

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: 3rd European Conference on Restoration Ecology

Travel Dates: 25th - 31st August 2002.

Location: Budapest, Hungary.....

Group Member(s): Barbra Harvie

Aims: To meet specialists active in the field of Restoration Ecology; to present an oral paper from my PhD research; to take part in a post conference tour visiting reclamation and succession sites in Eastern Europe during a three-day excursion to Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

Attending the conference enabled me to present part of my PhD research to an audience from all over Europe, the Americas and Australasia. I was able to discuss my work with leading specialists, while at the same time extending my knowledge of current research in other countries through a series of parallel sessions, workshops and poster sessions. Restoration Ecology is a subject that is developing rapidly in the United States and Europe but studied by very few people in the UK. This was a rare opportunity to liaise with ecologists and consultants working for governments, in academia and in the private sector.

The range and quality of presentations was exceptional, addressing two major challenges of the new Millennium, to diminish and reverse ecosystem degradation, and to express the responsibilities, prospects and tools of restoration ecology. A wide range of topics from the ecological bases of restoration and the requirements of nature conservation policy to the design and evaluation of restoration projects on various spatial and temporal scales was presented, as were community involvement and the problems of communication among researchers, practitioners and the public.

The presentations and posters were based on five major themes:

1. Strategic planning and monitoring restoration efficiency.
2. Species and habitat restoration.
3. European regulations and developing research agenda for restoration.
4. Community involvement and cultural perspectives in restoration projects.
5. The Ecological basis of restoration.

There were three workshops:

1. International co-operation.
2. Grassland habitat in Europe.
3. Restoration ecology and practice in Hungary.

The post conference tour enabled me to visit a range of restoration sites, in several different countries, giving me first hand experience of the reclamation techniques used and succession patterns developing in a wide range of man-made habitats. This enabled me to appreciate the importance of my research in relation to the restoration problems faced in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia.

One of the other aims of the conference, in conjunction with the Society of Ecological Restoration, was to establish a permanent framework for restoration ecologists in Europe. This will provide an excellent medium for discussion, combined research programmes and communication for the small groups and individuals working in this field.

Many thanks to the James Rennie Committee for the financial help that enabled me to attend, and contribute to, this conference.