

Braueria 50

Lunz, April 2023

Dear Trichopterologist,

The International Symposia on Trichoptera have now found their way back to their place of birth after 48 years. The Symposium no. 17 took place in Lunz am See, Austria, on 5 – 9 September 2022 after a delay of one year, caused by the Corona epidemic. We were a bit disappointed that some colleagues from neighbouring countries did not attend, but we were pleased to see here about 70 participants from 24 countries of the world, from Japan to Brazil, including 3 survivors of the first Symposium in 1974 (see the photo on the front cover). The presentations took place in the new building Haus der Wildnis (House of wilderness), a visitor centre of the protected wilderness area of Dürrenstein – Lassingtal which is a unique virgin forest of the Alps and UNESCO World Nature Heritage Site. In earlier symposia, there were mostly presentations on caddisflies, but now the computers dominated.

If you have wondered about the climate data for Lunz on page 12 of the conference booklet: climate warming has not yet progressed to such an extent as given there. The average annual temperature is not 12°C but 8,5°C; the annual rainfall is not 537 mm but 1570 mm, and the highest average temperature in July is not 24°C but 17,6°C, according to the mean of the last 4 years. Sorry for this mistake, we cannot reconstruct how it could happen. And the explanation of the “cold hole” is given on page 9 of the booklet.

The next Symposium is proposed for 2024 in Quito, Ecuador.

Remembering the past half century of caddis research, we see a surprising amount of scientific results all over the world, much more than any work done before this period. It was a random chance that so many active workers existed in this time in many countries. Some of them died meanwhile, but the scientific results of their work remains. I am pleased that I was able to contribute my part to this increase of knowledge.

However, much work remains to be done. We have now works which enable everyone to identify caddisflies to species level and to cover the fauna of Europe, Australia, Africa and Southeast Asia. We can expect that similar works will be produced at some future date for the faunas of China, Japan and the Indian sub-continent, for which the rich material collected by Fernand Schmid in the National Collection in Ottawa offers the best chance. Oliver Flint told me that our knowledge of the caddises of South America (except the Amazon basin) is now so good that someone could compile it in a similar manner. One can only wonder that the many caddis specialists of North America were not yet able to produce a summary which allows the identification of all species of this sub-continent. Sometimes I was thinking, if I were 20 years younger...

It is not yet clear how many species of caddisflies exist world-wide. We are detecting every year new species, even in well-known Europe, and judging from that, we may estimate a total of ca. 20.000 species world-wide. But the big open question is the insular world between Southeast Asia and Australia, with thousands of island faunas of which only a few are sufficiently known. Are there many endemics on all of these islands, or are they inhabited mainly by widespread species? Do we perhaps have a total of 50.000 species? It is impossible to generalise. On the Seychelles, which is a remnant of the old Gondwana continent, only 12 species were found, but on the equally remnant island of New Caledonia we know about 400 species, all of them endemic.

Not to forget that many species were simply described, but apart from the description of the males, they are not better known. Their biology is unknown, and in tropical species the females and the larvae are usually unknown. In Europe, there is no problem to identify the females of Chimarra, Ecnomus, Cheumatopsyche or Lepidostoma, but in tropical Asia, where ten species of the same genus may live together in the same brook, it is hard to say which female belongs to which male.

In our scientific work we have now heavy problems which did not exist 50 years ago. It is hard, if not impossible, to get a reasonable survey of the existing literature. I have discussed this several times in the editor's letters of Braueria no. 34, 35, 40, 41, 43, 48 (you can read all these under www.zobodat.at) and will not repeat it here. The Zoological Record, formerly the main source for information on recent publications, has developed in such a way that even big museums have cancelled their standing order. At the occasion of the first symposium which I had organised in 1974 here in Lunz, the trichopterists of the world proposed to create a Newsletter for better communication among them with short notes, change of addresses, announcement of meetings, report of meetings, book reviews and the like, and I was willing to do this work. During the first years, the flow of information was high as you can see in the first numbers, but it decreased continuously, and finally I converted the Newsletter into a formal journal called Braueria. One of the reasons for the lack of contributions was the electronic media, but it appears that the demand for real information has likewise decreased. If we look into some recent internet pages on Trichoptera, one has the impression that scientific information is less demanded, but (sometimes good) photographs of unknown caddisflies are now more important and are used as a pastime puzzle. Data banks on the internet are full of stupid mistakes of the kind which are unthinkable in printed books because they will be detected and corrected by proof-reading.

Many institutions and many fellow workers spend a lot of work (and money) to build up digital databanks, but also traditional libraries. We know examples that an institution gets a new director who says, 'we don't need this old-fashioned stuff, throw it away'.

Documentation which is not on paper has a short life. On the internet it survives as long as someone pays for it, so we can be sure that everything which is presently on the internet will disappear during the next 50 years. Printed documents, if distributed in some number of copies, may be readable even in 500 years immediately without special instruments which usually change every few years. Only think of the tape recorders which were in general use some years ago: the information stored on the tapes is now not readable, and practically lost. Diskettes which were generally used 20 years ago have meanwhile widely disappeared.

This number 50 of Braueria is the final regular number of Braueria. I cannot continue it in the present manner. The main reason is my age of 88. No successor is in sight to continue Braueria in my style. In particular, I am not able any more to compile the traditional literature list. Several sources of information on the internet are now empty or have disappeared. During the first years of the existence of Braueria, readers were busy to send me the reprints of their papers to be included in the literature list, to the benefit of all readers. This readiness has dramatically diminished, and only a minority of readers continues this until now. "Everything is on the internet" is often said, but how to find it, and even to refer correctly to the publications in the digital Nirvana, is beyond my ability. I cannot imagine how a reasonable taxonomic work which fulfils the conditions of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature will be possible in the near future.

Nevertheless, I will try to continue to compile Braueria for a few more years, as long as I can work, but not in the present form. Braueria is comfortable for myself as I use it for my own papers, but your contributions are also welcome. These papers will be published under the reference of Braueria with continuous pagination, but in separate issues at occasional times. The exchange of publications is continued with all colleagues who want to get it, provided they continue to send me their own papers.

I was informed that some of our old friends and colleagues have us left. François Vaillant died on 2 September 2020 at the age of 100 years; the obituary is found in Ephemera 23:1-6. John Solem of Norway died on 10 November 2021. Carmen Zamora-Muñoz died on 29 March 2022 (see the obituary in this number on page 5). They will be missed and remembered.

With best wishes,



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