

British Arachnological Society



The Newsletter

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XIV International Congress of Arachnology and 22nd Annual Meeting of the American Arachnological Society, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, June/July 1998

by Paul Selden

As I write this, with snowflakes settling on the lawn outside, the International Arachnological Congress in Chicago, 27th June to 3rd July 1998, seems long ago and far away¹. There is something to be said for writing meeting reports immediately after the event, when details are still clear in the mind but, on the other hand, the passage of time can distil the *mélange* of thoughts and feelings to a more manageable digest, so that the highlights of the meeting stand clear of the background arachnological chatter.

With 300 participants, this was the biggest assembly of arachnologists the world has ever seen, so Dr Norman Platnick, President of the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique (CIDA—under whose auspices the International Congress was held), informed us in the Welcome Session at the unearthly hour of 8.15 on the Sunday morning. This, like most of the lecture sessions, was held in the Simpson Theater of the Field Museum—a huge, galleried auditorium in which 300 people seemed less of a crowd than might be imagined. Nevertheless, mine was not the only mind to fantasise, mischievously, on the consequences to our science of a random earthquake or hostile missile.

The rest of Day 1 consisted of a symposium on Spiders in Agroecosystems, organised by Matt Greenstone (US Department of Agriculture, Oklahoma) and Keith Sunderland (Horticulture Research International, UK). There were no parallel sessions today, so it was a choice of enjoying the symposium or finding something else to do instead. In fact, the symposium was very interesting: many of the factors studied in relation to agroecosystems apply equally well to spiders elsewhere. So, for example, there was a fascinating session on aerial dispersal (ballooning) in spiders, including a talk by Robert Suter (Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY) on the physics of ballooning in a chaotic atmosphere. He showed graphically how convection currents near the ground were a strong influence on whether spiders attempting to balloon actually got airborne and whether they travelled far away or just to the next bush. Søren Toft (University of Århus, Denmark) demonstrated how a spider's prey is not always delicious, but can be foul-tasting or even toxic. Some toxic prey may not be avoided by spiders, in which case it is lethal. As usual, a balanced diet is better than too much of a good (or bad) thing. Some of the day's talks were, however, more applied in nature: Ann Rypstra (Miami University, Ohio) observed that the complexity of an agricultural habitat correlates positively with spider

abundance. Obviously, the more complex a habitat, the more niches are available for colonisation by different spider species, but whether there is a consequent decrease in numbers of herbivores needs more investigation.

Sunday evening was notable for the architecture cruise. Chicago is perhaps most famous for its modern architecture, with magnificent examples of every trend in building design from the turn of the century onwards. Whilst the Sears Tower (1,454 ft high) has now been surpassed as the world's tallest building, other favourites of mine include the Standard Oil building, whose cladding



Figure 1. Chicago sunset.

of Carrara marble tiles started falling off a few years ago, with potentially disastrous consequences for passers-by, but which has now been fixed. The Wrigley building, erected in 1919, is a triumph of early twentieth century architecture; the Bauhaus influence is seen in the Marina City apartments, also north of the river; the quite bizarre Harold Washington Library (1991) is right in the city centre, the 'Loop'; and the Field Museum itself was designed by Daniel Burnham in 1906, inspired by Greek temples,

and completed in 1921. Viewing the city from the river (which was engineered to flow backwards, away from Lake Michigan, in 1900) the emphasis is on the glass-clad architecture of recent years. As we cruised along the river, the evening sunlight reflected on the buildings and the water, whilst in the distance, beyond the power station, a thunderstorm could be seen brewing up (two more potential sources of freak accidents here, perhaps?). Later, at the Navy Pier, we watched the distant thunderbolts lighting up the eastern sky and reflecting in Lake Michigan—a beautiful end to the first day of the congress.

On Monday morning it was the turn of the Phylogeneticists to hold a symposium. The introductory remarks by Jonathan Coddington (Smithsonian, DC) and Gustavo Hormiga (George Washington University, DC) were followed by a talk about the Lamponidae by Norman Platnick, who carved this family out of the Gnaphosidae in 1990 for the interesting genus *Lampona*, a spider with a supposed venomous nature, familiar to Australians. Martín Ramírez (Ciudad Universitaria, Buenos Aires) followed with a review of respiratory system morphology and how it might be of use in phylogenetic studies of haplogyne spiders. Not to be left out, entelegynes came next, with Charles Griswold (California Academy of Sciences, San Francisco), Coddington, Platnick, and Ray Forster (New Zealand) presenting an outline phylogeny of the whole group. Before coffee, we finished the first session with the higher level phylogenetics of erigonines (Hormiga). And so the symposium continued until mid-afternoon, with talks covering phylogenetics of the theraphosids, araneoids, ctenids, thomisids, and

Reception on Saturday night. This time it was Philippine Night, and was followed by posters, computer demonstrations, and the Vince Roth Memorial Auction of arachnological paraphernalia. Thus, each day passed imperceptibly into night. When it was time to leave the Field Museum there were old-fashioned trolley buses shuttling to and fro between the museum, the Blackstone Hotel and the student residences. Each morning the same applied, so transport was nice and easy; or, if the Blackstone Hotel on Michigan Avenue was your choice of accommodation, a 20-minute walk across Grant Park was a pleasant option, perhaps pausing at the 'Taste of Chicago' fair which happened to be on during our stay.

Tuesday was Field Day, which meant another early morning—unless the 'field' of your destination was the Field Museum, which laid on an open house display of their arachnid treasures. There were three field excursions on offer, and I took the one to the Richardson Wildlife Preserve—an area of rare, original prairie, disturbed prairie, and grassland which is being returned to a native state. On arrival, we set off on quite comfortable hay-carts pulled by tractors to get deep into the prairie and do a little collecting before lunch (Fig. 2). Whilst it was fascinating to see native prairie and its arachnid inhabitants, we had very little time there after a late start and a long drive through rush hour traffic both out and back. I understand that the other destinations were closer to Chicago and more time was available to explore them. Nevertheless, it was a pleasant day when one could chat happily to other congress participants in a rural environment.



Figure 2. Lunchtime at Richardson Wildlife Preserve.

cyrtacheniids. From mid-afternoon Monday onwards, the congress split into concurrent sessions; now one could miss one, two or three talks at the same time. I chose Systematics on Monday afternoon, which included new genera of African liocranids and Australian amaurobioids as well as old friends such as *Sosippus* (Lycosidae) and *Attidops* (Salticidae). Meanwhile, I missed much sexual courtship and conflict among spiders, uropygids and scorpions; this topic continued almost to the end of the day. Or, if zoogeography was your interest, there were Alpine and Chinese problems to be discussed, but I most enjoyed hearing about the plastron (an underwater respiratory organ) in an amblypygid by Eileen Hebets (University of Arizona, Tucson).

After the talks on Monday, we were treated to another finger-food buffet—the first had been the Congress

Wednesday, 1st July, we were back in the Field Museum for talks, now with three concurrent sessions. I opted for more systematics, chaired by Marshall Hedin of the University of Arizona, Tucson, and which included his talk with Wayne Maddison (also University of Arizona) on molecular phylogeny of salticids, and a phylogenetic analysis of Migidae by Joel Ledford (University of California, Davis) and Charles Griswold. Meanwhile, you could have heard about 'Arachnids on the Edge' (of fields—i.e. edge effects in spider agroecology) or 'Prey Capture'. The Systematics sessions continued throughout the day, with memorable contributions by the University of Hawaii team members, Jessica Garb and Malia Rivera, on thomisids and *Argyrodes* of the Hawaiian Islands, respectively; the Australian Miturgidae (Rob Raven, Queensland Museum); Gnaphosidae (Vladimir Ovtsharenko, American Museum

of Natural History), and Salticidae (Barbara Patoleta and Marek Zabka (WSRP, Siedlce, Poland); and the liphistiid genus *Heptathela* by Hirotsugu Ono (National Science Museum, Tokyo). Concurrent sessions included talks on spiders of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park by Fred Coyle (Western Carolina University) and colleagues Marie Aiken and Melinda Davis; Australian lycosids (Tracey Churchill, CSIRO) and orb-weavers (Barbara York Main, Western Australia); as well as Columbian, Danish, Philippine and Russian spiders. More agroecosystem spiders occupied a session, for those with an insatiable appetite for applied arachnology, whilst Victor Fet (Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia) presented his catalogue of world scorpions and Jerzy Prószyński (WSRP, Siedlce, Poland) his internet project of salticid diagnostic drawings (<http://spiders.arizona.edu/diagnost/pg.htm>).

Parallel sessions continued into the early evening, so it was impossible for CIDA correspondents to attend the North American Spider Survey Workshop, organised by Richard Bradley (Ohio State University), as well as the CIDA Correspondents Meeting. At the latter, the disastrous news that the CIDA Secretariat in Paris were unable to continue running the organisation was announced. Further details of the implications of this, and proposals for the future organisation of CIDA, were discussed and presented at the CIDA General Assembly at the end of the Congress.

Thursday provided more concurrent sessions: 'Focus on Opiliones', 'Assessment of Biodiversity', 'Character Evolution', 'Foraging', 'Ontogeny and Morphology', 'Samples and Surveys', 'Mainly Poison', 'Learning and Behaviour', and 'Courtship'. Talks I particularly remember (for one reason or another) were: Karin Schütt (Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin) on The Triad—an Apomorphic Character of the Araneoidea, Victor Fet and P. H. Brownell on Morphological Variation in the Pectinal Sensory Organs of Scorpions, Roger Farley (University of California, Riverside) on Ventral Mesosomal Changes in Scorpion Embryos, and Greta Binford (University of Arizona, Tucson) on Venom in *Tegenaria agrestis* (a spider introduced into north-western states, where it has become unusually aggressive). Thursday evening was the time for letting hair down at the banquet. For this event, the main hall of the Field Museum was turned into a ballroom, with fitting music provided by Yoko Noge and the Jazz Me Blues. Before the dinner and festivities began, and following yet more cocktails and finger food, we were treated to an entertaining review of past congresses by Otto Kraus (Hamburg). I shall not reveal the contents of this talk, since it may form part of Professor Kraus's speech at our 40th Anniversary Meeting at Flatford Mill².

There were other invited lectures during the Congress: on Wednesday, Mark Harvey (Western Australian Museum) took us on a tour of the 'other orders' of arachnids—the 'neglected cousins' as he termed them. On Thursday, Adriano Kury (Museu Nacional, Brazil) told us about Laniatores—100 years of research on spiny harvestmen, and Friday's plenary lecture was by Peter Weygoldt (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg) on Spermatophores and the Evolution of Female Genitalia in Whip Spiders. Friday morning continued with the remaining contributed papers in concurrent sessions, including Bill Piel (MCZ, Harvard) on *Metepeira* webs, Cor Vink (Lincoln University, New Zealand) on systematics of New Zealand lycosids, Cathy Craig (MCZ, Harvard) on diet and amino acids in spider silk, Kefyn Catley (AMNH, New York) on the Australian gnaphosid *Encoptarthria*, Joachim Adis (Germany) and colleagues on ricinuleids, palpigrades and schizomids in Amazonia, and, lastly, Jason Dunlop (Museum für Naturkunde, Berlin) with evidence against monophyly

of the Arachnida, which provoked a lively debate.

The General Assembly of CIDA occupied the first part of Friday afternoon. It was a turning point for this international organisation, since the Secretary General, Jacqueline Heurtault, who has run the Secretariat in Paris for many years, had tendered her resignation. This appeared to be a good time for a number of alterations to be proposed, including changing the name of the Centre International de Documentation Arachnologique to the **International Arachnological Society**, a new organisational structure (with President, Officers and a Council), and a web site. However, publication of the *Annuaire* and the *Liste des Travaux*, and the triennial Congresses, would remain as at present. Members of CIDA will have had and returned their ballot papers to vote on these proposals. Since the new Secretary General, John Coddington, is in Washington, the greatest change members will probably notice straight away is that correspondence will come from the USA instead of from France. At the meeting, CIDA President Norm Platnick passed the mantle on to new President Rob Raven; Vice-Presidents elected were Yael Lubin, Joachim Adis and Rainer Foelix. One more exciting piece of CIDA news was that the next congress will be held in 2001 in South Africa, hosted by Ansie Dippenaar-Schoeman.

Following the AAS Business Meeting, as the congress participants dispersed from the Field Museum, it became apparent that something was afoot in Chicago that night. Grant Park, a large expanse of parkland alongside Lake Michigan (and built on rubble following the Great Fire of 1871), was swarming with partygoers carrying six-packs, coolers, blankets, video gear, barbecues, and all the other paraphernalia of a giant picnic. Tonight was firework night! Rather than spending six hours waiting for the festivities, I joined a select group of antipodeans and visited the Shedd Aquarium—a delightful, octagonal, gneiss-clad building beside the lake which houses a spectacular collection of aquatic life from around the world. Later, we strolled past the swelling multitude to get something to eat along Michigan Avenue. This was a big mistake: the rest of Illinois who had not brought a picnic were trying to do the same. Nevertheless, eventually we found a pleasant restaurant a few blocks behind and were thankful to sit down. Almost immediately, there were loud thunderclaps (as is usual on the last day of a congress in the company of Norm Platnick³) and the heavens opened. Strollers outside became instantly drenched and gossip ran around that the fireworks had been cancelled. We were glad to have found somewhere dry. By the time we had finished our meal the storm had nearly passed and the fireworks (over the lake) were starting up, so we watched from Michigan Avenue and the steps of the Field Museum, which afforded a grandstand view, and felt very sorry for the picnickers who were now wallowing in the mudbath that had been Grant Park.

There was time on Saturday morning to visit the Art Institute of Chicago on Michigan Avenue—a must for all visitors to the city. The Institute's collections are enormous and good in all areas, so it is difficult to pinpoint particular strengths. But especially memorable are the French Impressionists (roomfuls of Parisian countryside in the middle of Chicago seem somehow incongruous), some famous Magritte surrealist pictures, Twentieth Century American (of course), a reconstruction of the Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room, and the Thorne Collection of miniature rooms. The last consists of dollhouse-sized replicas of living spaces throughout the ages, particularly emphasizing decorative and furnishing styles.

Whinges and gripes? Only the usual regret that we had to have concurrent sessions: two is bad enough, but some

days had three excellent contributions running at the same time. Three hundred is a huge number of people to cater for in finger-food buffets, field excursions, and firework displays, and the organisation by Petra Sierwald and colleagues was faultless. This was not only the biggest arachnological congress ever, but the largest social gathering of arachnologists the world has ever seen. Those few who could not attend missed a real treat: start preparing now for South Africa 2001!

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Footnotes

¹ *Long Ago and Far Away* is the title of an autobiographical work by writer and naturalist W. H. Hudson, describing his childhood in Patagonia.

² See p. 16 of this Newsletter.

³ See Newsletter 47: p.2.

WELCOME!

A very warm welcome to the following new members who joined our Society in 1998 and early in the current year:

Dr W. A. Aston (Preston), Mr C. Bentley (Middlesbrough), Mr L. J. Bourne (Milton Keynes), Mr R. Cody (Exeter), Mr J. G. Corns (Burntwood), Mr P. J. Crook (Exmouth), Dr G. Davis (Worcester), Mr I. Dodd (Royston), Mrs P. J. Driver (King's Lynn), Mr J. D. Fenwick (Pool-in-Wharfedale), Mr J. S. Fleming (Ruislip), Mr A. M. Greene (Ilkley), Mr P. Hanlon (Bradford), Mr A. L. Harris (Ascot), Mr J. D. Harwood (Warwick), Miss R. E. Hollier (Spetchley), Ms S. Hood (Gaddesden Row), Miss E. A. Hornett (Ware), Mr S. L. Jackson (Scunthorpe), Mr G. Johnson (Sunderland), Mr P. J. Kirk (London), Mr J. P. Lamoureux (Orsett), Dr P. H. Langton (Coleraine), Mr I. Lowery (North Shields), Mr A. R. Marshall (Bishop's Stortford), Mr R. Merritt (Chesterfield), Mrs S. C. Middlebrook (Milton Keynes), Mr G. D. Moate (Wakefield), Mr W. Mortimer (London), Mr R. J. Pearce (Cranfield), Mr J. W. Philipson (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), Mr C. S. Portman (Telford), Mr C. D. Smith (Newcastle-upon-Tyne), Mr N. J. Steer (Haywards Heath), Mr M. P. Symes (Exeter), Mr L. F. Timberlake (London), Mrs D. K. Tomkinson (Nuneaton), Mr P. A. Ward (Rhayader), Mr W. Welstead (Woodbridge), Dr R. Bertani (São Paulo, Brazil), M. D. Blanchet (Rivery, France), Dr R. A. Bradley (Marion, USA), Dr A. Brescovit (São Paulo, Brazil), Dr B. Gantenbein (Bern, Switzerland), Dr T. Gasnier (Manaus, Brazil), Mr P. Gerba (Tuscon, USA), Mr A. van Harten (Sana'a, Republic of Yemen), Dr R. G. Little (San Luis Obispo, USA), Dr P. H. Pache (Las Cruces, USA), Dr M. Prez (Alicante, Spain), Mr U. Riecken (Bonn, Germany), Dr J. Rienks (Suva, Fiji), Mr P. Saunders (Bloomfield, USA), Dr W. E. Savary (Alameda, USA), Dr G. Spicer (San Francisco, USA), Mr I. C. Stocks (Sylva, USA), Sr A. J. Valverde (Madrid, Spain), Mrs I. S. H. Wilde (Bray, Ireland), Dr J.-S. Yoo (Kyonggi-Do, South Korea), Mag. V. Zingerle (Innsbruck, Austria).

Paul Selden, President

Change of Address for B.A.S. Librarian: John Stanney would like to inform members of his change of address to: 50, Mulberry Way, LEEK, Staffs, ST13 5TL. Tel. 01538 381990 (home), 01782 599226 (work). Email: john@stanney.demon.co.uk.

Two New Sites in Spain for the Theraphosid *Ischnocolus valentinus* (Dufour, 1820)

by Fabian Vol

Three species of theraphosid spider have been described from Spain: *Ischnocolus valentinus* (Dufour, 1820), *I. holosericeus* Ausserer, 1871, and *I. andalusiacus* (Simon, 1873). Locations for the last two species are rather vague: 'Spain' for *holosericeus* and 'Andalusia' for *andalusiaceus*. *I. valentinus* is from Moxenta, today called Mogente. The differences between the species are based mainly on size and chaetotaxy. Bacelar (1932b) considered that these criteria were unsound—there is, for example, great variability in chaetotaxy between individuals and even between right and left legs of the same animal—and so he regarded the three species as synonymous. Although *andalusiaceus* might have seemed the most apt trivial name for the species, *valentinus* had over half a century's priority.

Southern Spain is one of the most visited areas in the world, yet information on the only theraphosid genus on mainland Europe (one theraphosid species has been recorded from Sicily and two from Cyprus) is poor. Only Bacelar (1932a,b) gave collecting sites additional to those in the original descriptions; his new sites were at Malaga, Cartagena, Aguilas and Valencia.

In early April 1998, armed with this limited information on the species, I left for Spain to search for theraphosids and I was fortunate to find two new sites for *Ischnocolus valentinus*.

Site 1: About 10 km along the road from Marbella to Istan, I found my first four *Ischnocolus*. The site is on the slopes above the reservoir lake of La Concepción, 100–200 m above sea level. The collecting spot faces west and thus benefits from generous amounts of sunlight—from before midday to late evening. The vegetation is distinctly Mediterranean, with sparse *Quercus ilex* (Ilex Oak) and bushes of *Cistus*. The whiteness of the soil betrays its calcareous origins.

The spiders were hidden under large, rather flattish stones. In the same area, but under different stones, were some *Macrothele* sp.; I did not see any scorpions. The four *Ischnocolus* were large juveniles, perhaps sub-adults, and were wrapped in a thin sheet of silk—possibly the envelope of a chamber as there was no trace of a burrow. Higher up the hillside, conifers replace the oaks and I found no theraphosids there; this was the territory of a large species of scolopendromorph centipede.

This is the most westerly reported site for *I. valentinus*.

Site 2: This site lies on the side of the road from Mijas to Coín, about 2 km beyond the junction to Alhaurin el Grande. The vegetation is very similar to that of Site 1, but trees are sparser; *Cistus* dominates the lower vegetation. The ground is less steep, slightly undulating and more rocky, with piles of stones in many places.

Here I found over fifty specimens of *I. valentinus*, from spiderlings to fully mature males and females, all under rather large stones. I think that these large stones are slow to warm in the day and slow to cool at night, thus maintaining a more uniform temperature. My theory is supported by the observation that stones under which *Ischnocolus* chose to shelter in the open, exposed to direct sunlight, were more than twice the size of those chosen in the shade of the trees.

The stones sometimes sheltered the chamber, sometimes concealed the burrow opening, and sometimes the chamber was also the burrow entrance. This species seems to be rather opportunistic, adapting the shape and