

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/Conference Title: Tenth Congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology (ESEB2005)

Travel Dates: 14 August 2005 – 27 August 2005

Location: Krakow, Poland

Group Member(s): Alexie Papanicolaou

Aims: Attend Conference; Present Poster; Update current collaborations; Foster new collaborations; Meet new supervisor and discuss about my future PhD project

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The 10th Congress of the European Society for Evolutionary Biology was held at the Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland from the 15th to the 20th of August 2005. Attended by more than 1100 biologists from Europe and beyond, it was considered the biggest meeting of the society so far. Four to five different seminars, each with around a dozen talks, were running in parallel each day for a total of five days. Topics I saw included the utility of genomics in the study of evolution, functional evolution and development, mate choice, hybrid zones, speciation, co-evolutionary genetics, quantitative genetics, bayesian statistics, demography vs selection debates, human evolution and ocean species evolutionary genetics.

The conference started every day with a plenary lecture by one of five eminent thinkers of the field: G. Parker on helminth parasites, M.J. West-Eberhard on developmental plasticity, M. Lynch on the origins of genome complexity, W. Rice on intersexual conflict and J. Boomsma on insect societies. The society's president, P. Brakefield gave an exceedingly enthusiastic talk, including praising the work done so far on *Heliconius* butterflies (which includes my group). It was followed by an equally inspiring talk from D. Presgraves who was the winner of the John-Maynard Smith Prize this year.

For myself, it was the first conference of its kind which I have attended and I consider it an excellent experience. Considering I was the sole member of my group in the conference, I was charged with the responsibility of promoting my Master's work and status of *Heliconius sp.* genomics. Despite the large crowd, I managed to meet and form contacts with a number of evolutionary biologists, students and professors. We had many interesting conversations regarding my current work and that of others. A poster I had prepared for presenting, was visited by a number of people needing assistance with starting a small scale EST project on Lepidoptera or how to use the data already produced. This was helped by the fact that the paper regarding this work, had only appeared in print a week before.

We didn't have much time to appreciate the city of Krakow, but now it is definitely in my future plans. In addition, on the way back from the conference, I had time to meet my future PhD supervisor in Germany and co-ordinate the project we are starting in two months on insect host-race adaptation.

I judge this trip to have been a success since I have both a number new contacts and discussed a number of ideas that will help me in my current and future work. This grant covered all my travel costs to and from Krakow and I am indebted to them for their support.