

The newsletter of the European Society of Arachnology

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From the President

By Wolfgang Nentwig

Dear Fellow Arachnologists

Many of us attended the 31th European Congress of Arachnology in Vác. This was a wonderful and well-organized event and I want to take this opportunity to thank Ferenc Samu and Csaba Szinetár and their many helpers very much. I assume that most of us were for the first time in Vác and this turned out to be a lovely city, small and beautiful. We had the opportunity to meet again good old friends or detect new friends, listen to presentations from our colleagues, discuss unexpected findings, or just have a chat and a friendly beer with nice people. Indeed, Vác was great and very successful.

For many members of the ESA Council their 3-years-period ended this year. Luckily, they all decided to be available for the next period and were all re-elected by the ESA members in Vác. Sara Goodacre (Vice President and Newsletter), Christian Kropf (Treasurer), Jason Dunlop (Membership Secretary), Marco Isaia (Newsletter), Gabriele Uhl (Special Tasks) and me, as President, we were all confirmed by the ballot vote from members of our Society, thank you all! I should also add that Gabriele later accepted to function as contact women to our American sister Society AAS and that Gabriele together with Maria Chatzaki volunteered to evaluate applications for the new student travel grants to arachnological conferences.

At the General Assembly, we learned from Jason's report as membership secretary that our Society is continuously growing: as of July 2018 it comprised 235 members from 45 countries, among them 16% students! This is fantastic and shows that our Society is attractive and young. Of them, 214 are paying

members (students at a reduced rate), however, most of them are only "theoretically paying", probably because they forgot to pay the membership fees. By June 2018, about 60% of our members were still in payment arrears and received a mail from Jason. Many reacted positively and paid their fees but we still are waiting for many payments. This weak payment mentality caused major problems to our Society because we also have financial obligations. So, please check at our website (www.european-arachnology.org) your account via your personal member login. Paying the remaining fees is very easy with PayPal and you would increase the happiness not only of our treasurer and membership secretary. Please pay your membership fees also for the last years, if you did not pay them, because the Society needs all our support. Of course, I add here a cordially "thank you so much" to all who pay their fees regularly.

May I come up again with my personal wish for the next 12 months? I would like to see more activities among the ESA members through our mailing service. You are looking for a job or (luckily) can offer a position? You offer or need material? Arachnological books or journals no longer needed? An attractive offer to others to collect items at one of your next excursions to remote areas? Announcing a workshops? I am sure there is much more to communicate. Please, just write a mail to Maria Chatzaki, our media secretary, she will be happy to spread it to all of us.

Hope to see many of you at the next ESA conference, 2020 in Greifswald, Germany; Gabriele Uhl and Peter Michalik are already waiting to welcome us.

Wolfgang Nentwig
President of the European Arachnological Society



Congress Report

By Sara Goodacre

Photos by: Christian Komposch

The 31st European Congress of Arachnology was hosted by Ferenc Samu, Csaba Szinetár and their team at Vác, on behalf of the Hungarian Ecological Society and the Centre for Agricultural Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Coorganising organisations were Apor Vilmos Catholic College and the European Society of Arachnology.



The congress logo of the 31st European Congress of Arachnology was inspired by the course of the Danube in the region of Vác framing the triangular web of *Hyptiotes paradoxus*, a common local species.

Congress organizing is always a team effort, and this event was no exception. Throughout the event, the organizing team made sure that everything was in place for speakers, provided coffee, cakes and fruit at the breaks between sessions and made sure that everyone was very well looked after throughout.

The congress venue was Apor Vilmos Catholic College itself, which is based in the centre of the beautiful town of Vác. The congress began during the evening of July 8th with a welcome reception at the main venue. This was a wonderful opportunity to meet new friends – and to be reunited with old ones – whilst enjoying food and drink in the courtyard of the college.

The Congress was attended by more than 130 participants from 27 countries. Four plenary talks, 58 oral contributions and 53 posters were presented, many of which were authored or co-authored by students.

The conference was opened by our host, Ferenc Samu, and an opening address was also given by the Rector of Apor Vilmos Catholic College. After these formal greetings, Pál Kézdy gave a beautiful presentation on Nature conservation in the Danube

area. Christian Komposch then presented a wonderful selection of photos on 'Arachnologists in their natural habitats', taken both from old and recent editions of the Congress. This is the second year in which the congress has begun by remembering past events and celebrating long-held friendships in this way.



The congress Organizer, Ferenc Samu, and the Residence within the campus of Apor Vilmos Catholic College, the Congress Venue.

The scientific program itself was split into 12 sessions over four days of talks. Each day began with a plenary lecture followed by a wide range of contributed talks. As always there were many fascinating new studies contributed by others throughout the meeting. These talks featured a wide range of topics and included arachnids from around the globe – spiders in Samuel Zschokke's talk even made it in to space! His talk entitled 'The Silky Way' described his experiment on the International Space Station, testing the effects of gravity on *Nephila* web construction.

Arachnological Science

The plenary talks given throughout the conference illustrated the breadth of research covered at the meeting. Rosa Fernández gave the first plenary lecture, telling us about one of the largest invertebrate phylogenetic analyses to date that shows that orb webs probably evolved multiple times in different spider families.



The opening session of the Congress, in the Lecture Theatre of the Pope building.



The second plenary lecture was given by Jutta Schneider, who described studies of sex specific plasticity in *Nephila senegalensis*, a species with an unusual reversed sexual dimorphism.

Paul Selden's plenary lecture on the third day of talks described the ways in which spider fossils are invaluable in helping us to reconstruct the evolutionary history of the spider family and to understand how current patterns of diversity have arisen. The highlight of the talk was a new "protospider", discovered in Burmese amber, merely 100 Ma in age. This animal, *Chimerarachne yingi*, appears to be a missing link between true spiders and the Uraraneids (a new order of arachnids described on some fossils from the Devonian and Permian).

Finally, Christian Wirkner's plenary lecture on the final day demonstrated how to create intricate 3-dimensional reconstructions of the internal anatomy of different chelicerates. He explained how such studies can inform our understanding of the underlying relationships between different groups.



Christian Wirkner putting a spell on the audience during his plenary lecture about 3-dimensional reconstructions of the internal anatomy of chelicerates on the final day of the Congress.

Other sessions throughout the meeting included presentations on genome sizes and molecular evolution of particular spider groups. Jiří Král's talk on tetrapulmonate arachnid karyotypes in the first session complemented studies using molecular genetics for taxonomic studies of lycosids (Vladislav Ivanov) and dysderids (Martina Pavlek). There were also several talks on spider silk, including one by Fritz Vollrath on the use of this material in robotic applications, and one by Dakota Piorkowski on the stickiness of cribellate silk. Other topics that were covered on the first day included using spider webs as a source of environmental DNA (Matjaž Gregorič) and identification of spiders from Himalaya and Xinjiang (Yuri Marusik).

The second day gave an opportunity to hear talks on the life history and ecology of a range of species, including *Latrodectus* (Lenka Sentenská), *Pisaura* (Martina Magris) and *Cyrtus* jumping spiders (Łukasz Trębicki). Talks on the interaction between spiders and ants (Laia Mestre) and between spiders and mantises (Jan Raška) were followed by presentations on the potential for visual cues in nocturnal spiders (Ming-Yu Lee) and sensing of bioluminescence by web-building spiders (Ho Yin Yip). The afternoon was devoted to arachnids in food webs, with presentations on biocontrol efficiency of spiders at a global scale (Radek Michalko) and the diet of harvestmen (Søren Toft).

The third day of talks gave us the chance to learn about fossils from Paul Selden, with additional talks contributed on the subject of arachnids in amber (Danilo Harms). There were also talks on the response of spider communities following human disturbance such as at construction sites (Chri Komposch), in areas of managed forestry (Ferenc Samu) and after industrial accidents (Igor Armiaich). Talks on spiders and their kleptoparasites (Tany Levy), intracellular microbes (Hundertmark, Gibbons) and chemical communication cues (Miriam Shaidler), completed the day.



Samuel Zschokke's talk about *Nephila* spiders in space.

The final day of talks included several on morphological variation amongst chelicerates (Jens Runge) and within groups such as the Pedipalpi (Sarah Kariko), and how this can be used to infer patterns of divergence. An excellent session on community and landscape ecology featured studies such as those of forest-steppes (Róbert Gallé), calcareous fens (Maija Štokmane) and Indian desert sand dunes (Kashmeera Neisseril).

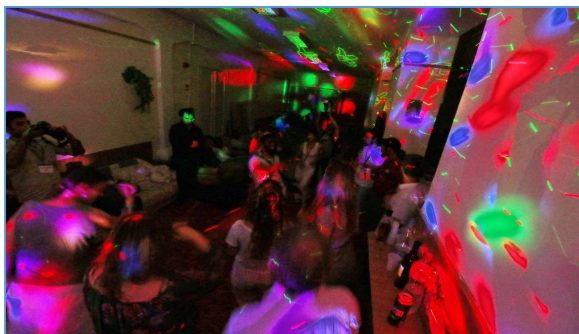


The final talks session on the last day was on 'underground' arachnids, and included talks on a range of different species, with habitats ranging from burrows in hyper-arid desert regions (Efrat Gavish-Regev) to caves (Rodica Plaiasu).

Excursions and Arachno-entertainments

The hosts ensured a great program of evening entertainments that began with a guided tour of Vác after the day's talks. The history of this beautiful town was wonderfully captured by our guides who spoke as we walked through the town.

The second evening saw the Russian Party, which was held at the conference venue. All the traditional Russian party food was there courtesy of our host, Yuri Marusik, and to the many other congress delegates who brought traditional drinks from home. The festivities took place despite a torrential rain shower occurring just as the drinks were being poured. (Arachnologists are not discouraged by rain and all the food and drink was swiftly moved indoors).



Torrential rain shower did not discourage anyone. The Russian party moved indoor and music played loud until very late on Tuesday evening!

The following evening there was an evening gulash („pörkölt”) cooked on a fire and accompanied by red wine. This took place close to Diósjenő in the Börzsöny Mountains where all the delegates met up following the excursions. The final evening was that of the conference dinner, which was held at restaurant Rubra in the centre of Vác, and which was followed afterwards by live music and dancing, accompanied by an amazing Hungarian folk band.

In addition to the evening entertainments, for the early birds amongst us, there were also morning excursions. These were an absolute highlight of the meeting and included forest walks, dragon boating along the Danube and trips to the market early in the morning. These were the perfect start to each conference day, giving us opportunities to see Vác in the beautiful early morning light.



Efrat Gavish-Regev and Robert Bosmans during the morning excursion to the flood forest, in the vicinity of the Congress Venue.

There were three excursions for delegates to participate in on the third day of the congress. One of these was to the Börzsöny Mountains, where there was an opportunity to learn about the flora and fauna from the rangers who accompanied us. There were many stops to take pictures of interesting creatures – including a salamander!



Arachnologists do not just look for spiders and their kin! Karin Urfer holding a mantis during the excursion to the Börzsöny mountains.

The second excursion was to Szentendre Island, a trip that involved first taking a ferry across the Danube. Walks through habitats such as flood forest, riverbanks, sand dunes and grasslands were followed by a relaxing trip to the town of Szentendre itself.

The third excursion also involved a ferry trip across the Danube, but in this case the final destination was the historic sites of Visegrád, which was once a medieval residence for Hungarian kings. A guided tour of the palace and citadel described the history of this beautiful town, and also allowed fantastic views of the Danube from a high point.

All the delegates met up in Diósjenő Forest Recreational Park, following the excursions. Stories of the day were shared over food and wine, accompanied by much laughter.



Award Ceremony

The audience celebrated the best students during the Award Ceremony at the end of the meeting. The student talks and posters were all of a very high standard and the judging committee had a difficult task to select winners.

Jens Runge (First prize for Best Talk), Ondřej Michálek (Second Best Talk) and Filippo Milano (Third Best Talk) were the winners this year. Pavla Dudov, Yun-Yun Tsai and Rebecca Heidbrink won the 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for their respective posters. A special prize was also given by the National Geographic Society of Hungary to Ágota Szabó.



The first prize for Best Talk was assigned to Jens Runge (left), here wearing 3D glasses with Lenka Sentenská (right) during the Poster session.

Thank you, Vác!

Our thanks go to the organizers of the congress – particularly to Ferenc Samu – and all the volunteers for taking care of us during the meeting. The very large round of applause at the end of the congress assembly said it all.

News from ESA general assembly

By Marco Isaia

The President (Wolfgang Nentwig) opened the General Assembly by reminding us of the Society's aims, which are to support European arachnological projects, to facilitate congress proceedings, to assist the attendance of students at meetings and to carry out the every-day functions of the council.

One minute of silence was devoted to arachnological colleagues who have died during the course of 2018: Otto Kraus, Carlo Pesarini, Harald Hansen and Paolo Tongiorgi.

Wolfgang then communicated the results of the Council election. All former members have been re-elected, so nothing has changed since last year. What has changed this year is the number of members: our Society is now made of 235 members from 45 different countries. The new 23 members (from three

more countries) are mostly students, which makes us feel even more international, younger and happier!

The financial state of the society is in order, but to keep finance stable we need to urge 141 members, who are still in payment arrears. Please provide payments as soon as possible. Despite arrears, the Society still supports European projects such as 'Araneae Spiders of Europe', and gives support to Congress Organizers.

The President opened the discussion about regulation of Honorary members, and finally concluded that this year we keep the number of honorary members as it was (15). Moreover, the council had to revise a bit the regulation, proposing that we do not need an honorary member each year, that each ESA member can propose one candidate, that the candidate must be a member of ESA, that the candidate needs not to be retired and that the list of proposed candidates is not published but only discussed within the Council.

Our Treasurer (Christian Kropf) presented a financial report attesting a balance of 4487.40 SFr (the Society's account is held in Switzerland. There was a balance of 3574.46 SFr the beginning of 2017, membership payments for 2017 were 1356.06 SFr, plus 261.01 Euro with PayPal and 51 SFr of interests. For the European Congress in Nottingham there was an expense of 2320 SFr, so the balance at the end of December 2017 was 3574.46 + 261.01 Eur. Income of 2018 memberships was 3000.90 SFr plus 2760.37 Eur from Paypal, with a total balance of 10200 SFr remaining as of the end of June 2018. Expenses (not paid at the moment of the Assembly) derive from support to Vác Congress 2300 SFr and 1200 to 'Araneae Spiders of Europe'. The treasurer's report was accepted by Jakob Walter and Elisabeth Bauchhenss on behalf of the auditors.

The president shared with the assembly that the council had approved the support to different projects, including The Spider of the Year, Araneae-Spiders of Europe and the European Year of Spider Biodiversity Research (2018-2019 Cyprus). There is also the intention to support students with reciprocal waivers with American Arachnological Society (approved by AAS's President Rich Bradley). The ESA also supports local organizers of the Congress and offers student fees /waiver applications.

Holger Frick presented a report about the website activities, with some interesting data about the use of our website: we had 61'000 visitors and 584'000 visits. Most of the references derive from Facebook, NRM.se and Google. The top 5 pages are the proceedings, the conferences, the start page, the



spider of the Year and the registration page (new members). The assembly meeting was then closed with a vote of thanks to Ferenc and his team for hosting such an excellent congress. Theo Blick confirmed during the closing ceremony that the congress proceedings will be published in AraMit. Further details of the General Assembly can be found on the Society website.

See you soon in Germany (or maybe in New Zealand?)

The next European Society meeting is in Greifswald (Germany) in 2020, organized by Gabriele Uhl and Peter Michalik.

The next International Congress of Arachnology will be held in Canterbury, New Zealand from 10–15 February 2019, hosted by Cor Vink. Plenary talks and social events will be held at the YMCA in Central Christchurch and concurrent sessions will be held at Lincoln University, which is 20 km southwest of Central Christchurch. Christchurch is the third largest, city in New Zealand. It is located near the east coast of the South Island in the agricultural Canterbury Plains.

New Zealand is a major tourist destination and the South Island is the more scenic of the two main islands of New Zealand. Christchurch International Airport is the gateway to Christchurch and the rest of the South Island.

Announcements

- **2019 The 21st International Congress of Arachnology:** will be held in Christchurch, New Zealand, 10-15 February 2019 (Organizer: Cor Vink).



- **2020 The 32nd European Congress of Arachnology:** in Greifswald, Germany (Organizers: Gabriele Uhl and Peter Michalik).
- **2021 The 33rd European Congress of Arachnology:** in Saint Malo, France (Organizer: Julien Pétilion).



Congress Photo in Vác 2018

