

THE EUROMAL PLUS THE 33RD POLISH MALACOLOGICAL SEMINAR

SEMINAR REPORT

It is not an easy task to write a report from a conference you had to miss. Alas, this is my second report from an event I couldn't go to (the good thing is that now I have some experience). As a result, I can only tell you what I have gleaned from the Book of Abstracts and from some gossip.

The 33rd Polish Malacological Seminar (10–14 September 2017) was unusual in that first of all it was not Polish but combined with the so called EuroMal, and secondly it was held in a big city (Kraków) which is unusual for the “normal” seminars. Maybe the selection of Kraków made sense. Since we expected many foreign guests, it was a good idea to show them a very beautiful historic city instead of a local holiday resort.

EuroMal (this one was officially the 8th European Congress of Malacological Societies) is younger than the World's Congresses of Malacology and younger even than our Seminars. The earlier EuroMals took place in 2000 (Genoa, Italy), 2002 (Vigo, Spain), 2003 (La Rochelle, France), 2005 (Naples, Italy), 2008 (Ponta Delgada, Azores), 2011 (Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain) and 2014 (Cambridge, UK). There was also one event before those, in München, Germany, but it was not officially a EuroMal. As you can see, the event is not organised on a very regular basis, though perhaps regularity was the original intention. The idea, so far as I know, was – since the Unitas Congresses became World's Congresses and thus no longer necessarily held in Europe – to provide a forum where European malacologists could meet to exchange opinions some time between consecutive World's Congresses without having to travel all the way to Thailand, or Australia. Since it is the Congress of Malacological Societies, the societies take turns (or “are volunteered”, I like the expression) to organise it.

This one was hosted by the Association of Polish Malacologists, with the Institute of Nature

Conservation, Polish Academy of Sciences as co-organiser. The Organising Committee included: TADEUSZ ZAJĄC (chairman), ROBERT A. D. CAMERON, ADAM M. ĆMIEL, TOMASZ KAŁUSKI, JAROSŁAW KOBAK, ANNA LIPIŃSKA, JOANNA PIEŃKOWSKA, MAŁGORZATA PROĆKÓW, KATARZYNA ZAJĄC and ELŻBIETA ŻBIKOWSKA. The Scientific Committee was composed of DAVID C. ALDRIDGE, ROBERT A. D. CAMERON, MARCIN CZARNOŁĘSKI, KAREL DOUDA, ANNA DROZD, ANDRZEJ LESICKI, MANUEL LOPES-LIMA, TOMASZ KAŁUSKI, ANDRZEJ KAIM, MAŁGORZATA OŻGO, JOANNA PIEŃKOWSKA, BEATA M. POKRYSZKO, JERZY SELL, RONALDO SOUSA, JOUNI TASKINEN, TADEUSZ ZAJĄC and ELŻBIETA ŻBIKOWSKA. The Book of Abstracts was edited by ADAM M. ĆMIEL, ANNA LIPIŃSKA, KATARZYNA ZAJĄC, TADEUSZ ZAJĄC and ROBERT A. D. CAMERON and published by our faithful publisher JAREK BOGUCKI (Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe). The sponsors were the Malacological Society of London (travel grants) and Carl Zeiss. The EuroMal venue was the Kraków Polytechnics, conveniently close to the railway station and to the Old Town with all its attractions.

The Book of Abstracts contains no list of participants as such, it only tells you the names of authors (and, considering the maximum number of authors per presentation/poster, it wouldn't be realistic to expect all of them to come), so I expected difficulties regarding counting at least a rough number of participants. That is, till I discovered... that in the list of presentations/posters each presentation/poster had a single name to it. Logically, then, those mentioned should appear, but still the numbers given will be rough. The total number of participants was roughly 140, and of these ca. 40 were Poles. This is rather surprising. You'd think all the Polish malacologists should take the opportunity and rush to attend, since it is not far to go, even for people from, say,

Table 1. Presentations and posters according to the division adopted by the Organisers

No.	Thematic group	Number of contributions
1	Taxonomy & phylogeny	30
2	Invasions	26
3	Conservation	17
4	Palaeo	15
5	Ecology & behaviour	10
6	Biodiversity	10
7	Ecology	10
8	Miscellaneous highlights	8
9	General biology	7
10	Morphology	4
Total		137

north-eastern Poland. The fee, rather high but not exorbitant, may have played a role. However, I suspect an ulterior motive: language, which is still the weak point of many of our malacologists.

In the programme there were 73 oral presentations and 64 posters (thus the poster:presentation ratio was much higher than during any of our local seminars: 0.9:1). The contributions were distributed among 10 topical blocks (each with more than one session): Taxonomy & Phylogeny, Invasions, Conservation, Palaeo, Ecology & Behaviour, Biodiversity, Ecology, Miscellaneous Highlights, General Biology and Morphology. The structure (numbers of contributions to each) is shown in **Table 1**.

Those who read our annual Seminar Reports will realise that the division adopted here is slightly different from the one we've used in our reports for ages. I have devoted some time to reading the abstracts and dividing them according to our criteria. As usual, some contributions fall into more than one category and are classified accordingly, so the numbers do not exactly correspond to the numbers of actual contributions. The results of my labours are presented in

Table 2, where the topical structure of the EuroMal is compared to that of our Seminars.

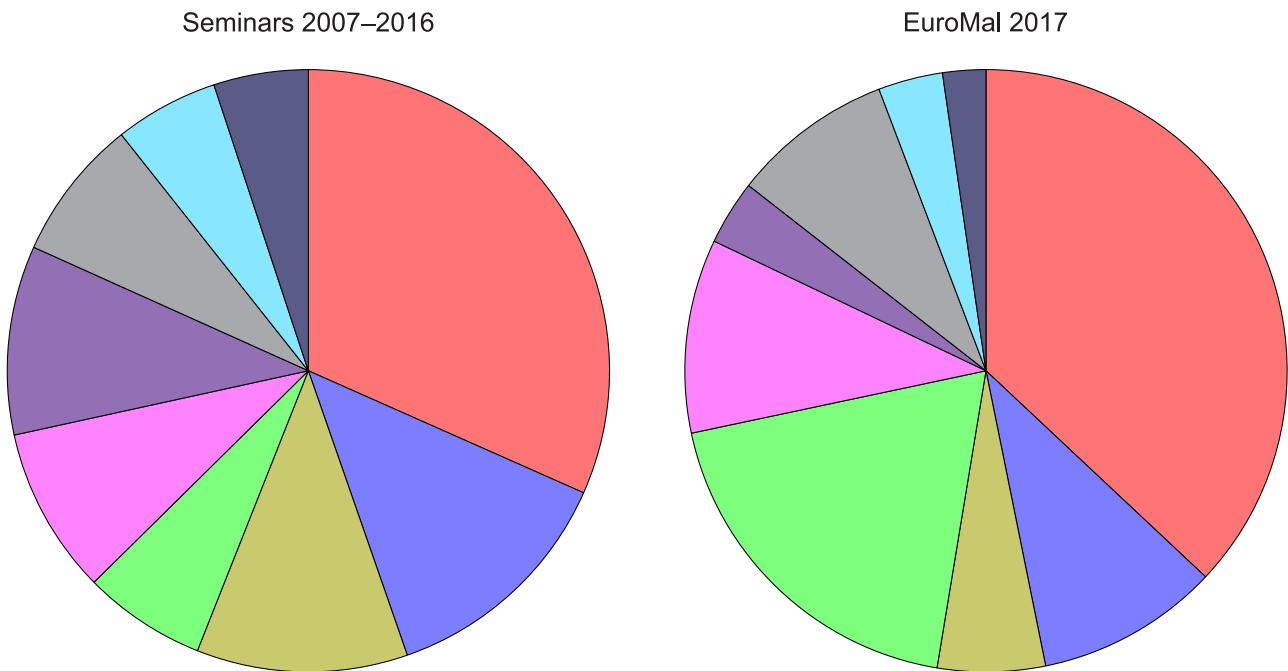
It turns out that out of the total of 72 contributions in Systematics & Phylogeny in 2007–2017 as many as 33 (45.8%, nearly half!) were presented at the EuroMal. A similar trend but not so pronounced is shown by Ecology & Conservation, Biogeography & Faunistics and Fossil Molluscs (see also Fig. 1). At the Seminars, Miscellaneous and Life Histories were more popular than at the EuroMal. I noticed very similar structural differences a few years ago, when comparing the topical structure of the Seminars and the World's Congresses. We seem to "save" our time-consuming and/or trendy studies for big events. This goes for phylogenies which are now for the most part molecular, biogeography (often phylogeography) of large bits of the world, or important fossils. On the other hand Ecology & Conservation are simply gaining importance in our work and at conferences, whether the event is local or international. This is a result of our increasing awareness, hordes of introduced species (see Table 1 where Invasions form a separate category; in Table 2 included in Ecology & Conservation), developing methods of active protection, changing legal regulations (obligatory conservation expertise prior to any serious road- or factory-building) and – last but not least – funds.

By the way, the EuroMal is already bearing fruit: MAXIM VINARSKI's paper "The species question in freshwater malacology: from Linnaeus to the present day", based on the author's EuroMal presentation, has now been submitted to the *Folia*.

The snail:bivalve ratio at the EuroMal was 1.3:1 (there were four other taxa, and they were cephalopods) (the mean ratio for the Seminars since 2010 was 2.7:1), the land:water ratio was 0.5:1 (Seminar mean 1.5:1). The ratio of one-author contributions to contributions with two or more authors was 1:4

Table 2. Topical structure of the Polish Malacological Seminars 2007–2016 and the EuroMal according to the criteria adopted in the Seminar Reports. Note column 4: the proportion of contributions in each discipline in the total number of papers/posters which reflects the structural differences between local and international events

No.	Discipline	2007–2016	2017 Euromal	Proportion of papers/ posters at Euromal	Total	Mean
1	Ecology & Conservation	187	64	25.5%	251	22.8
2	Applied Malacology & Parasitology	77	17	18.1%	94	8.5
3	Miscellaneous: general, behaviour, archaeology, collections, history, education, methodology	67	10	13.0%	77	7.0
4	Systematics/Phylogeny (including molecular)	39	33	45.8%	72	6.5
5	Biogeography & Faunistics	53	18	25.4%	71	6.5
6	Life Histories	60	6	9.1%	66	6.0
7	Fossil Molluscs	45	15	25.0%	60	5.5
8	Structure (histology, cytology, shell) & Variation	33	6	15.4%	39	3.5
9	Physiology	30	4	11.8%	34	3.1
Total		591	173	22.6%	764	69.5



**Ecology & Conservation, Applied & Parasitology, Miscellaneous, Systematics & Phylogeny,
Biogeography & Faunistics, Life histories, Fossil, Structure & Variation, Physiology**

Fig. 1. Topical structure of the Polish Malacological Seminars 2007–2016 and the EuroMal 2017 according to the criteria adopted in the Seminar Reports

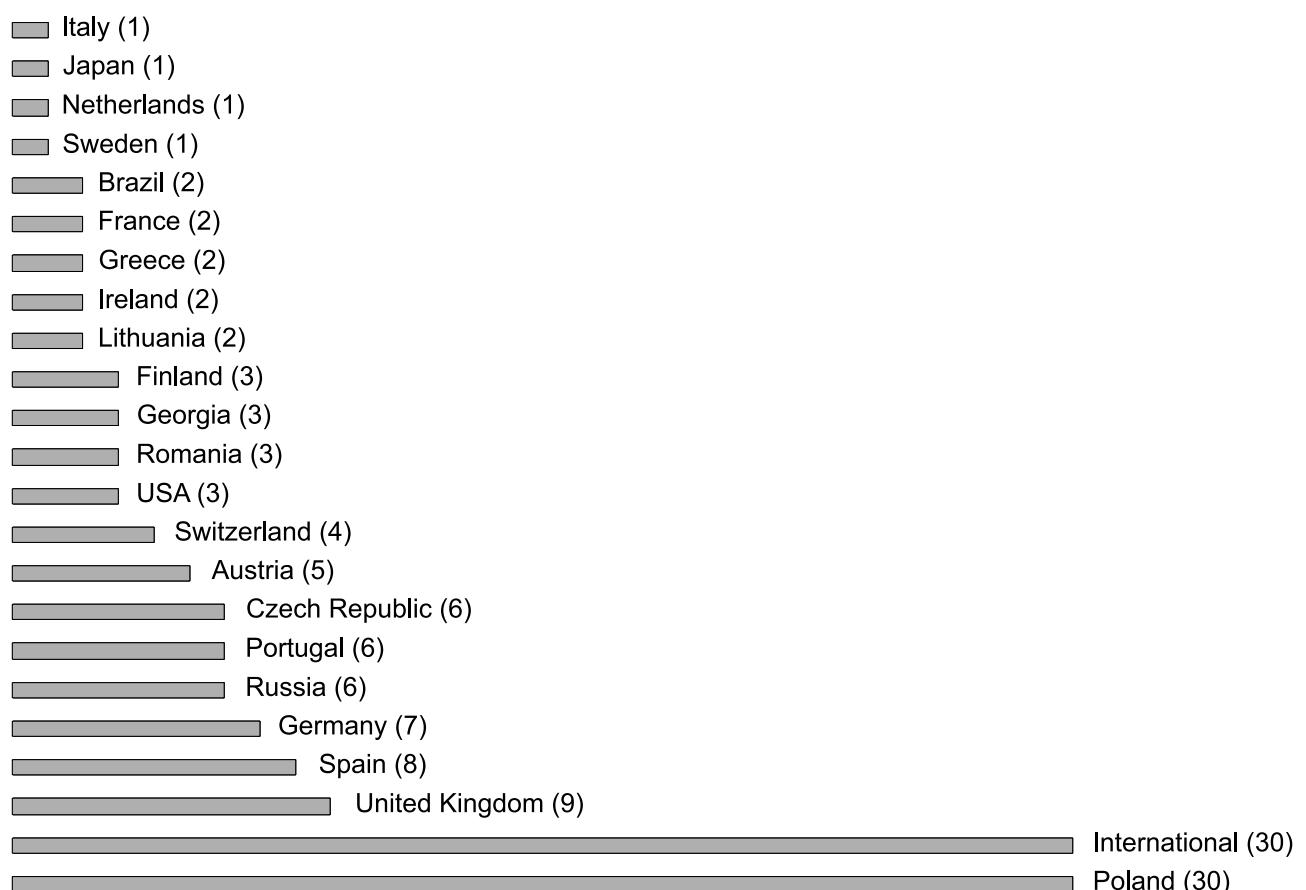


Fig. 2. Numbers of contributions by malacologists from various countries at the EuroMal 2017

(Seminar mean 0.9:1), and the numbers of papers/posters presented by girls versus boys were: girls 16, boys 31, mixed teams 93.

The chair persons (listed in the same order as in the Programme) were: DAVID C. ALDRIDGE, WOJCIECH SOLARZ, RONALDO SOUSA, STEFFEN KIEL, THOMAS A. NEUBAUER, SIMONE VARANDAS, ANDRZEJ KAIM, ALEXANDER NÜTZEL, JÜRGEN GEIST, RAFAEL ARAUJO, KAREL DOUDA, ADRIENNE JOCHUM, MANUEL LOPES-LIMA, BARNA PÁLL-GÉRGELY, ANTONIO FRIAS MARTINS, ROBERT A. D. CAMERON and ELŻBIETA ŻBIKOWSKA.

There were three keynote lectures: "Theory can explain a lot of life history diversity in molluscs" by JAN KOZŁOWSKI, "Ecosystem services provided by freshwater mussels" by CARYN C. VAUGHN, and "Who, where, what and why: some basic questions in land mollusc diversity" by ROBERT A. D. CAMERON.

The authors (not all of them present) came from 30 countries: Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Costa Rica, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA. There were ca. 340 of them, and the Poles constituted ca. 20% (71 authors).

The structure of authorship is shown in Fig. 2. By the way (which is not in the graph), in the category International three papers are co-authored by Polish malacologists.

It follows from the Book of Abstracts that there was an Award Ceremony. I got more info from ANDRZEJ LESICKI and ELŻBIETA ŻBIKOWSKA: The Best PhD Student Presentations (prize of the Scientific Committee) were that of DAVID WILLER (first prize) "Improving productivity of bivalve mollusc aquaculture using microencapsulated products", followed by two second prizes ex-aequo: ALYSSA RITA FREDERICK's "Differential disease resistance patterns in eastern Pacific haliotids" and DAGMAR RIHOVÁ's "Coat for every occasion; periostracum of selected land snails – a preliminary report". Besides, there was the Amber Snail Award for the best poster: "A mollusc in the tube instead of the shell: the first investigation of cladobranch sea slug associated with annelids" by IRINA EKIMOVA.

I'm not sure about the excursion(s). I only know one went to Ojców with its National Park.

ROBERT CAMERON's book donated by the author was auctioned and the resulting sum was to help the EuroMal funds (how much the auction brought I know not).

The next (9th) EuroMal will be held in Prague (organised by KAREL DOUDA). The next Polish Malacological Seminar in 2018 in Toruń will be organised by the Toruń malacological team.

BEATA M. POKRYSZKO
Museum of Natural History, Wrocław University
Sienkiewicza 21, 50-335 Wrocław, Poland
(e-mail: bepok@biol.uni.wroc.pl)