

A TASTE OF HUNGARY

Prepared by Irene Barnes (PhD candidate working on a project entitled: "Taxonomy and phylogeny of Dothistroma and other pine pathogens")

The IUFRO WP 7.02.02. foliage, shoot and stem diseases of forest trees meeting was held in the ancient (built in the 1200's) city of Sopron, Hungary during May 21-26 this year. This meeting of forest pathologists was well attended with approx. 43 delegates from a wide variety of countries, mainly spanning those from across Europe. It was hosted by the University of West Hungary, Institute of Silviculture and Forest Protection under the more than capable and motherly eye of the conference organiser, Dr. Ilona Szabó.

The main focus of the meeting was foliage diseases of conifers and hardwoods, shoot blights and various canker diseases. One of the hot disease topics was *Dothistroma* needle blight, more commonly known as red band needle blight disease. The pathogens responsible for this disease infect pine needles and cause defoliation leading to reduced wood growth and occasionally, death of trees. It was a privilege for me to open the meeting by being the first speaker. I presented a summary of the work done during my PhD studies on this very important pine pathogen and displayed a poster on new host and country records for *Dothistroma*. The talk was well received and led to many discussions on the topic as the disease is now prevalent in many parts of Europe and is causing large-scale epidemics. Other collaborators interested in and currently studying the disease also presented their work and it was a great opportunity to liaise and discuss future project plans and proposals.

Other relevant topics to our projects within the TPCP group included discussions on *Diplodia*, *Phytophthora*, *Cryphonectria* and Cypress canker disease. Thomas Kirisits presented collaborative work with FABI entitled "Common needle, shoot, branch and stem diseases of conifer trees in Bhutan", and a poster of Wilhelm de Beer was exhibited entitled: "*Quambalaria* species: Leaf and shoot pathogens of increasing concern to eucalypt plantation forestry."

The planned field excursions were very beneficial to my work. Dr Szabó had organised that we visit two *Pinus nigra* forest plantations that were heavily infected with *Dothistroma*. This presented a perfect opportunity for me to make collections, gratefully, with the help of other experienced delegates, for population studies. I am now currently screening these populations with the microsatellite markers I developed specifically to help us understand, more clearly, the population dynamics of this important pathogen.

We also got the chance to witness biological control in action at a site where hypovirulent strains of *Cryphonectria parasitica* (causal agent of the famous Chestnut blight disease) had been inoculated on European Chestnut (*Castanea sativa*). The Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) were, however, not so lucky and were heavily infected with *Cryphonectria parasitica*. Many of the younger trees at this site were already dead. Other diseases observed were Swiss needle cast, a foliage disease of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) caused by the ascomycete fungus *Phaeocryptopus gaeumannii*, and Rhabdocline needle cast (*Rhabdocline weirii*). Both these diseases have devastating effects on Christmas tree plantations in both Europe and North America.

Highlights of the trip included having lunch overlooking the beautiful blue waters of Lake Balaton, famous for its water holiday resorts, and which boasts of being the greatest freshwater lake in Europe at 77 km in length. Whilst the cold front was hitting South Africa

mid-winter, we were sweating and dehydrating in the heat in Hungary! In the evenings the participants cooled off with some fabulous ice-cream from the local “Cukrászda” deli. Walking on the cobble-stones we visited the local markets that displayed many hand-made traditional clothing and toys as well as exquisitely embroidered tablecloths.

After closing the meeting, we were treated to an evening of traditional Hungarian folk music and wine tasting of the legendary local Kékfrankos “blue franc” wines. More on the social side, delegates toasted each other and groups gathered together to sing their local country anthems or songs. We drank the excellent local Soproni beer and feasted on the famous traditional Hungarian goulash. Some of the more fortunate delegates, who stayed on longer, went on a planned excursion to see the beautiful, well-known baroque Capital city of Budapest.

I would like to say “Köszönöm” to both FABI and the CTHB for sponsoring this very successful and worthwhile trip.



a) Thomas Kirisits and Irene Barnes at the poster session b) *Pinus nigra* infected with *Dothistroma* needle blight c) “Dothi” girls: Irene Barnes (RSA), Sarah Archibald (UK), Irena Bodejckova and Mirka Bednarova (Czech Republic).