

FOREWORDS

Ricardo Garilleti

Chairman of Sociedad Española de Briología

The celebration of the 5th European Bryophyte Conservation Conference in Valencia got together 37 bryologists from 13 countries, with an elevated and encouraging proportion of young students. Most of the participants were Spanish (13), Portuguese (6) and British (4). Norway, Switzerland, Hungary, Sweden, France, Belarus, Estonia, Belgium, Colombia and South Africa were also represented in Valencia.

Felisa Puche, Secretary of the SEB, efficiently assumed the logistic support for the Conference. She managed to arrange both the scientific aspects and the everyday needs during the meeting with a smile in her face.

Along the Conference 13 posters and 12 oral communications were presented. They were good sample of the main topics in Bryophyte Conservation. Most of the contributions, 10, focused on threatened species: studies on populations of bryophytes of *Habitat* Directive in Sweden; the genetic diversity of *Pohlia bolanderi*; the discovery of a new locality of the highly menaced *Goniomitrium seroi*; the management of the populations of *Didymodon glaucus* in England; the study of some aspects of the vital history of *Neckera pennata* in Estonia; population studies of *Buxbaumia viridis* in Central Pyrenees; the distribution of several threatened species in Bulgaria, in relation to their preferences by habitat, substrate and its reproductive strategies; the progresses in *ex-situ* conservation; the genetic diversity of the European populations of *Sphagnum fimbriatum* and the specificity by the habitat of genus *Anastrophyllum* in Europe and the relation with his reproductive strategies were the main subjects of these communications.

The second topic in relevance, eight contributions, dealt with areas and habitats of special importance for bryophytes. The value of certain habitats, like logs in beech forest of central and northern Europe; the conservation of peat bogs in France; the originality of the moss communities of *Juniperus thurifera* trunks in Spain; the use of GIS in regional conservation projects in Portugal; the diversity of the epiphytic bryoflora from Portugal were analyzed in six different contributions, whereas the two remaining were about outstanding bryophytic areas in Hungary and Morocco. The remaining communications turned on red lists of the Iberian Peninsula and Eastern Europe, the effects of the human management on the epiphytic bryoflora from La Palma (Canary Islands) and the validity of present knowledge on the Madrid Autonomous Community bryoflora.

The conservation studies continue diversifying. The number of researchers and papers in this subject seem to increase over the years. The transformation of the ECCB in a more formal association, with the constitution approved in Valencia, will facilitate many bureaucratic tasks to the members of the Committee. Now, an international association could endorse national or international request grants for funding the initiated studies or to begin new ones.

Lars Söderström
Chairman of ECCB

The 5th European Bryophyte Conservation Conference held in Valencia, Spain, 21-23 September 2005, has been a very successful meeting. Not only have bryologists interested in conservation been able to meet and exchange ideas and concerns, but many bryologists also participated, and gave valuable contribution, to the *Planta Europa* meeting preceding the ECCB meeting. Bryophytes do, thanks to this, play an important role in the general conservation of plants in Europe.

ECCB have until now been an informal group without a constitution. The acceptance of a constitution in Valencia is a milestone towards being accepted as a major force in the general conservation work. We can now speak on behalf of members.

Although so much was said, and done, at the meeting, bryophytes will not benefit at all if we just sit back and are satisfied with what we have done. The hard work starts now. We must implement all the good ideas that we got.

I like to mention the three most important goals for the coming three years until the next ECCB meeting. The goal that is immediately ahead of us is to produce a checklist of mosses for Europe. This work has already started and it looks as we can have it ready by the end of 2005 as we scheduled.

Another important goal is the revision of the European Red Data Book. This will go on slowly due to financial problems, but the process is moving. There is a web page running (www.bio.ntnu/ECCB) and the page where it is possible to add data interactively is under development. Then all can help with information, wherever you are in the world.

Last but not least is the concept of IPA (Important Plant Areas) that we should participate in. Although bryophytes are included in the IPA programme of *Planta Europa*, we felt that we should try to develop specific IBrA (Important Bryophyte Areas) as rich and interesting areas for bryophytes not necessary is the same as for vascular plants or other organisms.

Let us hope that we will be successful to put Bryology and bryophyte conservation on the agenda for teaching, conservation and public awareness.

Tomas Hallingbäck
Chairman of the IUCN SSC Bryophyte Specialist Group

On behalf of IUCN and its Bryophyte Specialist Group it is a great pleasure to congratulate the organisers and the bryologists in Valencia to a successful symposium. It is satisfactory that this kind of symposium for the first time has been arranged in Spain. During the last decade bryologists in Spain have developed an impressive over-all activity, not least in the field of bryophyte conservation.

The IUCN expresses great concern about the loss of species and the negative impact from transformation of habitats important to bryophytes. This loss of moss and liverwort diversity has repeatedly been a theme of conferences and papers delivered by organisations like ECCB. It is especially important to keep the focus on these issues because Europe has a high bryophyte diversity, and also because the loss of each animal and plant species creates an effect throughout the entire ecosystem. Bryophytes are important components of the vegetation as pioneers, and they inhabit a wide range of habitats, from seashores to alpine heights. They do of course have a right to exist for their own sake, but their potential use for various other purposes is an additional important reason for continuing to work for their protection. Their role in environmental scenarios as bioindicators is now being increasingly felt. As bryologists, we must be concerned, because without any taxa we do not have anything to study. This concern should be extended beyond our respective individual areas of expertise to the preservation of all bryophytes.

Bryophyte conservation in Europe was initiated in 1990. Since then, a series of conferences and workshops has resulted in several important papers, to which also this volume of proceeding is a contribution. Just as previous meetings, also this symposium served as a means of communication of current and ongoing research among the bryologists of different countries. The greatest pleasure for me was to note the high number of bryologists who visited the meeting, and also the distance they had found it worthwhile to travel. A spirit of enthusiasm for bryology, and for sharing results between colleagues was very apparent. The contributed papers were very diverse, both in field of research and methodology, and they were representative of well the current trends in bryological research throughout the world.

The meeting demonstrated that bryologists are definitely concerned with the state and quality of the environment, and that by working together we may form an effective lobby that can help to improve the situation. The rapidly decreasing bryophyte diversity in many European countries necessitates effective action. In Valencia we all learnt that while the areas of preservation ideally should be large and continuous, we should still not discourage the preservation of small and scattered of micro-reserves such as those established in the Valencia region, which together save a lot of bryodiversity. The round table discussion, led by Dr. Lars Söderström, showed a general consensus on this point. Most bryologists feel the urgent need of a coordinated action on bryophyte registration, mapping and protection on a European scale. It is our hope that this symposium in Spain, and its results, will stimulate further work to promote the bryophyte flora all over Europe.

Let us hope that in the future the Iberian peninsula, as well as the rest of the world, will be well preserved and maintain a vital and rich bryoflora.