

THE 5TH CONGRESS OF THE EUROPEAN MALACOLOGICAL SOCIETIES

CONFERENCE REPORT

Nobody knows why it was the 5th and nobody – except, perhaps, the Main Organiser (nobody dared to ask) – could remember when and where the previous four Congresses had been held. This one was held in Ponta Delgada, The Azores (formally Portugal, but quite different from the mainland Portugal), from the 2nd till the 6th of September 2008. It was combined with the Atlantic Islands Neogene 2nd International Congress. The organising institutions were Instituto Português de Malacologia, The Marine PalaeoBiogeography Working Group and The Centre for the Study of Biodiversity and Genetic Resources of the University of Oporto. The Organising Committee included ANTONIO DE FRIAS MARTINS, GONÇALO CALADO, SÉRGIO ÁVILA, JOSÉ BORGES, JOAQUIM REIS, MANUEL MALAQUIAS, PATRICIA MADEIRA, RITA COELHO and JORGE MEDEIROS, and they really did a marvellous job. Thanks Antonio (Fig. 1) and the Committee!

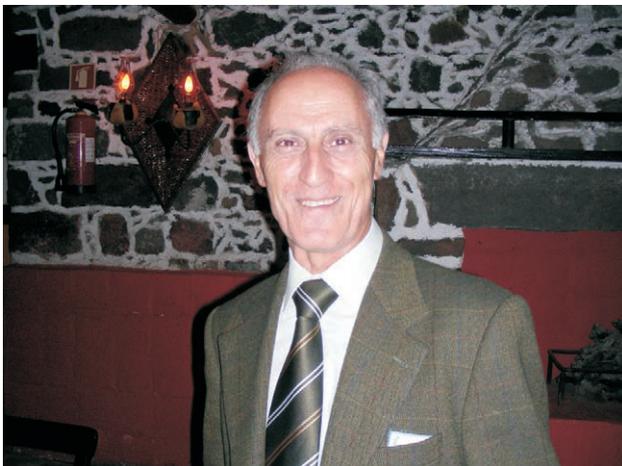


Fig. 1. The Main Organiser of the 5th Congress. Photo B. M. POKRYSZKO

There were 113 participants from 23 countries: Albania, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal (Portugal has many malacologists), Romania, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey, UK and USA.

No.	Discipline	Number of papers/posters
1	Ecology	18
2	Life histories (incl. embryology and population dynamics)	11
3	Conservation	12
4	Fossil molluscs	4
5	Applied malacology	3
6	Parasitology	1
7	Faunistics	1
8	Methodology	2
9	Physiology	6
10	Structure (histology, cytology, shell)	6
11	Variation, morphometrics	3
12	Systematics/phylogeny	20
13	Biogeography	3
14	Evolution	5
15	Molecular genetics	4
16	Others	2

The number of presentations within particular disciplines in the Table corresponds almost exactly to their percentage, since the total number of papers and posters was 101, discounting the six presentations on non-snail and non-bivalve taxa (Cephalopoda, Caudofeata and even non-molluscs: bryozoans and



Fig. 2. Malacologists admiring a hot spring. Photo B. M. POKRYSZKO

human remains). The land:water ratio was 0.49:1 and the snail:bivalve ratio 1.88:1. For comparison with the other two meetings this year see the other conference reports in this volume. My main impressions are: many very good systematic/phylogenetic papers and some equally good papers on various aspects of mollusc evolution; also very many posters of absolutely top quality; many young people – doctoral students – doing very good science and apparently not discouraged by the rather gloomy employment prospect.

We stayed in a whole range of places, from a students' hostel to quite posh hotels, scattered all over Ponta Delgada. It did not matter, Ponta Delgada is small and very beautiful, and pleasant to walk in. There were many opportunities to enjoy the weather (which varied), swimming in the sea (warm), the music (late at night at the Marina), the food (which was great) and the local malacofauna (quite a lot of nice creatures). Especially the snailing opportunities were appreciated, and used: some made short trips to grab a few snails, some other people even arrived earlier or stayed afterwards to look for the beautiful *Plutonia*, *Drouetia* or *Leiostylia*. Several cars were rented especially for snailing purposes and it is only to be hoped

that some of the Azorean molluscs remained uncollected. A few people went for whale-watching trips and brought back innumerable photos of whale tails (somehow the front of the whale never showed). The Congress excursion went to Furnas – the famous place with hot springs (Fig. 2); on the way we saw many picturesque and/or historic places, and after visiting Furnas we had a typical Azorean meal, volcano-cooked or, as it said in the programme “cooked with natural geothermal energy”. Apart from the excursion there was an ice-breaker on the first afternoon (with not only an ice to break and a glass of wine, but many good snacks), and the Congress Dinner on the 5th, with a fantastic variety of Azorean foods, and dancing.

Let's hope more malacological conferences will be organised by the Azorean malacologists: the place, the climate, the people and the organisation were great!

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