

## European Committee for the Conservation of Bryophytes

Minutes of the Board Meeting held at Jardí Botànic, University of Valencia, Spain, 21 September 2004.

Present: Lars Söderström (Chair), Tomas Hallingbäck, Ron Porley, Margaret Ramsay, Cecília Sérgio, Edi Urmi.

Apologies: Geert Raeymaekers, Michele Aleffi, Jiri Váňa, Marko Sabovljevic, Kimmo Syrjänen.

LS welcomed all and apologised for his croaky voice.

### 1. Reports

RP: UK Agencies are required to report on condition of habitats and species on Natura 2000 sites and SSSIs, and as part of the Common Standards Monitoring, guidelines for reporting on bryophytes are being developed at the habitat, ecological assemblage and individual species levels. Other work includes detailed monitoring of bryophytes (eg *Didymodon glaucus*) and the UK arable bryophyte survey.

CS: Developing new version of Iberian Peninsula Red List involving more than 100 spp. to evaluate using 1994 IUCN criteria and identification of spp. of special responsibility such as endemics and compilation of bibliography. Need for a European bryophyte checklist essential.

MR: New Bryophyte Officer (Jenny Rowntree) started at Kew in November 2003 in post for 3 years to continue *ex situ* project funded via UK Agencies. Priority is to get more taxa in *ex situ* and begin translocation trials with *Orthodontium gracile*.

Posters/oral presentations about the Kew project have been given (eg. World Botanic Gardens Congress, Barcelona). Also considering possibility of including Red Listed European spp. in project.

TH: We need to revise the guidelines on how to apply the most recent IUCN criteria on the European bryophyte Red List (version 3.1) (eg counting trees/logs as an indicator of population levels). Progress on ECCB web site and fact sheets for Swedish bryophytes is ongoing. Exploring ways of monitoring those species on H&S Directive Annex II – needs cooperation across countries and need to capture best practise. In Sweden currently a lack of baseline data on which to judge decline against; requires more local involvement to cover species. Work on the 2005 Swedish Red List is in its final stages and will be printed in April 2005.

EU: Time constraints have meant little opportunity to progress ECCB Red List, but hopefully Swiss Red List is not too far off.

LS: Work started on interactive database for European Red List but limited time has constrained progress.

[The Board was reminded everyone that the Czech Red List had recently been published in *Preslia* **75** (Kucera & Váňa, 2003; and Serbia & Montenegro Red List published in *Biodiversity & Conservation* **13** (Sabovljevic, Cvetic & Stevanovic 2004)].

### 2. Constitution & Registration of ECCB

RP and Liz Radford provided advice on registration; in summary to do so would involve a lot of work pulling together an application (which might not be successful)

and we would need to have an annual meeting (something we have not done to date). The issue of where (in which country) to register was not resolved. The main advantage of registration is access to EU funding, and lack of funds is a serious limitation to what ECCB can do. The idea to register ECCB was initially motivated by slow progress on producing a European moss checklist. However, registration itself costs much money, and whereas affiliation with another organisation is an option (eg *Planta Europa*, IUCN) this is not without problems, and these organisations have indicated that they are reluctant to do so. MR pointed out that the Orchid Specialist Group and its relationship with IUCN is experiencing difficulties. Registration would also raise profile of ECCB, but probably only temporarily.

Comments were invited on a draft Constitution by LS, previously circulated to the Board. All were happy with it. It was considered wise not to be restrictive in its wording, which should include the aims of the ECCB in brief.

**ACTION: RP** to check English language of Constitution.

Since meetings tend to be every 3 years (in conjunction with *Planta Europa*) an Executive Committee was proposed to expedite decisions. The Board reserves right to welcome new members from new countries eg enlargement of EU, viz. Cyprus. To ensure complete European coverage/representation it was suggested that *Flora Europea* provided a good framework.

The pros & cons of membership were considered, acknowledging that having paid-up members gave a professional integrity and authority to an organisation such as the ECCB. The fee may range from zero to whatever was deemed appropriate. However, it was not clear what ECCB offered members in return, although access to authoritative advice, support to individual countries in deflecting threats to bryophyte sites, and reduced Conference fees were suggested. It was noted that ECCB would benefit if national Bryological Societies became members.

**ACTION: LS** It was decided that the Constitution should be presented at ECCB Business Meeting next day (22 September), and views on membership fees sought.

### **3. Red Listing and web database**

Data sheets [or fact sheets] now retrievable from web site in standard format, but needs some refinements to enable searching for Red List spp. and images. Draft data sheets (blanks) were sent out to country representatives some time ago, but these could now be put on the web site. It was decided that data sheets should not be regarded as final until 'officially signed off' by ECCB Board members (at least 3?) to act as quality control and remove some current apparent inconsistencies; approval by ECCB Board is essential for veracity of data and authority of ECCB.

**ACTION:** Edi Urmi and Kimmo Syrjänen will coordinate moss datasheets, and Jiri Váňa will coordinate liverwort datasheets.

They will send datasheets to Board members for final checking within an agreed timeframe. If comments not received within this timeframe the datasheet will be deemed to be OK.

TH cautioned moss datasheets involved much work, and suggested the ECCB priority ought to be the European moss checklist – from this Red Lists and datasheets flow. An assessment of localities in each country should be made – then this can be the basis for application of IUCN threat categories. Need to prioritise spp., such as H&S Directive species, and invite feedback from bryologists; do not send whole list since likely to lead to inaction. Process could be done electronically/ e mail, and information on decrease/increase could be sent to a Coordinator. Since the European liverwort checklist already exists the evaluation of populations can proceed, but mosses should also begin to be worked up. Specialists should initially compile the data sheets; they should know the species well and can make assessments of population trends etc. This can be done via the web site but should be marked as ‘provisional’ until validated by Board members (sheets for validation could be circulated during meetings or by e mail). TH concerned that many people are still using the preliminary 1995 RDB of European bryophytes, and so a new European Red List is ever more urgent. Once this is available the 1995 RDB could be revised in bite-sized chunks. Also need to be aware that different countries may interpret IUCN criteria differently, but every effort should be made to ensure consistency as far as possible. TH asked for clarification of some IUCN terms (eg. mesh grid size) that was published post *Lindbergia* 1998. CS brought attention to the new Czech Red List, a paper considered to illustrate careful application of criteria.

**ACTION: all.** Feedback is requested (to TH) on interpretation of *Lindbergia* 1998 guidelines.

In the absence of funding to take forward *en bloc* this work on compiling datasheets we should begin slowly, firstly on H&S Directive spp. etc, then Critically Endangered, Endangered and so on.

### **Moss checklist**

The need for a European checklist is urgent; all other projects depend upon it. Were funds to be available this task could be done quickly. In absence of funds we need to identify volunteers. Tom Blockeel has completed the English translation of Gams *Kleine Kryptogamenflora* (bryophytes) and may be persuaded to act as coordinator for a European checklist.

**ACTION: RP** Contact TLB to put forward proposal.

If not TLB unable to participate Michele Aleffi should be approached, and Rosa Ros may be interested in contributing Mediterranean Pottiaceae (OPTIMA project).

**TARGET: European checklist to be completed by end of 2005**

Once checklist is available a Red List of European mosses can be compiled (Bern/H&S Directive species mostly already completed) and this should follow soon after. TH pointed out that the recent upsurge in field recording is leading to rapid changes in our knowledge of populations of rare species viz. *Buxbaumia viridus* in Austria, but people need to report this back if system is to work (although web site should make this easier). RP flagged up usefulness of national threatened bryophyte databases (if a country has one) such as that managed by Nick Hodgetts in the UK.

Following completion of European checklist we need to produce a country distribution list. The list EU has been working on (an update of work published by Düll) will provide a good foundation.

**ACTION:** EU to redistribute draft Excel spreadsheet of distribution by country

**TARGET:** Distribution list (by country) to be completed by next *Planta Europa*/ECCB meeting 2007

### **Important Bryophyte Areas (IBrAs)**

LS briefed Board on background to IPAs and that they constitute a major item at *Planta Europa* Conference. ECCB should be involved – it is crucial bryologists have a major input. TH cautioned that bryophytes should not become ‘lost’ in vascular IPAs. Also need to ensure areas are compatible in terms of single sites vs. landscape scale. ECCB considers IBrAs as important in identifying bryophyte ‘hot spots’, although some countries (such as UK, Switzerland, Sweden) already have a framework of designated sites that encompass the bryophyte interest and would not wish another tier of site designations to confuse the picture. Therefore, it is acknowledged that it is up to individual countries how they use/interpret the results. It is likely that even in those countries with extensive network of designated sites some gaps may become evident. IBrAs could be explored in more detail in a focussed workshop, preferably in an eastern European country where some progress has already been made; this will be put forward at the Business Meeting. Such a workshop would need to be held soon before IBrAs moved too far forward.

Meeting was adjourned at 20.30 for 22 September (the following day).

### **New Board Members**

The composition of the Board was discussed. Currently there are 14 members, and although the aim is to have someone to represent every country this is probably not realistic, it is permissible therefore for some countries to have 2 Board members. Nick Hodgetts has resigned from the Board due to pressure of work. His contribution has been greatly valued. Suggested that we need a Treasurer/Secretary with fundraising skills, but no obvious candidate came to mind. Currently there is no Vice Chairman. Jiri Váňa was suggested, and e-mail sent. A customarily swift reply was received agreeing to take up the position.

Further discussion revolved around possible candidates for the Board, but it was decided that many of the issues would be put to the Business Meeting which follows.

### **Any Other Business**

Nothing was tabled.

### **Next Meeting**

The next General Meeting would be held in Romania alongside the *Plant Europa* meeting, dates to be announced.

Ron Porley  
September 2004

