

Alpine land snails extended

Workshop Alpine Land Snails 2014 is No. 18 in a series of similar workshops that were carried out by our working group under different titles and with different focus since the year 1992. In the majority of cases the workshops took place in Johnsbach, hosted by the famous alpine guest house “Kölblwirt”. This year we meet again in Johnsbach and, as always, the group consists of numerous colleagues and friends from the Museum of Natural History Vienna and from other research institutes in Austria as well as other countries.

There is a high variety of topics and emphases that will be reported in our oral presentations and posters. Besides summarizing reports on sections of our successful FWF project (No. P19592 B17) on the “Phylogeography of alpine land snails” some talks refer to monitoring and research projects on snails of various regions in Austria, like Kalkalpen National Park, Biosphärenpark Wienerwald or the eastern foothills of the Alps. We also present our recently started FWF project (No. P26581 B25) dealing with *Montenegrina*, a very diverse clausiliid genus, endemic in the Balkan peninsular. From an Austrian point of view, apart from the Eastern Alps, one of the nearest hot spots of biodiversity is the Balkan Peninsula. The scientific questions concerning the basis of morphological and genetic diversity as well as problems of species delimitation are similar in organism groups of the Eastern Alps as well as the Balkan Peninsula. Additionally, we present topics on the evolution of snails, and on the diversity of some exotic land snails.

A major issue this year was the start of our important project “ABOL – Austrian barcoding of life”. The kickoff phase of this project includes a pilot project – led by members of our *Working Group Alpine Land Snails* – to document and characterize all mollusc species of Austria by DNA barcoding of voucher samples. An introducing talk provides an overview of the ABOL initiative, the plans for the forthcoming years and the importance of ABOL especially for nature conservation. Furthermore, some talks deal with topics of importance for the ABOL initiative, e.g., utilisation of museum material for genetic analyses and experiences and thoughts about scientific collections and legal collecting. These aspects are closing the circle to ABOL. We will also learn about a gripping arthropod story dealing with another Austrian DNA barcoding effort on millipedes. Although our workshops traditionally are dedicated to snails, we welcome also contributions from colleagues working with other organisms groups. Thus, we are convinced that “crossing taxonomic borders” always provides inseminating aspects.

As every year, one main task is to conduct various excursions. This time they are focused on the biodiversity of snails (and arthropods) with respect to our tasks within the ABOL initiative. Our aim is to cover as much of the species diversity as possible. It is a good start within the Gesäuse region which is extraordinary rich in species and endemics.

Last but not least, we will have some presentations for the public to demonstrate the importance of biodiversity research in all facets and the fascination of studying biodiversity of snails.

As always, we have a very mixed group here consisting of senior scientists, students and family members, which makes this a multi-experience week. Thanks to all for coming and contributing their knowledge and their good mood!

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