

The History of the Nordic Congresses of Entomology

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Abstracts: To separate entomology from the large and general meetings of the Nordic natural scientists (Nordiske naturforsker møter), the 1st Nordic Congress of Entomology was held in Stockholm in 1923. Later, it became a dilemma that the Nordic entomology congresses are too general, and many entomologists prefer to attend more special meetings or symposia. The Nordic Congresses of Entomology have been arranged with three years interval, with the exception of a break during the Second World War. The scientific programme included faunistics, taxonomy and ecology, as well as applied entomology. The number of participants was usually between 100 and 120, with a maximum of 185 in Helsingfors in 1947, and the lowest number in later years of 48 in Trondheim in 1988. These figures also include accompanying persons. Swedish and Finnish entomologists have dominated the meetings. Danish entomologists were well represented up to the 1986, but have later given priority to other meetings, and suggested that the Nordic congresses should be discontinued. Norwegian entomologists have always been in minority, except when the congresses were held in Norway. At The 23rd Nordic Congress of Entomology in Turku in 1994 it was agreed that The Baltic countries should be included. The first joint Nordic-Baltic congress was held in Tartu in 1997. The previous number system of the Nordic congresses was maintained, and for this reason the meeting in Melsomvik, Norway in 2000 became the 25th Nordic-Baltic Congress of Entomology. The combination of Nordic and Baltic entomologists brings new perspectives to the congresses. There has been a general agreement among the participants for a continuation of the meetings.

Key words: Nordic-Baltic Congresses of Entomology, history.

Introduction

The reason for the initiation of the Nordic Congresses of Entomology (NCE) was that many entomologists felt that the traditional Nordic Meetings of Natural Scientists (De nordiske naturforsker møtene) were too general in contents. In 1923 the possibility of a separate entomological section at the meetings of the natural scientists was discussed, but as suggested by The Entomological Society in Stockholm (Entomologiska Föreningen i Stockholm) a separate and independent Nordic Entomological Congress would be a better option. The Entomological Society invited to the 1st NEC to be held in Stockholm on 29-30 June 1923 (Kemner, 1923). Invitations were sent to all Nordic entomologists, whose addresses were available.

Entomology - in a wider sense - is a large field, and insects and arachnoids include many groups of highly specialised animals. The borders between Norway, Sweden and Finland do not correspond to natural biogeographical divisions,

and the fauna of terrestrial arthropods in the Nordic countries has many similarities. To the south, the fauna of Fennoscandia is also related to the fauna of Denmark, and to the east to the fauna of the Baltic countries, although the latter were not included in the negotiations in 1923.

The congress in Stockholm was the beginning of a long series of meetings with varying success, but with a continuation up to our present time. From 1998 the meetings have new actuality because entomologists from the Baltic countries have decided to participate. From then on the meetings are called the Nordic-Baltic Congresses of Entomology.

Pre-war meetings

Most of the 31 active participants at the 1st NCE in Stockholm came from Sweden. There were three representatives from Denmark, three from Finland and one from Norway (Kemner, 1923). The lectures were partly on pest insects, but also included several other topics, like

“Insects and glaciations” by Christopher Aurivillius. Comprehensive summaries were printed in *Entomologisk Tidskrift*. At the end of the meeting an entomological excursion was arranged to the beautiful surroundings of Nacka. The excursion was the beginning of a tradition for later meetings.

The 2nd NCE was held in Copenhagen on 12-15 August 1926 (Wolff, 1928). The chairman of the Entomological Society of Copenhagen (*Entomologisk Forening i København*), Emil Olsen, expressed his wishes that the participants would enjoy contact with colleagues from other countries, as well as walks in the Danish beech forests. The fresh-water biologist Carl Wesenberg-Lund was guide on an excursion to a lake at the end of the congress.

The following meeting was held for the first time in Finland. The 3rd NCE was arranged by The Entomological Society in Helsinki (*Entomologiska föreningen i Helsingfors*), and took place in Helsinki on 5-7 August 1930 (Frey, 1931). At the opening Harry Federley talked about the genetics of butterflies and Uuno Saalas about Reinhold Ferdinand Sahlberg's travels around the world in 1839-1843. An excursion after the meeting went all the way to Karelia on the border to USSR, where the fauna of the typical sand dunes were investigated.

In 1933, the circle of nations was completed when the 4th NCE was arranged for the first time in Norway, in Oslo on 2-5 July 1933 (Schøyen, 1934). Among the lectures Ivar Trädgård talked about forests insects, and a young Norwegian student, Rolf Schnell-Larsen, demonstrated his own apparatus to measure the frequency of insect wing beats.

Following Oslo, the next meeting was arranged in Lund in August 1936 (Kemner, 1936), and the last meeting before the Second World War was held in Copenhagen in August 1939 (Tuxen, 1939). The 7th NEC should have taken place in 1942, but had to be cancelled due to the war.

Helsinki 1947

After the war, the first meeting was arranged in Helsinki 5-7 August 1947 by the Finish

Entomological Society (Kangas, 1948). This was a very special reunion. As pointed out by Uuno Saalas in his opening address, the high number of participants - 185 - clearly demonstrated the great desire of Nordic entomologists to meet and renew their contacts following the difficult years they had experienced. Due to the large number of participants the congress was divided in three sections; Lepidoptera, one for Coleoptera and Hymenoptera, and one for applied entomology. Many of the lectures or summaries were printed in *Annales Entomologici Fennici*.

Special events

Within the limited time for this lecture, it is of course not possible to mention all the meetings, but I would like to point out some events of particular interest or importance. During many years there was a general agreement about the importance of the NCEs. In Helsinki in 1959, Håkan Lindberg pointed out that the meetings resulted in more coordinated entomological studies in the Nordic countries (Hackman, 1960). At the following congress in Copenhagen, Søren L. Tuxen said that the importance of the meetings could not be exaggerated with regard to scientific value and personal contacts (Tuxen, 1963). S.L.Tuxen also mentioned that the Zoological Museum in Copenhagen was still not finished. He repeated the words of A. S. Jensen from 1926, 36 years earlier that new facilities would be available next time the NCE should be held in Copenhagen!

In his opening address in Oslo in 1965, Per Brinck talked about “Insects in a changing world” - a topic that is even more relevant in our days. The excursion of this meeting went to some of the most spectacular areas of Western Norway in the inner parts of the Sognefjord, where large numbers of insects were collected and identified (Løken, 1978).

The 18th NCE in Stockholm in 1979 was remarkable in several respects (Sylvén et al., 1979). This is the first and only time the meeting has been opened by a king. His Majesty King Gustav Adolf pointed out that entomology is a fascinating science, studying a world of

numerous inhabitants mostly unknown to non-entomologists. He also mentioned that insects are important for ecological studies, and personally he appreciated that environmental aspects would be discussed during the congress. In 1979 the Entomological Society in Stockholm celebrated its 100 years anniversary. In reviewing the history of the society, Lars Brundin told the audience that there have only been four chairmen up to 1977. Oskar Sandahl was the founder and first chairman, followed by Christopher Aurivillius, Albert Tullgren and Lars Brundin, himself. In 1977 the chairmanship was taken over by Edvard Sylvén. Human influence and changes in the biotopes of insects was the topic of the 20th NCE in Copenhagen in 1986 (Hofsvang, 1986). A Nordic committee, as presented by Sigmund Hågvar, emphasized the importance of protection of insects and their habitats in a report. A letter signed by all the Nordic entomological societies was sent to the environmental ministries of the Nordic countries. The questions of protection were further discussed in the following meeting in Trondheim in August 1988 (Lundheim, 1988). The 23rd NCE in Turku 1994 was dramatic and important for the future of the meetings (Pekkarinen, 1995). The number of participants in some of the previous meetings had been low, and several entomologists preferred special symposia and congresses in taxonomy, ecology and physiology. For this reason, Danish entomologists, represented by Niels P. Kristensen, suggested that the NCEs should be discontinued. An almost unison meeting, however, voted for a continuation, although this opinion may not have been representative for all the Nordic entomologists that were not present. The decision to include the Baltic countries in the meetings also added in favour of a continuation, and the next meeting was to be held in Estonia. The 23rd NCE in Turku was the sixth meeting held in Finland, but the first time outside Helsinki. As pointed out by Antti Pekkarinen (1995), the first university in Finland was founded in Åbo in 1640, and entomology has long traditions, e.g. with the work of Carl Reinhold Sahlberg on Coleoptera in the early part of the 19th century. An excursion was

arranged to the Russian part of Karelia, which had also been visited in 1930, when it belonged to Finland. The area was lost during the war, and was closed for non-soviet citizens for forty years.

The Baltic countries had experienced a long period of occupation by the USSR. At the 24th NCE in Tartu in 1997, Kaupo Elberg and Mati Martin compared the meeting to the one in Helsinki in 1947. The congress in Tartu was of great importance to the Baltic countries as free nations. They also pointed out that there are many similarities in the fauna of Nordic and Baltic countries, and that the meetings are open to entomologists from all over the world with interests in these aspects (Elberg et al., 1999). It was decided that future meetings should be called "Nordic-Baltic Congresses of Entomology", but that the numbering from previous Nordic congresses should be continued. The following congress, the 25th, was held in Melsomvik, Norway (Raastad 2001), and the 26th congress in Skalupes, Latvia.

Discussion

The NCEs were initiated in 1923 because the Nordic meetings of natural scientists were too general. Later it became a dilemma that the NCEs themselves are too general, and that many entomologists prefer more special conferences. For scientists on a low budget, priority cannot be given to the general meetings.

The number of participants varied greatly (tab. 1). Usually there have been between 100 and 120 participants, with a top of 185 in Helsinki in 1947 and a low number of 48 in Trondheim in 1988. The total numbers that are quoted in the reports from the meetings, however, are misleading, because they include accompanying family members. Up to 1982 there were usually between 20 and 40 accompanying persons in addition to the participants themselves. The participation of family members illustrates the important social aspects of the congresses.

Entomologists from Sweden and Finland have been most numerous among the participants, and up to 1986 entomologists from Denmark were also well represented. Norway has been poorly represented, often with less than ten

active participants. This reflects the fact that Norway has relatively few entomologists and fewer members of the entomological society, compared to other Nordic countries. The column for “others” in Table 1 includes Iceland with one representative on four occasions, as well as a few participants from USA, USSR and France.

Estonia was represented with two participants in 1930 and two again in 1994. Entomologists both from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were present in 1997 and 2000. The numbers of participants from these countries are expected to increase, as is seen from the present congress.

As may be expected, there are always more participants from the country in which the congress is arranged. The tendency is most clearly seen with regard to Finland and Sweden, but in Denmark as well. Even in Norway, the numbers have been relatively high during congresses arranged in one of the Norwegian cities. The congress in Bergen was most popular.

During the NCEs a wide variety of subjects have been presented, and both amateurs and professional entomologists have found topics of interest. Special sections for the faunistics of Lepidoptera, Coleoptera or other groups, and

the traditional excursions at the end of the congress have attracted many collectors. The professional entomologists have dominated the meetings with regard to lectures in taxonomy, ecology and physiology, as well as applied entomology. In addition to the scientific value of the meetings, the social aspects and establishment of contacts across the borders have been most important.

An outstanding entomologist has usually been elected as president of the meeting. This is an important position with responsibility for the continuation of the congresses.

While S.L. Tuxen in Copenhagen pointed out the great importance of the NCEs in 1962 (Tuxen, 1963), it was doubted 32 years later by N.P. Kristensen in Turku in 1994 (Pekkarinen, 1995). Danish entomologists suggested that the congresses should be discontinued, and had decided not to arrange further meetings themselves. Although the participants in Turku voted for a continuation, their opinion may not be representative for all Nordic entomologists. The participants were there because they are in favour of the meetings, but they represent only a small fraction of the total number of members of all the Nordic entomological societies.

Table 1. Nordic Congresses of Entomology and numbers of participants and accompanying persons. Abbreviations: D = Denmark; F = Finland; N = Norway; S = Sweden; E = Estonia; La = Latvia; Li = Lithuania.

No.	Year	Location	D	F	N	S	E	La	Li	Others	Accompanying persons	Total
1	1923	Stockholm	4	3	1	23	-	-	-	-	2	33
2	1926	Copenhagen	32	10	-	12	-	-	-	-	14	68
3	1930	Helsinki	5	46	1	13	2	-	-	-	13	80
4	1933	Oslo	5	4	16	6	-	-	-	-	7	38
5	1936	Lund	11	7	6	64	-	-	-	-	20	108
6	1939	Copenhagen	44	13	5	23	-	-	-	-	29	114
7	1947	Helsinki	4	108	3	25	-	-	-	-	39	185
8	1950	Copenhagen	47	25	8	23	-	-	-	1	36	140
9	1953	Oslo	11	17	28	16	-	-	-	1	29	102
10	1957	Stockholm	5	15	6	52	-	-	-	-	32	110
11	1959	Helsinki	8	52	1	20	-	-	-	-	40	121

12	1962	Copenhagen	54	21	11	22	-	-	-	-	33	141
13	1965	Oslo	9	14	30	22	-	-	-	-	23	98
14	1967	Lund	23	11	17	56	-	-	-	2	32	141
15	1970	Helsinki	9	56	8	25	-	-	-	1	22	121
16	1973	Århus	38	14	13	22	-	-	-	1	15	103
17	1977	Bergen	17	14	45	23	-	-	-	-	19	118
18	1979	Stockholm	7	22	17	84	-	-	-	3	36	169
19	1982	Helsinki	5	46	8	26	-	-	-	1	23	109
20	1986	Copenhagen	41	11	10	28	-	-	-	2	-	92
21	1988	Trondheim	5	7	18	10	-	-	-	2	6	48
22	1991	Göteborg	4	5	2	32	-	-	-	1	9	53
23	1994	Turku	2	39	1	24	2	-	-	5	2	75
24	1997	Tartu	-	24	4	21	12	13	1	2	11	88
25	2000	Melsomvik	1	10	29	16	18	7	5	5	2	93
26	2003	Skaļupes	-	5	5	16	14	10	5	6	3	64

Is it really a good idea for the specialists to isolate themselves? In my opinion, contact with other groups and knowledge of other fields within entomology, are also important for the specialist's own work. On the other hand, their presence give valuable contributions to the general meetings, and this in itself is an argument for their participation.

When entomologists from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania joined the congresses in 1997 and 2000, small increases in the number of participants were observed. The participation of the Baltic nations gives broader aspects to the meetings. For this reason they are still of importance for the exchange of scientific information and establishment of personal contacts across the borders. The future will show if the interest for The Nordic-Baltic Congresses of Entomology will continue. If we feel that they are of any importance, it is the responsibility of all Nordic and Baltic entomologists to support the congresses.

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