

The history of twenty five phycological symposiums

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The Polish phycological story began in the USA in 1962 during the SIL Congress when the International Phycological Society was founded. Professor Jadwiga Siemińska was one of this society's founding members. The idea of gathering together all Polish phycologists working in various Polish scientific institutions was discussed during the Tatra scientific meeting of the Polish Hydrobiological Society held in Zakopane in May 1969. Professor Siemińska's tireless efforts following this meeting resulted in the founding of the Phycological Section of the Polish Botanical Society and the approval of its statute at its fortieth jubilee symposium held in Warsaw in 1972.

The first meeting of Polish phycologists was held in Cracow in 1974 with the participation of Prof. Dr. K. Starmach; Prof. J. Siemińska; Prof. I. Dąbska; Prof. R. Bohr; Dr. J. Sosnowska; Prof. T. Mrozińska-Webb; Dr. T. Bednarz; Dr. C. Gazdowa; Asst. Prof. K. Wasylik; Prof. I. Wojciechowski; D. Maciejewska, M.Sc., K. Hojda, M. Sc.; B. Tarnowska, M. Sc.; Prof. B. Kawecka; Dr. I. Kaczmarska; Dr. J. Pudo (after Siemińska, 1991). This group approved the regulations of the Phycological Section of Polish Botanical Society, and one year later in September 1975 the governing board of the Phycological Section

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was elected with Professor Karol Starmach as the first president, R. Bohr as vice-president, and I. Wojciechowski as secretary.

The first Polish Phycological Conference (May 10-11, 1980) was held at the field station of the Institute of Ecology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Mikołajki. Prof. Bohr, the leader of the conference, requested that the participants compile a list of Polish phycological literature.

The second Polish Phycological Section conference entitled *Algae communities of rivers and artificial reservoirs* was held one year later in May 1981 under the leadership of Prof. Bohr at the holiday resort of the Nicolaus Copernicus University near Lake Bachotek in Brodnica. Secretary Wojciechowski presented those in attendance with the new regulations of the Phycological Section, which had been approved by the Board of the Polish Botanical Society on March 21, 1982. He also proposed to expand the board of the Phycological Section by a second vice-president position, to which Prof. Jadwiga Siemińska was elected.

The next meeting of Polish phycologists was cancelled due to the declaration of martial law in Poland. At last in early June 1984, the third Phycological Section conference was held at the Limnological Station of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Iława. During this meeting the participants focused mostly on phytoplankton research in static waters.

Two months later, Prof. Izabela Dąmbska was killed in a tragic car accident. She had been an outstanding researcher at Adam Mickiewicz University and had conducted well-known studies, for example, in Wielkopolski National Park. Most of her investigations focused on the Charophyta group, and her results became famous among Polish scientists and are an impressive contribution to the Polish phycological scientific database (Burchardt 2004).

The fourth meeting of the Phycological Section was held on May 16-17, 1985 in Gołysz. It was organized by the research group from the Department of Water Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow. This unforgettable field session provided a great opportunity for professors and friends alike to meet, and everybody has enthusiastic memories of this time. Moreover, Prof. Karol Starmach's legendary toast, "Let's Love", during the solemn banquet still unifies us to this day.

The fifth meeting of the Phycological Section was organized for the third time by Nicolaus Copernicus University and was held in Charzykowo on May 8-11, 1985. The meeting focused on lobelia lakes and their functioning, and the presentations made offered various points of view of Polish scientists (L. Burchardt, I. Wojciechowski). This meeting also included an intense discussion, proposed by A. Batko, of the possibilities of applying computers in the study of such ecosystems.

In May 1987, the next Polish Phycological meeting was organized in Jastarnia on the Hel Peninsula. The host of this meeting was Assoc. Prof. Marcin Pliński from the University of Gdańsk. The main attraction was a field trip guided by Dr. Witkowski to show the participants different types of algal mats. Assoc. Prof. Batko also presented the advantages of conducting statistical analysis in phylogenetical studies of algae and their communities. Memorably, the printed version of the statistical calculations was over one kilometer long. That same year saw the passing of Prof. Ryszard Bohr, the vice-president of the Polish Phycological Section, president of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, and an outstanding hydrobiologist and ecologist. This was followed by the passing, just three months later on March 2 1988, of Karol Starmach, professor at Jagiellonian University and member of the Polish Academy of Sciences, who had been section president and was highly respected by botanists and hydrobiologists alike.

The seventh meeting of the Phycological Section was held on May 12-15, 1988 near Lake Piaseczno and was organized by scientists from the Agriculture Academy in Lublin under the leadership of Prof. Wojciechowski. The beauty of these dystrophic lakes as well as the impressive results of the restoration of Lake Piaseczno remain embedded deep in the memories of that year's participants.

The Botanical Institute of Warsaw University hosted the next meeting of the Phycological Section on May 25-28, 1989. The symposium was held in the Kameduł monastery near Lake Wigry. This was the eighth meeting of the section, and the atmosphere was so wonderful that nobody was interested in returning home.

On September 23, 1989, our colleague Andrzej Oleksowicz passed away suddenly. Contributing factors to his premature death probably included the great stress associated with his work on Spitzbergen, logistic efforts in Murmańsk, and the various difficulties presented by the whole expedition. He was the author of many publications, a collection of drawings of desmids from Kashubian lakes, and a very interesting post-doctoral thesis on phytoplankton dynamics in the lakes of Szwejcaria Kaszubska (Kashubian Switzerland).

The ninth meeting of the Phycological Section in 1990 was organized by Prof. Lubomira Burchardt and her coworkers from the Department of Hydrobiology of Adam Mickiewicz University. This six-day conference focused the evolution of freshwater reservoirs. The introduction to this topic was the scientific session held in the historical inland Ostrów Lednicki. For the next five days, the conference was held at the small palace in Czerniejewo. Thanks to the participation of many foreign scientists, our scientific publications and results gained international exposure. The official part of the meeting must have been exhausting, because nowadays most participants

remember just the evening gathering around the bonfire. At the end of the symposium the participants were invited on an excursion to collect samples from a few lakes near the small, historical town of Kórnik. Many of us still remember the sight of our colleague, Jacek Sanecki, who made full, direct contact with the water while sampling from a ferry.

The tenth jubilee meeting of the Phycological Section was held under the leadership of Prof. Konrad Wołowski in Jura Krakowsko-Częstochowska. Increasing interest in the Phycological Section of the Polish Botanical Society and the algae issues discussed during this meeting was reflected in the growing number of participants, which exceeded fifty during this conference (Siemińska, 1991).

The next decade of phycological meetings was initiated by the scientific community in Łódź in 1992. The participants were impressed most by Dr. B. Rakowska's presentation on the diatoms of Niebiańskie Źródło as well as by a presentation on issues regarding the functioning of the Sulejowski Reservoir. The main attraction of the meeting's social program was the "bear meal" served in a charming atmosphere during the banquet held at the beautifully renovated Poznański Palace.

The twelfth International Phycological Symposium entitled *Ecology and Taxonomy of Algae – Green Lungs of Poland* was held in Płociczno in May 1993 and was organized by the Agricultural Academy of Lublin and Warsaw University. During the presentation session, the director of the Wigierski National Park encouraged researchers to conduct more studies within the territory of the park. The following speakers prompted the audience of scientists to employ statistical tools more broadly in diversity studies of Coleochaete (A. Batko) as well as to base ecosystem stability assessments on studies of the biomass of Oscillatoriales. The greatest surprise and the most important information was, however, presented by Prof. Jadwiga Siemińska; three new diatom species had been identified in proteozoic marbles in Przeworno. The *Miss Gloniara* contest provided some comic relief during the conference.

In September 1994 the thirteenth phycological meeting was organized by our friends from Olsztyn and Stare Jabłonki from the Inland Fisheries Institute under the leadership of Dr. Andrzej Hutorowicz. The title of the conference was *Algae communities – factors influencing their development and variety*. The plenary presentations were entitled *The truth of algae-the truth of algologists* by A. Batko, *Changes in structure and production of phytoplankton of eight eutrophic Mazurian lakes* by W. Krzywosz, and *What triggers the onset of cyanophytes?* by J. Barica. Field trips were organized to the Jezioro Czarne and Sosny Taborskie nature reserves as well as to the Museum of Agriculture Architecture. Although the atmosphere in the camping houses was hot, the

participants had to switch on electrical heaters in order to keep warm in the early morning hours.

The fourteenth meeting of the Phycological Section coincided with the 50th Symposium of the Polish Botanical Society in Cracow that was organized by the Institute of Botany and the Department of Water Biology of the Polish Academy of Sciences. Noteworthy presentations delivered during the plenary session included Prof. Bucka's talk on the toxicity of planktonic Cyanophyta in water supplying reservoirs, Prof. Lange Bertalota's speech on diatoms as good indicators of river water quality, and finally Prof. Wojeciechowski's discussion of long-term changes in phytoplankton community structure and productivity in Łęczycko-Włodawskie lakes. The field trip organized by Jacek Sanecki to the Na czerwonym peat bog and rafting on the Danube River provided participants with many thrilling emotions.

The fifteenth meeting of the Phycological Section was organized in Lublin, Krasnobród, and Zwierzyniec on May 10-12, 1996 by Prof. Tadeusz Skowroński in co-operation with Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. The principle speakers at this symposium were foreign, including Prof. F. Hindak, who gave a presentation on blue-green algae blooms, or Dr. J. Barica, who spoke on the possibilities of conducting manipulations during blue-green blooms. Professor T. Skowroński talked about the responses of algae to heavy metals and phytochelatin production. During the charming social evening in Krasnobród, original prizes, such as a pair of rubber overshoes for the best dancers, were awarded (F. Hindak, L. Burchardt).

The sixteenth symposium of the Phycological Section was held in the Kashubian region in Wdzydze Kiszewskie in May 1997 and was entitled *The causes and effects of algae and blue greens bloom*. It was organized by the phycological team of Prof. Marcin Pliński from Gdańsk. The beginning of the symposium was sad due to the recent death of Prof. Batko. Hania Werblan-Jakubiec presented a collection of his pioneering phycological research methods based on software he had developed.

The plenary session on blooms was kicked off by Dr. G. A. Codd from the University of Dundee (UK), who spoke about the threats to human health presented by blue-green toxins. The scientific discussions were interspersed with interesting field excursions to the lakes and rivers of Szwejcaria Kaszubska, a presentation of regional music and language, and finally a cruise during which the special cups provided by the organizers turned out to be very useful.

In this same year, our colleague, Andrzej Szyjkowski, passed away. He had participated in our earlier conferences and was working together with the Institute of Meteorology and Water Management to initiate a monitoring program for running waters, especially in the Oder River and its tributaries.

The seventeenth symposium of the Phycological Section was held in May 1998 in Łukęcin and was dedicated to Prof. Jadwiga Siemińska in honor of fifty years of scientific work. The organizers of the symposium, Drs. Wojciech Kowalski and Andrzej Witkowski proposed discussing issues related to the symposium title *Algae as universal bioindicators of the degradation of the natural environment with a special focus on the Oder estuary*. The participants will long remember the beautiful trip from Szczecin to Szmaragdowe Lake and the Wrzosiec Atlantic-type bog, the impressive organ concert at Kamień Pomorski, and the wonderful banquet with original T-shirts with recently-discovered diatoms whose names were drawn from those of our phycological colleagues.

The eighteenth meeting of Polish phycologists was held in 1999 in Kielce and Wólka Milanowska. The main organizers were Prof. Teresa Mrozińska and her colleagues from the Geography Institute of the Higher Pedagogical School in Kielce. The participants of this meeting had the opportunity to admire the beauty of the Świętokrzyskie Mountains and the Białe Ługi bog. They were also given tours of the geological station and the museum in Jędrzejów. Thanks to the excellently prepared conference proceedings entitled *Biodiversity of algae and blue-green flora as a method for assessing aquatic ecosystems*, one is reminded of this fruitful time spent in Kielce.

In 2000 the nineteenth symposium was held in Tleń and organized in cooperation with the Technical-Agricultural Academy in Bydgoszcz and Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. For the first time at this conference the number of participants exceeded one hundred. The organizers Drs. Luścińska and Wiśniewska proposed the interesting title for the plenary session *Taxonomy and ecology of plants – marriage of responsibility?* The majority of the participants will remember the visit to the historical water mill and the comical announcement of competition results during the banquet.

The twentieth symposium of the Phycological Section was held during the Congress of Polish Botanical Society in Poznań in September 2001 at Adam Mickiewicz University. The organizers of the section meeting were Prof. Burchardt and scientists from Department of Hydrobiology. Although the conference participants were indeed numerous, the phycologists had an opportunity to integrate during the plenary sessions and the field trips organized in the vicinity of the lakes of Biskupińskie and the Kórnicko-Zaniemska valley. The conference ended with a banquet.

One year later in May 2002 the twenty-first meeting of phycologists was organized by Dr. Jan Matuła from the Agricultural Academy in Sosnowka Górna and Karpacz. The wonderful landscape and interesting field excursions were very well integrated with very productive plenary proceedings. The

ceremonial dinner with grilled boar and delicious cake was dedicated to Profs. Siemińska and Bucka.

The twenty-second meeting was held in 2003 in Olsztyn and Mierki and was entitled *Algae and the biological state of waters – threat or support?*. The organization of the event fell on the shoulders of Dr. Iwona Łązniewska, who, as the Dean of the Biology Faculty of Warmińsko-Mazurski University, was very active in our discussions.

In September 2004, the twenty-third symposium of Polish phycologists was held again in Toruń and Bydgoszcz. This time it was part of the congress of the Polish Botanical Society. The organizers of the symposium were from the Bydgoszcz division of the society (Dr. Wiśniewska, Dr. Paczuska) and the Toruń division (Dr. Luścińska). They ensured that the integration of all phycologists was possible despite the many sessions held during the Polish Botanical Society Congress. The proposal of founding an independent Polish Phycological Society was put forward during a spontaneous, late dinner in the old town of Toruń. This idea was supported enthusiastically by our foreign guests, Dr. Elliot Schubert with his wife and Dr. Marshall.

The twenty-fourth phycological conference was organized by Prof. Pliński and his phycological team from the University in May 2005. This is the third time this team accepted the responsibility of organizing the annual symposium. During this meeting problems associated with toxic blooms caused by blue green algae and the necessity of developing an integrated program for monitoring these blooms were discussed. The wonderful weather, the cruise, and great diversity of the surrounding natural environment of Mierzeja Wiślana together with “trojanka” by M. Pliński will remain in our memories for years to come time.

In Lublin in December 2005, Dr. Czernaś organized the jubilee meeting dedicated to Prof. Iwo Wojciechowski. The atmosphere at this symposium was exceptional but simultaneously tinged with sadness at the knowledge of Prof. Wojciechowski’s illness. With deep sorrow we said our final good-byes to Prof. Wojciechowski, who died two months later.

The twenty-fifth phycological meeting *Algae and their changes over time* was held on May 16-19, 2006 in Poznań and in Łagów near the beautiful Łagowskie Lake. Once again the organization of this gathering was in the hands of the staff at the Hydrobiology Department at Adam Mickiewicz University under the supervision of Prof. Burchardt. This conference saw the presentation of many interesting and original results of taxonomical, ecological, and biochemical studies.

The growing need for easier, faster development in the phycological sciences and the persistent interest in algae by an increasing number of researchers convinced the members of the Phycological Section board to

announce during the official meeting the proposition of creating an organization independent of Polish Botanical Society, which would gather together all Polish phycologists. By majority in an official election, it was decided to establish the Polish Phycological Society with its own statute and governing board. Prof. Burchardt was elected to as the new society's first president. Further discussions regarding the statute also included ideas to broaden co-operation and integration with foreign phycological societies in Europe and around the world. Membership in Polish Phycological Society does not exclude membership in Polish Botanical Society.

The anthem of the phycologists, *Let's Love*, was sung for the first time at the ceremonial dinner under the direction of the amazing Waldemar Surosz. Later that evening the most original Miss Phycologist was chosen and a prize was awarded in the evening's second competition for the best homemade vodka. The whole conference was splendidly summarized that evening by Prof. Siemińska, who pronounced that it was of a "new quality".

The next meeting is planned to be held in May 2007 in Lublin and will be dedicated to Prof. Iwo Wojciechowski. The organization of the event will be in the hands of the vice-president of the Agricultural Academy Dr. Krzysztof Czernaś together with D. Krupa and A. Szczurowska.

REFERENCES

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