

FOREWORD

Sitges, a picturesque and welcoming Catalan town located on the Mediterranean coast near Barcelona, hosted the 23rd European Colloquium of Arachnology from the 4th to the 8th of September, 2006. The meeting was organized by the Zoological Systematics and Evolution Research Group (Zoo-SysEvo), the Universitat de Barcelona's Departament de Biologia Animal, and the Grupo Ibérico de Aracnología (GIA), and was held, like previous meetings, under the auspices of the European Society of Arachnology (ESA).

The conference was attended by 136 participants representing 31 countries from four continents, yet another demonstration that European meetings are by no means restricted to European researchers. The Palau Mar i Cel, an emblematic Noucentista-style palace built in 1910 by American millionaire Charles Deering to house his art collections, was the venue of the opening ceremony. Following speeches by Dr. Søren Toft, president of ESA, Dr. Xavier Testar, the Catalan government's Director General for Research, and Dr. Carlos Prieto, president of GIA, the colloquium was formally opened. The main venue for the oral and poster contributions was the Edifici Miramar, a 19th century neoclassical building that exemplifies the success of the *indianos*, the locals that emigrated to America in search of a better life. The terrace of the Miramar, looking down on the Mediterranean, where participants converged for coffee breaks, became the meeting point for scientific discussions and social interactions, and was also the place where the welcoming party on Sunday and the already classical Russian party, sponsored by Yuri Marusik, were held. The sun, the sandy beaches, the wide gastronomic choice and the multiple leisure opportunities offered by Sitges also played a part in facilitating encounters and discussions among the participants.

Altogether, 130 contributions were presented at the colloquium: four plenary lectures, 69 oral presentations and 57 posters. Contributions were grouped into four main topic sessions (Ecology & Evolution, Conservation & Management, Systematics & Palaeontology, and Biogeography & Faunistics) and one symposium on Spider sex, organized by Dr. Jordi Moya-Laraño. On Monday 4th, Dr. Rosemary Gillespie opened the scientific programme with the plenary lecture entitled "Evolution in island communities of spiders: opportunity, chance & determinism". After the plenary talk, two sessions were run in parallel: *Ecology and evolution*, at the Palau Mar i Cel, where six oral communications were presented; and *Conservation & Management*, held at the Miramar, which included 13 contributions. Every day, after the round of oral contributions on the corresponding topic, participants were invited to attend the poster presentations, where authors introduced their results. On Tuesday 5th, Dr. Gustavo Homiga opened the session on *Systematics & Paleontology* with a plenary lecture entitled "The colour of a dog running away: Araneoid systematics for the twenty-first century". The guest presentation was followed by 17 oral contributions on the topic. On Wednesday 6th the scientific part of the colloquium took a break and the whole day was devoted to social activities. We first visited the Garraf natural park, where the combination of limestone bedrock and human activities have created a classic Karstic Mediterranean landscape that constitutes the northernmost limit of the distribution of many plants and animals of African origin. Before the summer heat became too unbearable, we moved to the dark, cool cellars of the Torres vineyards, at the heart of the Penedès wine country, one of the oldest wine-growing regions in Europe and renowned for its Cava (a local sparkling wine). After enjoying a wine-tasting session it was time to have a proper meal. We enjoyed some local specialities (including, of course, several portions of cured ham, escargots and the traditional *pa amb tomàquet*) at the Casa del Conill restaurant, near the village of Olèrdola. In the afternoon, we finished our day-long excursion by visiting the 12th century monastery of Santes Creus, a perfect spot for relaxing and stretching our legs after a copious meal. On Thursday 7th, Dr. Jutta Schneider opened the *Symposium on Spider Sex* with the plenary lecture "Why do some spider males sacrifice life and genitals for sex?", followed by 16 oral contributions and a round table led by Dr. Jordi Moya-Laraño. On Friday 8th, Dr. Pedro Cardoso's plenary lecture entitled "Labels, bits and maps: an overview on the process of producing, validating and sharing biogeographic data" opened the session devoted to *Biogeography and Faunistics*, which included 11 oral communications. The ESA general assembly was held in the afternoon, followed by the closing ceremony, where the prizes for the best student contribution were announced. The best student presentation prize was awarded to Anja Klann for her talk on "The alimentary system of solpugids (Arachnida, Solifugae)" and the second best student presentation award was for Soledad Ghione for her contribution on "Sexual cannibalism and broken copulatory organs in the

orb-weaving spider *Argiope argentata* (Araneae, Arneidae)”. The best student poster award went to Giovanni Malarico for his work entitled “Taste while chewing? Sensory structures in the chelicerae of *Pseudocellus pearsei* (Ricinulei, Arachnida)” and the second best student poster prize to Iasmi Stathi for her poster on “The evolutionary history of the north-eastern Mediterranean scorpion species *Mesobuthus gibbosus* and *Iurus dufourei*”.

The organizing committee (Carles Ribera, Miquel A. Arnedo, Jordi Moya-Laraño, Leticia Bidegaray, Albert López, Mercè Loukota, Eva de Mas, Nuria Macías and Nayra Txasko) wishes to express its deepest gratitude to all those who assisted in the organization of the colloquium. We are particularly indebted to the Sitges town council, which provided free access to the main venue of the colloquium; to the members of the scientific committee (Pedro Cardoso, Jason Dunlop, Rosemary Gillespie, Gustavo Hormiga, Bernard Huber, Rudi Jocqué and Yael Lubin); to the guest speakers; and to the chairmen of the sessions.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the financial support from the Catalan Government’s Departament d’Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació (grant 2006ARCS1), the Spanish Government’s Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (grant CGL2006-26151-E/BOS), the Zoological Systematics and Evolution Research Group, the European Society of Arachnology, and the Grupo Ibérico de Aracnología.

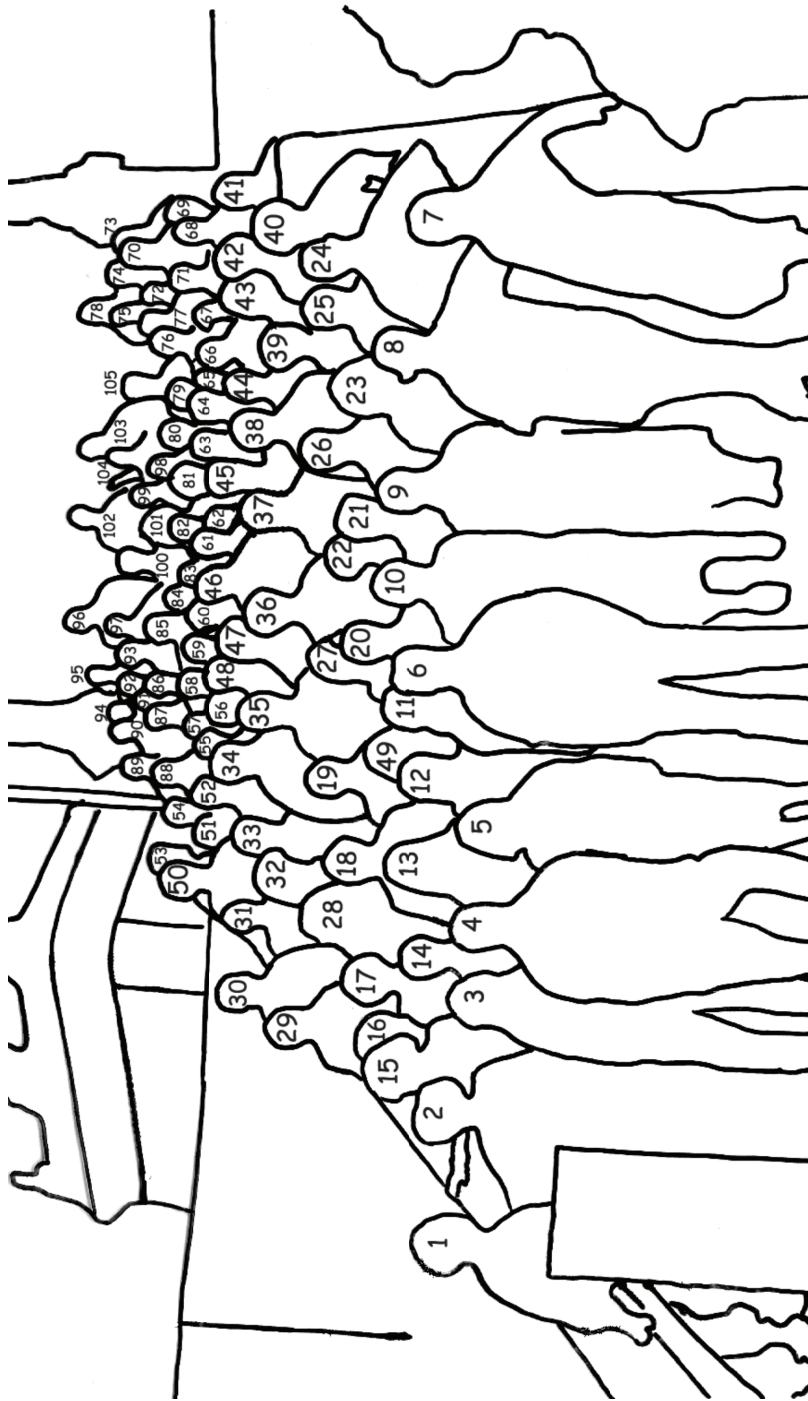
We look forward to seeing you all again at the next European Colloquium of Arachnology.

The organizing committee

*23th European Colloquium of Arachnology
VII Jornadas G.I.A.*







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