Letter from IAA's president

In Anticipation of A Banner Year

As the time ticks away we draw ever closer to our quadrennial meeting which is now only 8 months away. The time before the meeting is always flush with activity. It is typically a banner year for the IAA as new members join, new executive and council committee members are selected, and all members rush to finalize projects and research to be presented at the meeting. Here is a helpful list of items to attend to throughout the year.

1) The new year is upon us and it is time to pay membership dues. These are due now. Please see the dues form at the end of the newsletter or at the IAA website http://www.isac.cnr.it/aeobio/iaa/. When you pay 2010 individual membership dues of $40 and you will receive a subscription to the electronic version of Aerobiologia. Please also send your updated contact information to the Secretary-General Bernard Clot in preparation of the printing of the membership directory.

2) Help us connect to aerobiologists in your country or discipline and to advertise our annual meeting. If you know someone who may be interested in the Aerobiology meeting please send them an email with a link to the 9th ICA meeting website – www.aerobiologia.com.ar/9thica.html

3) Submit an application for the Young Aerobiologist Award if you are eligible or if you work with or know a young aerobiologist please encourage them to apply. This award can help with expenses associated with attending the annual meeting or for other purposes such as visits to labs, field projects or many other possibilities. This award is available every year not just during the year of the ICA meeting. The deadline is February 1st.

4) Prepare a proposal to host the next ICA. The proposal must be submitted to the Secretary-General Bernard Clot who can also provide guidance in the preparation of the proposal. The deadline is February 23rd.

5) The associated societies must nominate members to be included in the next IAA Executive Council by February 23rd. Those societies with 10 to 49 members shall nominate one Council member; those with 50 to 99 members shall nominate 2 Council members; those with 100 or more members shall nominate 3 Council members. Associated Societies with fewer than 10 members may, with the agreement of Council, combine with other Associated Societies, to nominate one member if their joint numbers are 10 to 25, and two members if their joint number exceed 25. Members of the Council may be renominated. Please let your society know if you are interested in serving in this capacity.

6) Submit an abstract (or two!) for the 9th ICA. The deadline is February 28th.

7) Check the expiry of your passport and whether you need a visa for Argentina.

8) Nominate a paper for the best paper of 2009 in Aerobiology (& propose a name for this award). Papers can be from any journal and authors do not have to be IAA members. The award will provide registration fees to any aerobiology meeting. Instructions for nominating are on the IAA website and the deadline is April 1st.

9) Deadline for early registration for the 9th ICA meeting: 15 April 2010

10) Please consider serving on the executive committee, or executive council, or nominate someone you think might do a good job — Deadline May 1. Nominations can be submitted to the President Christine Rogers. The nominating committee consists of Christine Rogers, Carmen Galan, Andreja Seliger. The instructions for nominations as passed at the last general assembly are listed below.

The candidates for the Offices of President, Vice-President, Secretary-General, Newsletter Editor, Webmaster and Treasurer plus two at large members should be nominated by individual members of the IAA. Candidates should be nominated, in writing, by one member of the IAA and seconded by at least two other members of the IAA. Requests for nominations should be sent out to the membership approximately 6 months before the next Congress (via the newsletter and website). The nominations should be sent to the Nominating Committee 3 months before the next Congress. Nominations should consist of a brief curriculum vitae for the nominee, and written consent by the nominee. Individual members would only be able to nominate or second one candidate for each Office. In the event of no candidate being nominated for a given Office, the Nominating Committee should nominate a suitable candidate. The nominating committee should decide on a person for each position and forward the slate of nominees to the President to present before the General Assembly. The slate of candidates will be announced in the newsletter prior to the congress. The Officers would then be elected by the individual members, in person, during the General Assembly at the Congress.

The nominating committee shall consist of 3 members: the current Past-President, the current President, and one IAA member elected by the membership at the prior General Assembly.

11) Communicate with Christine Rogers or Bernard Clot if you have any comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding the IAA. We look forward to hear from you anytime.

Have a happy, prosperous, and productive year!!

Sincerely,

Christine Rogers
President IAA

Looking for graduate students

A graduate research assistantship is available to study ragweed pollen production in current and future climate scenarios, with an emphasis on applications of datasets to public health needs. The research will involve field collection, air sampling, pollen counting, and allergen assays. The position can be associated with either an MS or PhD in Environmental Health Sciences in the School of Public Health and Health Sciences at the University of Massachusetts Amherst beginning summer 2010. This is a collaborative research project with Harvard Forest, Harvard University. Applicants should have a science based B.S., M.S. or equivalent in areas such as aerobiology, ecology, environmental science, and excellent oral and written communication skills. Applicants must submit GRE scores (and TOEFL scores for foreign applicants) with their application to the Graduate School. The deadline for applications is February 1, 2010. For more information please contact Dr. Christine Rogers at carogers@schoolph.umass.edu.
The 9th European Course on Basic Aerobiology took place in Evora, Portugal, from the 3rd to 9th September 2009. The course was organised by the European Aerobiology Society (EAS) with support from European Commission COST Action ES0603. The organising committee from the EAS were Siegfried Jager (President of the EAS), Michel Thibaudon and Giuseppe Frenguelli. The course was prepared by Rui Brandao and his team from the University of Evora.

The course was attended by 26 participants from 14 different countries mostly from Europe, but it also included people from as far away as Brazil and Pakistan (Fig. 1). The course was structured to help aerobiologists and other professionals to analyse bioaerosols from air samples and use the data for a variety of different applications such as forecasting, allergy prevention, phenology and examining the impacts of climate change.

An interactive course format was adopted, which was designed to start a dialogue among participants and experts. A special emphasis was put on practical sessions in the laboratory where the participants could work with the biological materials. Practical sessions included the identification of pollen, the identification of fungal spores, scanning and counting of daily slides, practical plant identification and taxonomy, and sampling allergens by immunoassays (ELISA) (Figs 2 and 3).

As well as time spent in the laboratory, the participants were given a series of lectures that we aimed at giving them an introduction into the various aspects of aerobiology. The presentations included:

- Aerobiology, Aerodynamics and Pollen sampling (M. Smith)
- Use of the Hirst type volumetric spore trap (C. Lanzoni)
- Pollen structure and morphology (G. Frenguelli)
- Pollen and Allergy (M. Morais-Almeida)
- Health Impacts of Pollen and Molds (M. Thibaudon)
- Pollen development, Biology and Function (C. Galan)
- Basic microscopy: Calculating the field of view: Scanning the slides: Sources of error (G. Frenguelli)
- Practical plant identification and taxonomy (S. Jäger)
- EAN database, EPI and polleninfo.org (S. Jäger)
- Basic statistics applied to Aerobiology (C. Galan)
- Seasonal and Short Term Forecasting (B. Clot)
- Molds and Allergy (C. Nunes)
- Fungal Spores – production and release (I. Câmara)
- Direct Sampling of Aeroallergens (M. Thibaudon)
- Meteorological Aspects of Particle Dispersal (M. Sofiev)
- Aerobiological Methods in Crop Sciences (Helena Ribeiro)

Every lecture was delivered to the students on a CD-Rom. At the end, each participant was submitted to an examination (theory and practical) and all those that were successful received a certificate.

A social programme was included where the students have the opportunity to contact with the history, the landscape and the economy of the region, through the waters of Alqueva, on one of the biggest dams of Europe. The trip started at Monsaraz, a Middle Age village of southern Portugal and finished with a dinner at Marina de Alqueva.
On 8 and 9 December 2009, the Fourth Argentine Meeting of Aerobiology was held in Mar del Plata city, Argentina, for the first time under the XIV Argentine Symposium on Palaeobotany and Palynology. The presentations of the aerobiological scientific papers were preceded by the conference by Dr. Jordina Belmonte Soler from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain, who was specially invited for this event.

The topic addressed at the conference was the role that Aerobiology plays in Science and Society.

Afterwards eleven aerobiological works were presented. The topics discussed were: the study of problematic taxa from an aerobiological perspective, a comparison of airborne pollen spectra from different cities, the relationship with meteorological factors, the allergenic pollen types, and long-distance pollen transport.

The following researchers attended the Aerobiology Meeting: Viviana S. BALZARETTI MAGGI, Flavia J. BARREIRO, Jordina BELMONTE SOLER, M. Martha BIANCHI, Valeria CARAMUTI, M. Elena GARCÍA, M. Cristina GARDELLA SAMBETH, Fabiana LATORRE, Andrea C. MALLO, M Gabriela MURRAY, Daniela S. NITU, Ruth OTERO, Claudio F. PÉREZ, and Sandra M. VERGAMINI, representing Argentina, Brazil, Spain and the United States.

Other works presented in the Actuopalynology and 4th Argentine Meeting of Aerobiology, centered on issues of Melissopalynology and Pollen Morphology. The session was dedicated to the memory of Professor Martha A. Caccavari.

Apart from works presentation, and as every year since 2006, a discussion meeting on several Aerobiology concerns was conducted. The main issues discussed were: a) experiences and news update, b) ways of involving the Argentine Group of Aerobiology in the 9th International Congress on Aerobiology, Buenos Aires 2010, c) possibilities of organizing an Argentine aerobiological network, d) financial support: subsidies, other forms of financing, ideas, and consensus, e) website, and f) assembly.

It is worth noting the addition of new colleagues, continuing the commitment to promote and prioritize our research in the country and in South America.

Argentine Group of Aerobiology Website: http://www.aerobiologia.com.ar (Argentina)
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Since the 1970’s, the Nordic Aerobiology Forum (NAF) aims to cover the progress of aerobiology in the Nordic and Baltic countries and to stimulate cooperation between research groups in these countries. The 12th conference of this association was held in Copenhagen, during the pleasant summer days of 28-30 August 2009. It was hosted by Janne Sommer representing the Danish Asthma-Allergy Association and Carsten Ambelas Skjøth, NERI, Aarhus University. The participants were from Denmark, Norway, Finland, Germany, and Lithuania. The meeting was held in a conference centre close to the very city centre and to the Botanical Gardens.

The scientific programme covered a broad spectrum of topics within aerobiology, such as the genetic background to allergies, the degree of correlation between pollen counts and symptoms, and the general knowledge of aeropalynological services in society. We also heard about models concerning transport of bioaerosols and mineral dust, the use of high-resolution satellite imagery in such models, and of long-range transport of birch pollen as well as about the resulting effects upon the genetic structure of birch populations. Meteorological factors and the biological factors that determine the start and intensity of the pollen season were discussed, as well as the course of the Alternaria season in Lithuania. With regard to indoor health, the concentration of pollen in private and public spaces and the prevalence of allergenic moulds in day care centres were described, as well as the possibility to screen fungi and actinomycetes that are present in damp buildings using PCR.

We learnt that immunosupression as a cure against Wegener’s granulomatosis can be fatal when Aspergillus fumigatus is around. The protein in pollen and other bioaerosols can be stained for studies in light and laser scanning microscopes, among other things as an indication of their physiological status. Airborne proteins, which may be allergens, can also be screened with the help of ELISA technique, as in the European HIALINE project.

The likewise important social programme included a sightseeing of the port and channels of Copenhagen, as well as a very interesting visit to a famous ”social experiment”, the self-proclaimed autonomous free-town of Christiania. The NAF meetings are usually held at a biannual schedule, and the next meeting is planned to take place in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 2011.

Åslög Dahl

Fabiana Latorre
Researchers' Night in Lithuania 2009 was a project represented in Lithuania during an annual European science fest Researchers' Night, which took place all over Europe on the 25th of September 2009. It's the 7FP project funded by European Commission.

The main idea of the event consisted in bringing closer to one another researchers and public at large, allowing the latter to discover the “human face” of researchers and perceive them as “ordinary people”. In such a context, the project aimed at showing that researchers are not magicians, although their job appears full of excitement, unpredictability and unbelievable discoveries.

The event took place in 6 rather distant cities. Aerobiological achievements in Lithuania were chosen to be the major focus during the Researchers' Night in Šiauliai university. Children, students, researchers and participants were all directly and actively involved in the programme. Target audience consisted of the public at large, covering all age categories, regardless of scientific background or not: everyone was welcomed to an amazing world of aerobiological research and found out that they could also perform an experimental research.

Particular attention was paid to young people, who got familiarized with researchers in face to face exchanges, and will be presented selected successful cases of individual research career in Lithuania. Several witnesses were also there to help them to understand better what the real life of a researcher is like, leading probably some of them to think of embarking on a scientific career.

Ingrida Šaulienė was giving a speech for the audience on the topic “Aerobiology: the air we breath and the dangers of the plant flowering seasons”, introducing everybody to the everyday work of aerobiologists, researches, projects and achievements. In a meantime, all the willing participants were kindly invited to “become scientists” for a short period of time. Laboratory doors were opened to them, they were taught how spore traps work, how pollen are identified. In the computer rooms people were allowed to model air mass transportation, etc.

Ingrida Šaulienė

French R.N.S.A. expands to Africa

Since November, RNSA, in partnership with ORA (Observatoire Réunionais de l’Air), established a new station in La Réunion in the city of Saint Pierre. In near future, two other pollen traps will be implemented.

For this action, we chose the new Lanzoni VPPS2010 pollen trap with solar pannel. RNSA tested them over 3 months before to be sure of the good function of these new equipments.

Two other French driven sites are in operation in Africa: Tozeur and Sousse in Tunisia (red.).

The two new 2009 brochures of RNSA: National results and ragweed results are available on our website www.pollens.fr at the direct link:


For these two links you must use “espace adherents” with the username (login) rnsa and the password 2008

The CD Key of determination is always available directly to rnsa@rnsa.fr at the member’s special fare of 75,00 euro plus shipping cost.
Ukrainian Aerobiology is just developing its modern step now. 2009 became the first year when investigators from Kiev, Vinnitsa and Zaporizzhya cities united their efforts for performing pollen and spore counts in the Ukraine.

Our Present arrangement of the pollen stations opens the possibility to collect pollen from different biogeographical zones as the Ukraine covers widely: forest- (Kyiv), forest-steppe- (Vinnitsya) and steppe- (Zaporizzha) zones. So, there are some deviations in pollen composition and pollination times of different taxa determined in the zones of our country.

A governmental program which includes aerobiological aspects is provided through the Ukrainian Institute of Social Hygiene and Medical Ecology (Kiev), with the laboratory of Atmospheric Air Pollution and Evaluation of Risks is supervised by Dr. Elena Turos. Scientists from Ukrainian cities involved into the program mentioned are developing uniform methods of pollen collection, sampling and counting. Organizing a system of pollen forecast for Ukrainian patients is the aim of the study, too.

Quality Control System maintaining and education of researchers is also important for the Ukrainian aerobiology. Two members of the Vinnitsa pollen research group: Olena Bilous and Olena Palamarchuk were attending the 9th European Course on Basic Aerobiology in Évora, Portugal, from 2-9th of September, 2009. Internal Aerobiological studies are also provided in Ukraine.

The seminar “Harmonisation of pollen identification” was conducted in Kiev on 28th of July, 2009 in collaboration with IRINE (Immunology Research Institute of New England, USA). More than 20 doctors and biologists from nine Ukrainian regions studied the basics of Aerobiology, pollen morphology, rules of Burkard trap operating under supervision of coaches from Ukraine (Dr. Victoria Rodinkova and Dr. Irina Kovtunenko) and Russia (Dr. Elena Severova).

Data of Zaporizzhya and Vinnitsa sites is regularly updated into the European Aeroallergen Network. We hope for the next successful collaboration with European colleagues from different countries.

Dr. Victoria Rodinkova, Dr. Irina Kovtunenko
Vinnitsa National Pirogov Memorial Medical University (VNMU), Ukrainian Institute of Social Hygiene and Medical Ecology, Ukraine.

On behalf of the Polish team dealing with the aerobiological monitoring I would like to present some aspects of our activity. The continuous aeropalynological monitoring has been performed in Poland from about 20 years. In Krakow, the oldest monitoring centre, the gravimetric measurement started in 1982 and the volumetric method was introduced in 1989.

Our present activity focuses on different fields. Some of us participate in the European research projects (HIALINE, COST-EUPOL) as well as national projects. There should be stressed that the multi-centre project financed by the Ministry of Science and High Education was accepted to realize in 2009-2011. It refers to the forecasting of the alder, hazel and birch pollen concentrations in Poland using climatic, aerobiological and phenological data.

One of our main activity is to develop aerobiology as a scientific discipline in Poland introducing this subject into the study program (didactics) at the universities. Undoubtedly there was a success to publish the textbook “Aerobiologia” for students and young scientists interested in aerobiology (http://wydawnictwo.up.lublin.pl/publikacje/pnd_aerobiologia.htm).

Several Polish journals publishing the articles connected with the aerobiological subject are worthy to be recommended: Annals of Agriculture and Environmental Medicine, Acta Agrobotanica, Alergoprofil, Alergologia, Immunologia.

Additionally, the co-operation with the local authorities and the medical centers has been taken to promote the prophylaxis of allergic diseases based on the results of the aerobiological observations. In this field we strictly co-operate with the Allergen Research Center in Warsaw making the national pollen communications presented in media.

Simultaneously, the structure of the Polish Aerobiological Network has been created. For a long time most of us has been declared to integrate our activity and to realize the joint tasks. In 2005 the Section of Aerobiology by the Polish Botanical Society was set up. The President of the Section is Elżbieta Weryszko-Chmielewska, Professor of the University of Science in Lublin. In 2008 the Krakow monitoring center proposed to create the national scientific network focuses on the aerobiological research making in the university centers. Seven centers agreed to join the network (Szczecin, Poznań, Sosnowiec, Łódź, Kraków, Rzeszów, Lublin). The aim of the network is to develop aerobiology as a scientific discipline and promote its practical application, to lead the common projects, to co-operate with the European Data Base and to introduce the quality control. Nowadays, the official website (both Polish and English version) is being prepared and hopefully, it will start in spring.

We welcome all the persons interested in aerobiology to participate in our annual conferences “Days of Pollen Allergy”. The short communication of the last Conference was presented in IAA-Newsletter No 67. On behalf of the organizing Committee I would like to encourage our colleges from all over Europe dealing with the aerobiological and environmental monitoring to visit Krakow in the last weekend of May 2010 (28-29th) and to present the results of their research.

If you like to know more, please visit the website www.dap.cm-.ui.krakow.pl. Staying in Krakow would be the opportunity to establish both scientific and social contacts and to get to know the place where the 5th European Symposium will be held. The official website of the next Symposium will be available in January 2010.

Dorota Myszewska
BioCheA

Analysis of the development and occurrence of Biological and Chemical Aerosols

Set in University College Cork, which is located in the deep south of Ireland, the BioCheA project is an Irish EPA-funded initiative aimed at developing a real-time methodology to discriminate between the various airborne PBAP (Primary Biological Aerosol Particles) and pollutant chemicals that are found in the region. Therefore a new 2D-fluorescence based instrument, the Wide-Issue Bioaerosol Sensor (WIBS-4), developed at the University of Hertfordshire, has, to date, been deployed both in Killarney National Park, County Kerry and at Tivoli Docks, Cork.

The overall programme comprises laboratory experiments, which have been devised to build up a library of PBAP real-time data for use in the field and also a set of atmospheric measurements directed toward the measurement of PM10 and NOx. The most novel aspect of the research is the field deployment of the WIBS-4 instrument alongside a conventional Hirst Sporewatch impactor for the rigorous determination of the natural (bioaerosol) materials. The short-term aim is to simply discriminate between biological and chemical components of the detected particulate matter but, in the longer term, it is hoped to be able to provide key information on levels and identities of important allergens such as fungal spores and pollens. In due course, an understanding of the processes by which particulate emissions, from both natural and anthropogenic sources, are released and potentially interact in the atmosphere will be developed.

The WIBS-4 is the latest in a series of relatively low-cost bioaerosol sensors developed by the University of Hertfordshire under funding from the UK Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, DSTL. It is a real-time, single-particle bioaerosol sensor, which attempts to exploit UV-excited intrinsic particle fluorescence as a rapid, non-destructive diagnostic parameter in order to discriminate between airborne biological particles. Hence when bioaerosols are excited by UV wavelengths tuned to the absorptions of the principal biological fluorophores, the emitted light can be used to provide a differentiated signal from non-fluorescing particles or particles that fluoresce at different wavelengths of light. The WIBS-4 also offers the ability characterize the size and shape of particles using a continuous-wave diode laser (660nm). In theory, these parameters when linked with the fluorescence information obtained for the single particles should indicate whether they are pollen or spore PBAP and of what specific type.

The capabilities of WIBS-4 have been tested in both a rural environment (Killarney National Park) and an urban site of particular interest for shipping-pollution studies (Tivoli Docks, Cork). The photograph below shows the sampling site used in Killarney National Park, where the WIBS-4 is contained in the green box, alongside a Sporewatch and a PM10 collector.

The Killarney campaign represented our first attempt at placing the WIBS-4 in a field campaign and many important things were learned especially regarding the amount of data obtained and its subsequent analysis.

The time-profile below shows some of our preliminary results obtained by the WIBS from the Killarney campaign.

The fluorescent signals are derived from emission/excitation signals captured in two wavelength channels and are plotted on the secondary axis above. As expected there is a lull in the monitored concentrations of particles during the early hours of the morning. It can also be seen that most of the total particle concentration spikes correlate with spikes in the concentrations of fluorescent particles. This observation suggests that biological events such as pollen and spore release occur at such times in confirmation of the Sporewatch data.

While the results at present are very preliminary the future of this technique would appear to be a bright one. The sheer volumes of data that are generated mean that while statistical analysis is difficult it is probable that interesting information on bioaerosols can be obtained from the WIBS-4. Until then, the BioCheA team (Professor John Sodeau, Dr. Dave Healy, Dr. Stig Hellebust and David O'Connor all in the Department of Chemistry and Environmental Research Institute, University College Cork) will endeavour to develop this novel technique to its full potential for environmental scientists everywhere.

David O'Connor and John Sodeau
Ragweed : it is urgent to act !

Following the International Conference on “Ragweed: from knowledge to action” organized in Aix-les-Bains (France), on 21 November 2008, in the context of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union,

Acknowledging the health problems caused by ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and the increased incidence of allergic diseases due to its pollen,

Considering that these diseases may add up to those caused by air pollution and aggravate them,

Considering the increased risk of developing asthma for people sensitive to ragweed pollen,

Considering also the problems caused by this plant to agriculture and in some natural environments,

Noting the widespread of the plant in Europe and particularly in France, particularly related to human activities and global warming,

Taking into account the existing control methods, implemented in Canada, Hungary, Italy, Switzerland, etc., and the latest developments on applied techniques,

Representatives of organizations involved in the fight and the participants of the Aix-les-Bains Ragweed Conference, signatories of this declaration, recommend:

- that the coordinated actions for the fight against ragweed spread are taken into account in the framework of the World Health Organization and the European Union;

- that the actions are quickly implemented in France within the framework of the second National Environmental Health Actions plan (PNSE 2);

- that, in each country, the persons officially in charge of the fight against ragweed are identified and that a European coordination between them is set up particularly by the creation of a European working group on that subject; in the same way, that the persons in charge of the fight in each region are identified and that an interregional coordination between the actors of the ragweed fight is set up;

- that the multidisciplinary nature of this problem is taken into account and that the coordination between the different relevant administrations (health, transport, agriculture and environment administrations) is ensured at national and regional levels;

- that a national regulation is designed to support local policies and actions;

- that research programmes are started to improve the knowledge particularly on ragweed biology and on methods of eradication;

- that a better monitoring of the ragweed spread and of the results of the fight, is provided by mapping and by aerobiological monitoring;

- that, because of an extremely favourable cost-effectiveness ratio, a strategy of surveillance, prevention, control and early eradication is implemented in areas where ragweed is rare or absent;

- that the measurements of pollen exposure and health impacts are strengthened, and that forecasts are available to the general public and to relevant stakeholders involved in the fight against ragweed;

- that communication campaigns are directed to relevant services and populations, particularly in schools, in order to make them aware of the risks associated with this plant and that actions are developed to consciousness-raising;

- that interdependent actions to fight against its proliferation are developed, including with schools;

- that measures are taken to minimize the dissemination of the ragweed seeds by various vectors (soil and rubble, birdseeds, agricultural and grounds work machinery).

These signatories strongly recommend that these actions are sustained over a time period that reflects the long lifespan of the seeds.
This declaration is supported by:

Dominique DORD  
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Député,  
Président d’ATMO France

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Gérald GUEDON  
Docteur-Ingénieur, Directeur de la FREDON Pays-de-la-Loire

Jean-René ARGOUARC H  
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Michel CALLEJA  
Palynologue, directeur du Centre de Transfert de Montpellier SupAgro

Michel Thibaudon  
Bernard Clot
International Ragweed Society IRS

In 2008 several important scientific meetings took place: the First International Ragweed Conference, September 10-13 in Budapest, Hungary; the 2nd International Symposium on Intractable Weeds and Plant Invaders, September 14-18 in Osijek, Croatia; and the European Symposium on Ambrosia, November 21-23 in Aix-les-Bains, France. During these meetings, it was (again) shown that ragweed (Ambrosia artemisiifolia) is actively spreading throughout Europe, resulting in crop yield losses and allergy to pollen. Considering that management will require concerted and continued work over a longer period of time, the participants wanted to inform on the dangers, to prevent further spread and to urge governments and citizens to take the issue seriously and respond with appropriate actions.

For that purpose, the International Ragweed Society was founded on October 2nd, 2009 in Nyon (Switzerland) by seven enthusiastic persons. On December 6th, in Nyon a General Assembly took place aimed at completing the Committee and creating the first Working groups.

According to the Statutes, “the aims of the Association shall be the following:

a) to promote the knowledge concerning ragweed (Ambrosia L.) and to further its development;
b) to facilitate collaboration, research, education, information, technical development, practical applications and laws concerning ragweed and its direct and indirect impacts, as well as fight against that plant;
c) to create a platform for the persons, associations, societies and institutions with an interest in ragweed;
d) to elect the bodies responsible for organizing the International Ragweed Conferences;
e) to encourage collaboration with other areas related to environmental and health issues.

The Association shall be entitled to carry out any activity in accordance with these aims, such as organizing courses or developing educational programmes, coordinating or supporting projects, suggesting quality standards and quality controls, encouraging young researchers, developing fighting actions, managing data bases, etc.”

Private individuals and collective bodies may be granted membership. Annual fees are: individual members: 10 €; collective bodies: minimum 100 €.

Make up of the Committee for the 2009-2013 period: M. Bonini (Italy), C. Bohren and B. Clot (Switzerland), P. Comtois (Canada), J.L. Da Passano and M. Thibaudon (France), T. Komives and L. Kiss (Hungary), U. Starfinger (Germany).

The Committee is in charge of the administrative tasks, but the “real life” of the Society will take place in the Working Groups. Some have already been suggested: Biology of ragweed (ecology, genetics, etc.), Pollen and allergy / health impact, Financial impact, Integrated management, Biological control, Communication and education, Regulation - International collaboration (official), International conferences, Databases & mapping.

If you are a scientist, an allergic person, a politician, a responsible in an administration, a farmer, a nature lover, or a person interested in any aspect of ragweed problematic, join and contribute, you will be welcome!

Contact:
President: T. Komives tkom@nki.hu;
Secretary General: M. Thibaudon michel.thibaudon@wanadoo.fr;
Treasurer: C. Bohren christian.bohren@acw.admin.ch.

In 1999, the State promulgated the O.P.G.R. March 29th - No 25522 “Provisions to prevent the spread of the plant Ambrosia in the Region of Lombardy in order to prevent related allergic disease”. This was the first regional measure on the subject, which was designed to control the spread of this allergenic plant using a method which includes mowing three times a year (the first two respectively between the third decade of June and July, and the third one during the second decade of August). The ultimate goal was obviously to protect the health of citizens.

This important Conference organized by ASL Milano 1 under the patronage of the Italian Association of Aerobiology, Lombardy Region and the Province of Milan was opened by the assessor of the Regional Health Department Luciano Bresciani and had considerable success demonstrated by the interest of the participants throughout the day. National and international experts (Bernard Clot, Chantal Déchamp, Henriette Méon, Martin Hicke, Paolo Alleva, Riccardo Asero, Maira Bonini, Paolo Bottero, Giovanna Berti, Lorenzo Cecchi, Claudio Ortolani, Anna Tosì, Alessandro Travaglini) and representatives of institutions concerned with the problem (Regione Lombardia, Provincia di Milano - Settore Agricoltura, rappresentanti dei Comuni, delle Associazioni di categoria degli agricoltori e dell'Ente Parco del Ticino) took part to the event as speakers or moderators.

Each of the speakers brought his contribution on different aspects of ragweed problematic, ranging from botany, ecology, palynology, characteristics of the allergic disease, preventive measures, experiences in other European countries and Italian regions, to control measures, problems encountered during these ten years of work and possible future developments.

The information provided by the speakers and the lively discussion among the participants during the various working sessions showed that training of specialists, deep knowledge of the different aspects of the phenomenon and the active collaboration of all citizens are necessary to fight and control the ragweed problem and exert an effective preventive action.

The Conference closed with the proposal from ASL and participants for new legislative measures, which would redefine the objectives of fighting ragweed, actions to be taken and roles of different actors. It is hoped that these measures take into account the experiences made during the last ten years of application of the Regional Ordinance, the results from studies on control methods, the action plans in other European countries, and, last but not least, includes the participation of the institutions and structures in agriculture and heath domains. An improvement of the situation in territories where Ambrosia has become a public health concern can be only achieved with conjugated efforts of all concerned persons and institutions. It is equally true for preventing the explosion of the problem in those areas where the spread of ragweed is still in early stages.

Maira Bonini
ASL Milano 1, Milano, Italy

visit the Spanish-language Palynology Association International Symposium APLE in July in Ourense
One of the recommendations proposed in the first Quality Control (QC) Workshop that took place in Turku (Finland) on August 14th 2008 was to formulate a minimum requirements report (IAA Newsletter, issue 67, June 2009). The first step towards this was to produce a questionnaire that was completed by 26 different regional/national networks involved in the European Aerollenfergen Network/European Pollen Information (EAN/EP). The results of which were presented at the Workshop on Quality Control, held in Perugia (Italy) on November 27th 2009.

The first draft of the questionnaire was supplied by Regula Gehrig (Swiss Pollen Monitoring Network) on May 2008, so that it could be discussed among all the regional/national network coordinators involved in EAN/EP. Once all suggestions were received and studied, the definitive questionnaire was sent to all network coordinators on September 2008 so the work could commence.

The QC questionnaire refers to different topics related to: a) pollen trap, b) preparation and counting of the samples, c) data management, d) QC tests and courses, e) additional questions and comments.

Regarding the pollen trap, the results confirm that all networks use volumetric spore traps of the Hirst design (Hirst, 1951), both Burkard and/or Lanzoni, as one of the EAN/EP minimum requirements in the Methodology for Routinely Performed Monitoring of Airborne Pollen –Recommendations (News. 1995, Aerobiologia, 11:69-70).

The 26 contributed networks represent 23 different countries. Ten networks are represented by only 1 or 2 samplers; some others are better represented with more than 50 samplers. The sample average per network is 14.

The samplers are located at very different heights above ground level, from 2 to 60 m. In networks with more than 10 samplers there is an average range, from lowest to highest, of 31 meters.

Thirteen networks weekly control the flow rate, 2 of them both before and after changing the drum. The others can vary from daily to never.

Twenty five networks count with written instructions for people who change the drum: only 15 control it in different ways, most of them by a responsible person or specialized technicians.

Six networks sample all the year round, some others depending on different factors, such as: weather, site, pollen types, year or financial support.

Regarding sample preparation and counting, 22 networks use Vaseline or Silicone as adhesive, representing the 88% of the total: from these 59% use Vaseline and 41% use Silicone. Both Vaseline and silicone are used in different ways. As mounting media, 10 networks use glycerin gelatin, the others use a great variety of different mounting media.

Twenty three networks work with written instructions for sample preparation and counting. Twenty two (88%) read the samplers at 400x microscope magnification. Fifty two percent prepare slides by representing the complete day (0-24 hours), slides from other networks represent the period of day depending when the drum is changed. Twenty four networks use horizontal (16) or vertical (8) transects as counting methods, representing 92.3% of the total: one network uses random fields and in one network there is a combination of horizontal transects and random field methods. Fifty eight percent express data as bi-hourly values and 38% present the daily average data, 1 network uses both methods. In the case of the number of horizontal transects per slide, there is a high diversity: 2 networks examine 5 transects per slide; 5 networks examine 4; 4 networks examine 3; 4 networks examine 2. In the case of the number vertical transects only one network examines 24 transects per slide, all the others examine 12.

Regarding the minimum required pollen types, 18 networks propose a minimum, considering an average of 27 pollen types. Six networks do not require a minimum. Regarding number of pollen type identified per year: Three networks identified more than 50: 10 from 41 to 50; 7 from 31 to 40; 4 less than 30. Only one network out of those asked does not record unidentified pollen.

Regarding data management, 21 networks control databases by analyst, data collector, administrators or PhD students. Twenty two networks do not interpolate gaps due to missing data. The average of missing values due to pollen trap failure or wrong manipulations in the different network is 5 days.

The numbers of analyst depends on the number of pollen traps involved in the networks with an average of 15.5.

Analysts from 22 networks participate in training courses, both at national or international level: 6 of them repeat training courses, 1 only if needed. Others do not participate in training courses or did not answer.

12 networks are involved in QC tests for pollen identification, 7 annually and 5 only some years. Three networks are involved from 2004, 3 from 2009, 1 from 2005 and 3 from 90’s, others networks did not answer.

Different methods were used for QC in the networks: (1) identification of single and/or mixture pollen type slides; (2) identification of slides taken directly from the sampler; (3) both, pollen type slides and slides from the sampler. They are involved in internal and/or external QC by other sites.

Regarding the question about the possible certification for pollen and spore counters, some networks consider that it is needed, or useful, some others manifest doubts about it. Some networks consider that the Basic Course on Aerobiology, that requires some sort of examination, can certificate the analyst training as well as some sort of post course assessment. One network works in accordance with ISO 9001 certification and several others have started working towards accreditation. Some of the networks have financial problems with both the certification process and the participation on basic courses.

About the question of the possibility of inter-countries quality control, most networks agree with this proposal and some of them have already started participating in QC surveys with different countries. One network also considers that it is essential for accreditation. In any case, some of them remark on the necessity to select pollen types from similar vegetation areas.

These are some of the conclusions from the questionnaires that we have received so far. This information will be updated when we receive more completed questionnaires, so we request that people continue to send them. During the workshop a number of interesting communications pointed out the interest in this subject, but also the difficulty of carrying it out. It is necessary to discuss a reliable method for quality control which permits a good interpretation of the results. It is time to work!

Carmen Galan

More news from the European Aerobiology Society

Sevcan has configured the EAS web portal: http://eas.polleninfo.org

Come and visit and become a member! If administration should fail, please contact uwe.berger@meduniwien.ac.at .

You can also renew your membership for IAA and pay your membership fees secure online by credit card.

Uwe Berger
9th ICA
SECOND ANNOUNCEMENT

The 9th International Congress on Aerobiology, will take place from Monday, August 23 to Friday, 27, 2010 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The venue of the Congress is the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales "Bernardino Rivadavia".

Call for proposals for session topics and satellite symposia

The local organization committee of the 9th International Congress on Aerobiology (ICA2010) invites the aerobiological community, as well as scientists from other disciplines related to aerobiology, to present proposals for symposia, conferences and sessions to be considered for its inclusion in our program. Proposals must be received by January 31, 2010. Those proposals including innovative topics on aerobiology or all-encompassing syntheses of well-known subjects will be prioritized. Proposal of activities must be electronically submitted to both 9thica@aerobiologia.com.ar and mgmurray@criba.edu.ar

Proposals should be brief and include:
1) a complete contact information of the symposium/session organizer(s) (name, affiliation and address)
2) a synopsis, 200 words maximum, including the title and purpose of the symposium/session.
3) a justification, 200 words maximum, explaining why the topic is appropriate and significant for the 9th ICA
4) a tentative list of speakers that have been contacted and have shown a firm commitment to attend, specifying presentation titles and contact information of each speaker. Priority will be given to those proposals that address novel and general conceptual issues or propose new questions within the main theme of the Congress.
5) a possible financial support for this activity.

The proposed activities will be assessed by the organizing committee and we will try to promote high diversity in scope and country representation. Symposia organizers will be notified of the committee's decision by February 15, 2010. The local organizing committee can not guarantee any funding to cover travel and accommodation expenses for symposia participants, and strongly recommends the organizers to acquire the necessary funding. Financial aid is pending and might be unavailable. All symposia organizers and speakers will have to register as participants in the Congress.

Preliminary General Sessions
1. Dispersal studies, models and statistics
2. Phenology, emission studies
3. Health impacts
4. Agricultural impacts
5. General aerobiology
6. Indoor air and cultural heritage studies
7. Exposure, symptoms and thresholds
8. Aeromycological studies
9. Long series of data and old aerobiological measurements
10. Aerobiological monitoring systems

Abstracts and registration information are available on the web
NEW Deadline for abstracts submission: 28 February 2010!!
For more information on the 9th ICA, please visit: www.aerobiologia.com.ar/9thica.html

The organizing committee welcomes comments and / or contributions to ensure the success of the event.
To contact the organisation, please write to: 9thica@aerobiologia.com.ar

See you in Buenos Aires!

María Gabriela Murray
Chairperson
Profesora Marta Alicia Caccavari started her career in the Paleobotanic department of the Museo Argentino de Ciencias Naturales (MACN) “Bernardino Rivadavia” in 1964 where she specialized in Palinology under Dr. Carlos A. Menéndez. She was a research worker of CONICET throughout her career; head of the Actuopalynology section of the MACN; in charge of the Palynology laboratory in the CONICET research centre in Diamante, Entre Ríos and Director of the Mellisopalynology laboratory for SENASA for the certification of honey.

She followed different lines of research in Actuopalynology. In basic Palynology she developed studies in Aeropalynology concerning the phenology of pollination, and in applied Palynology she looked at the relationship between climate change and local allergies and Aerobiology. Likewise she carried out important work in Mellisopalynology analyzing nectar and pollen resources and the pollen content of honey.

Another line of research that she carried out over several decades was the study of the morphology and ultrastructure of pollen grains of Mimosoideae native to South America. This allowed her to carry out various projects of scientific cooperation between 1992 – 1997, in the Institut de la Palynologie in Mont-Pellier, France with well known research workers in the area of Aeropalynology, such as Dr. P. Guinet and Dr. P. Cour. She also visited different research centres in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil and Bolivia. Prof. Marta Caccavari published more than 70 articles in national and international journals and made presentations at more than 45 conferences related to her field, both in Argentina and overseas.

One of her main activities was the development of human resources, by directing undergraduates, scholars, postgraduate students, research workers and technicians.

Those of us who had the opportunity to know Marta will remember her for her optimism and her infinite energy. She was a person with many unfinished projects and in particular someone who never gave up, she was always a tireless fighter.....until the last moment.

Dra. María Gabriela Murray
Laboratorio de Plantas Vasculares
Universidad Nacional del Sur
2010 Membership Dues for the International Association for Aerobiology

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