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from the members

On the biogeography of biogeographers

Biogeography is concerned with “*the study at all possible scales of analysis of the distribution of life across space, and how, through time, it has changed*” (Whittaker et al. 2005). It is a long established field of research, with its roots in the early nineteenth century. Recently, the fifth IBS International Meeting was held in Irakleion, Crete, where the latest scientific research in relation to biogeography was presented by biogeographers from around the world. The list of topics covered in this conference was comprehensive: there were four symposia covering Mediterranean biogeography, comparative phylogeography, biogeography and ecology, and analytical advancements in macroecology and biogeography; and six sessions with contributed papers on island biogeography, climate change biogeography, conservation biogeography, palaeoecology, marine biogeography and hot topics in biogeography. Overall, there were 63 talks and 271 poster presentations covering a wide range of biogeographical topics.

However I noticed that the geographical origin of the attendees of the conference was less diverse: the majority were from the US and Europe and I was surprised to see only a few researchers from South America and Asia and practically none from Africa. In a relatively advanced field such as biogeography, concerned with distribution patterns, I found it slightly ironic that the diversity of the biogeographers at this meeting was relatively low. Out of the total of 334 contributions at the meeting, nearly 60 percent of the authors came from a European institution and 26 percent from North American ones, whereas 7 percent of the first authors came from Central and South America, just about 5 percent from Asia, 2 percent from Oceania, and only 0.3 percent from Africa. So I wondered: where were our colleagues from these regions?

I wanted to know whether the low proportion of researchers from outside of Europe and North America at the IBS meeting is representative for the wider academic biogeography community, so I investigated recent contributions pub-

lished in the four main biogeography journals. I looked up all articles published during 2010 in *Journal of Biogeography*, *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, *Diversity and Distributions* and *Ecography*, and counted and classified them into six geographical regions according to the United Nations Statistics Division (2010) composition of macrogeographical regions based on the first mentioned affiliation of the first author of the paper. I considered a total of 490 papers in these four journals and found that 45 percent had a first author affiliated with an institution in Europe, 29 percent had a first author from North America, nearly 13 percent from Oceania, just about 5 percent from Asia, 4 percent from Central and South America, and only 4 percent from Africa.

The fact that the proportion of Europeans was relatively high at the conference is logical since the conference was being held in Europe and thus easier to attend for researchers based in this part of the world. The opposite is true for biogeographers from Oceania, who were underrepresented, probably because of the large distance they had to travel to attend the conference. However, considering these minor differences, the geographical distribution of the biogeographers attending the conference seems to correspond with the distribution of those publishing in the four journals. Thus, it would be fair to say that the biogeographers at the IBS meeting were fairly representative of the wider publishing biogeography community in terms of their geographical origin.

There are of course various factors contributing to the observed patterns, and I will refrain from attempting to explain them. Moreover, the manner in which I classified the publications does not acknowledge the contribution from co-authors affiliated with institutions outside of Europe and North America, which is likely to hide a wider international participation. Nevertheless, it is interesting to be aware of the geographical distribution of biogeography researchers and encourage further participation and contributions from underrepresented regions. For example, it

might be worthwhile to increase the number of invited speakers from these regions at future IBS meetings. Another way of increasing the diversity of biogeographers at the meetings and facilitating the integration and collaboration of international biogeography researchers is to assist researchers from these regions to attend the meetings by offering special travel grants¹. I believe it would certainly enrich the IBS meetings if the diversity of the participating biogeographers would be increased.

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1. *Note from the editor*. The IBS supports the attendance to its biennial meetings of researchers from developing countries, as well as of many students worldwide, by means of travel grants. The number of grants awarded each year is unfortunately determined by the limited funds available. Due to this, a program started last year raised funds from senior biogeographers who volunteered to sponsor student travel grants. If you are willing to contribute in this or similar initiatives, please contact Karen Faller at biogeography.ibs@gmail.com, or make a direct donation through the IBS webpage, <http://www.biogeography.org/>.

Job announcements

2-year postdoc position

University of Lund, Sweden

Ecosystem Modelling & Biodiversity Studies Group, <http://www.nateko.lu.se/embers/>. Project "Simulating species and functional group responses to climate change, based on the mechanistic modelling of habitat change, population dynamics and dispersal". The objective will be to develop a generic methodology that may be applied to many species or functional groups, and to demonstrate this for one or two specific species, chosen from the Swedish bird monitoring database among species already demonstrated or suspected to be showing a response to climate change in terms of their distribution and abundance. Relevant habitat factors, or proxies for these, e.g. vegetation type, will be identified and simulated through vegetation modelling. Changes in the spatial configuration of habitat elements will be analysed using landscape ecological approaches as input to modelling

of the population dynamics and dispersal of the target species. Advanced statistical methods will be employed for the comparison of observed species distributions with simulated distribution and abundance in space and time.

Qualifications: PhD in Ecology or similar with particular expertise in landscape ecology. Strong statistical and computing skills including demonstrated programming ability are required. The successful candidate will have a good publication record and excellent written and spoken English.

Applications including a full CV and a covering letter highlighting the applicant's skills and relevance to the advertised position should be made on-line system at: <http://www.lunduniversity.lu.se/about-lund-university/jobs> where this vacancy (NPA 2011/271) is displayed. For further information please contact: Martin Sykes, Professor of Plant Ecology (Martin.Sykes@nateko.lu.se; Phone +46 46-2229298). Closing date: 30th June 2011; Start date: 2011-10-01 or as soon as possible.

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