

WELCOME TO THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE EUROPEAN MOSQUITO BULLETIN, A NEW PUBLICATION DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND VIEWS ON ALL ASPECTS OF THE STUDY OF EUROPEAN MOSQUITOES. BELOW, CHRISTINE DAHL INTRODUCES THIS NEW VENTURE. THIS ISSUE IS A MIXTURE OF ORIGINAL ARTICLES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS BUT THE FORMAT OF FUTURE ISSUES WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE READERSHIP. THE EDITORS WOULD WELCOME COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS AND, OF COURSE, ARTICLES FOR THE NEXT ISSUE.

Winged Victory?

There are two important questions to pose at the beginning of this article: Do we need another serial publication on mosquitoes and if so, why should it be specifically on European mosquitoes? One further question is what should such a publication bring its readers? As you by now will have guessed, I shall attempt to answer the questions, at least to my own satisfaction.

In the past, mosquito-borne diseases played an important role in the life of European people. We do not now have malaria in our western and central regions, but in historic times the story was different. Bones of more than 100 people unearthed from Meso- and Neolithic sites in the eastern Mediterranean showed enlarged bone marrow spaces, a malignancy which was probably caused by malaria. Also the ancient city of Selinus, Sicily is said to have been saved from a "fever sickness" by the philosopher Empedocles (490-430 BC) who drained the city's marshes. Again in Egypt, a hieroglyph inscription at the temple of Dendarah reads: "O year.....keep the Goddess Hathor free from all misfortune, from all calamity, and from the bad air" (1st century BC). This bears witness to the presence of a feared sickness ascribed to bad air, which might well have been malaria. Until AD 300 the Romans even had a deity called Dea Febris. Thus mosquitoes certainly were around human settlements all over Europe.

Even during the Renaissance, Shakespeare through Cassius could, with astonishing accuracy, describe the sickness of Julius Caesar in Spain:

"He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him, I did mark
How he did shake; 'tis true, this god did shake
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre; I did hear him groan;
Aye, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
Alas! it cried, 'Give me some drink, Titinius',
As a sick girl."

By advances in agriculture and other factors we have now eliminated malaria from northern Europe. Most of the most obnoxious mosquito-ridden areas along our coasts have now been built upon, often for tourism. We still have some extensive river inundation areas in all parts of Europe, but experienced control people using *Bti* and other measures help to combat most mosquito problems. A future problem could be the re-establishment of wetlands and the desire of people to live close to nature, preferably as close as possible to natural conservation areas where control measures are not permitted. So do we really know what these interactions between people and mosquitoes will have in store for us? In some European areas we do not know what species are present. We have few facts about most species' ecology and the variability of their behaviour. Each national state has dealt with its own health problems, and knowledge has accumulated within political borders. But mosquitoes observe borders of their own and do not respect ours when it comes to epidemiology and disease transmission. We have to know much more about the correlations between mosquitoes, parasites and possible vectors and natural multipliers or reservoirs of disease such as migrating birds, mammals and humans. These are topics on which we should co-operate and exchange views and information.

In the thirties European scientists contributed significantly to mosquito taxonomy and ecology. Let us hope that there is a new surge of activity with young people becoming interested in our fields. It is much needed to fight future problems caused by mosquitoes interacting with people. We might still in the future ask with D.H.Lawrence:

"Can I not overtake you
Are you one too many for me
Winged Victory?
Am I not mosquito enough to outmosquito you?"

The advances in molecular biology now provide us with tools to restudy both vector and zoogeographic problems in Europe. By co-operative molecular studies of the same species, over different areas of Europe we might learn more about viruses and other disease agents. We may also be able to retrace the main zoogeographic trends from the past which have influenced the present distributions. We should also consider the combination of new methods to establish the phylogenetic affinities of our European mosquito fauna with those of the eastern Palaearctic, Nearctic and the tropical regions.

So here are my answers to the three questions asked. We need to gain far more field knowledge of European mosquitoes and their roles as vectors. We also need to highlight the importance of basic as well as applied research in European mosquitoes, and both seek and hopefully obtain major funding for such research. We need a European forum for all this kind of information, which can help discussions at an early stage and bring about co-operation. To achieve this the *EMB* needs short articles, scientific notes, articles on field biology of mosquitoes, and discussions or solutions of taxonomic problems. It is also important to encourage the exchange of early information about ongoing projects, to search for participants, material and maybe young scientists, technicians or students to participate in field or laboratory investigations. I am sure you have other views and ideas. The *European Mosquito Bulletin* will be happy to receive and publish them.

Christine Dahl

Footnote: If you are interested in the topic of insects and disease, read J.L. Cloudsley-Thompson: *Insects and history*. The World Naturalist Series. Cox & Wyman Ltd. London. 1976. The quotations cited may be found in: *The complete works of William Shakespeare*. Oxford University Press. London 1962 and D.H. Lawrence: *The complete poems*. Volume 1. Heinemann. London. 1964.