

Preface

This edition of *Advances* is devoted to the memory of Reginald William Sims (1926–2012), one of the leading scientists in Oligochaete taxonomy and ecology. Reginald W. Sims greatly contributed to the development of earthworm taxonomy and ecology in the U.K. where, undoubtedly, his name will be imprinted in the Hall of Fame of the British oligochaetology accompanying personalities, such as John Stephenson, Lev Cernosvitov and Frank Evers Beddard. However, his influence and impact were not limited by the U.K. borders but were truly international. Reginald W. Sims was a dear personal friend to many participants of the IOTMs who appreciated his scientific knowledge and his kind personality. To the readers interested in further personal and professional details about Reginald W. Sims, I recommend to consult the memorial paper written by E. Sherlock and L. Berridge that was published in *Opuscula Zoologica* (Budapest) 43, 2012: 101-105.

The 22 articles presented in “Advances in Earthworm Taxonomy V (Annelida: Oligochaeta)” were selected from presentations delivered at the 5th International Oligochaete Taxonomy Meeting (5th IOTM), Beatenberg, Switzerland, 11-15 April, 2011. They represent significant contributions to the current development and achievements in research on Oligochaeta (mainly earthworms) taxonomy and phylogenetics, zoogeography and evolution, ecology and environment, morphology, and history. Needless to say, that we are at the beginning of the road; many uncertainties and controversies persist in understanding Oligochaetes, and there is plenty to argue about.

The IOTMs became a traditional meeting point of earthworm biologists. The issues discussed at the IOTMs are now more complex and broader, and the geographic scope of the contributions is truly covering all world. The importance of these meetings is in the transfer of knowledge and discussion about new achievements. The majority of the contributions in this volume include taxonomical and zoogeographical papers analysing different taxa (for example, on status of the family Microchaetidae by Danuta J. Plisko), earthworm taxonomic diversity in different political or zoogeographical regions (for example, an annotated checklist of the Romanian earthworm fauna by Victor V. Pop, Adriana A. Pop and Csaba Csuzdi) or specific habitats (for example, on earthworm diversity in urban habitats by Michèle Glasstetter). Included in the *Advances* are, among others, also contributions describing new or interesting phenomena among Oligochaeta (for example, a first record of reproduction by fragmentation in the genus *Marionina*” by Gergely Boros), and the reports on technical progress in data gathering, keeping and access (e.g., on the “Lumbricus” Database on Earthworms Ranges by Maxim P. Shashkov).

On the one hand, the growing attendance at IOTMs proves that the study of oligochaetes is attracting the attention of the scientific community. On the other hand, however, we see that the study on the most important but invisible builders of soil fertility is suffering of the lack of support by policy-makers and by grant agencies. Robert Blakemore in his “Call for a Census of Soil Invertebrates” has clearly shown this.

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There is no doubt that the organization of 5th IOTM would not be possible without the generous organizational, administrative and financial supports that we received. Among others, the received support allowed to offset the costs of the meeting, to make it more friendly and agreeable, to financially support the attendance of young researchers, waive the congress fee for oligochaetologists without financial means, and to publish the “Advances in Earthworm Taxonomy V”. The organizers are thankful to the following institutional and private sponsors for the generous support they received: Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF), Swiss Academy of Sciences, Faculty of Science of the University of Neuchâtel, Laboratory Soil & Vegetation of the University of Neuchâtel, Beatenberg Tourism office, Kasperek Verlag, Heidelberg, Germany, Elsevier, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, Pietro OMODEO (Italy), Huei-Ping SHEN (Taiwan), and to several other private sponsors.

Tomáš Pavlíček
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