeth Bauchem, 57 Peter Jäger, 58 Anne-Sarah Ganske, 59 Andrej Tanasevitch, 60 Shou-Wang Lin, 61 Rimmma Seyfullina, 62 Tomas Nowicki, 63 Nina Polchaninova, 64 Christoph Muster, 65 Vardit Makover, 66 Gordana Grbić, 67 Maciej Barros, 68 Nollie Hallensleben, 69 Gabor Kovács, 70 Roland Horváth, 71 František Štáhlavský, 72 Peter Gajdoš, 73 Anna Šestáková, 74 Pavel Žila, 75 Katrin Kunz, 76 Anja Junghanns, 77 Guilherme Gainett, 78 Pedro Cardoso, 79 Jordi Moya-Laraño, 80 Theo Blick, 81 Marek Zábka, 82 Madeleine Miller, 83 Jan Dolanský, 84 Tjaša Lokovšek, 85 Vlastimil Ružička, 86 Jan Raška, 87 Petr Doléž, 88 Milan Režáč, 89 Thiago Kloss, 90 Marlis Dumke, 91 Eva Liznarová, 92 Jan Erhart, 93 Vladimír Hula, 94 Jens Runge, 95 Sara Normark, 96 Matyáš Hiřman, 97 Janet Beccaloni, 98 Pavel Just, 99 Jonathan Pruitt, 100 Lior Ventura, 101 Alba Cherubini, 102 Alessio Trotta, 103 Luka Katušić, 104 Martina Pavlek, 105 Elena Piano, 106 Stefano Mammola, 107 Philip Steinhoff, 108 Jana Niedobová, 109 Jana Frisová-Christophoryová, 110 Katarína Krajčovičová, 111 Jesús Hernández Corral, 112 Jana Kotrbová, 113 Jana Plišková, 114 Orsolya Belenzai, 115 Csaba Szinetár, 116 Hirotsugu Ono, 117 Yael Lubin, 118 Karin Sindemark Kronestedt, 119 Torbjörn Kronestedt, 120 Eran Avital, 121 Robert Bosmans, 122 Marij Decler, 123 Rudy Jocuqué, 124 André Walter, 125 Blerina Vrenozzi, 126 Jagoba Malumbres-Olarte, 127 Azucena Claudia Reyes, 128 Sara Goodacre, 129 Rebecca Wilson, 130 Cor Vink, 131 Peter van Helsingingen, 132 Peter Kozel, 133 Paul Selden, 134 Maura Selden, 135 Lucie Havlová, 136 Mariëlle van Dam, 137 Marnix Bos, 138 Jutta Schneider, 139 Simona Kralj-Fišer, 140 Efrat Gavish-Regev, 141 Christian Komposch, 142 Štano Pekár (photo: R. Štich)



Jan Buchar, the honorary committee member

morning they walked up the hill, a protected area and could see some Pannonian spider species. Then they took a short walk through the historical centre of the town, visited a wine-producing company where they learned about the wine biological production process and tasted wine. The smallest group of attendees explored the Lednice-Valtice Cultural Landscape, a UNESCO World Heritage Site; a large landscape area famous for the masterful integration of various architectural structures, chateaux and French-style gardens. The participants walked up the stairs (to heaven) of a Minaret, took a boat trip and saw beavers' constructions, to reach a romantic castle ruin, the John's Castle. In the evening we returned to Brno for the big social event, the Russian party. There was lots of fine caviar and fish provided by Yuri Marusik, home-made whiskeys from all corners of Europe and music provided by a DJ.

A couple of participants went for the post-congress excursion to the Podyjí (Thaya) National Park situated along the deep Dyje River valley. We visited the underground city of Znojmo, tasted wine in the old monastery cellars of Znovín winery, took a boat trip to the early medieval Bítov Castle where we practiced archery and explored stuffed dogs.

During the Closing Ceremony awards were presented. There were 64 student presentations registered for the competition. I wish to congratulate again the students that received an award for their oral presentation or a poster. Altogether 12

students were awarded, six for oral presentations and six for posters. The awards were given in two categories. In Ecology and Behaviour the best oral presentations were: 1. Lenka Sentenská (Czech Republic), 2. Eva Líznavá (Czech Republic), 3. Andreas Fischer (Germany). The best posters were: 1. Thiago Kloss (Brasil), 2. Marlis Dumke (Germany), 3. Elena Piano (Italy). In Taxonomy and Genetics (which actually covered also other topics not mentioned in the title) the best oral presentations were: 1. Stefano Mammola (Italy), 2. Luka Katušić (Croatia), 3. Liana Lasut (Switzerland). The best posters were: 1. Guilherme Gainett (Brasil), 2. Nik Lupše (Slovenia), 3. Matyáš Hiřman (Czech Republic). The evaluating committees had to work hard throughout the whole week.

Beside the student awards, the Arachnological cup was given for non-scientific activities at the ceremony. The winner of the Arachnid Film competition, Lukáš Pich, was awarded for his film named "Wolf Spider: The mother". The best team of the Kubb, called THUG Greifswald (composed of Jens Runge, Katrin Kunz, Guilherme Gainett, Tomas Nowicki, Shou-Wang Lin) won a cup too.

I should not forget to mention the sponsors of this congress. Without the generous financial help of Becherovka, Dynex, Ento Sphinx, Keyence International, Masaryk University, Mendel Museum, Nikon, Olympus, Regina Coeli, Réva Rakvice and Zeiss, the congress fee would have been much higher. Particular thanks goes to the European Society of Arachnology, American Arachnological Society, Grupo Ibérico de Aracnología, British Arachnological Society, Arachnologische Gesellschaft, Czech Arachnological Society and Siri Scientific Press for providing prizes for the student competition. Thanks to the support by European Society of Arachnology, Pensoft, Grupo Ibérico de Aracnología and Czech Arachnological Society, we were able to provide 18 student grants and to support six colleagues from low-income countries.

This Proceedings includes five contributions, two will follow in vol. 52, nine manuscripts were submitted.

At last but not least I would like to thank all participants for attending the congress and making it an unforgettable event (at least for me).

Stano PEKÁR