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INTRODUCTION

"It is a pity that in this year most of these trees are felled for road improvement. This is to be highly regretted because the single large maple tree standing a quarter of an hour's walk beneath the waterfall, and on which Rudolphi probably detected this moss, is almost completely deprived of its precious burden". The 'precious burden' is *Tayloria rudolphiana* and 'this year' refers to 1844. This was reported 150 years ago by Bruch & Schimper in their 'Bryologia Europaea'. One of these authors found a new locality and concluded that "...the beautiful *Tayloria Rudolphiana* is still, at least for a while, safe from extinction, despite of the fact that the classical maple trees keep falling under the strokes of civilization".

This demonstrates that the problem of vanishing bryophytes is not new. Efforts, however, made in favour of their conservation are definitely more recent.

A first symposium on endangered bryophytes was held in September 1990 in Uppsala (Sweden). The proceedings are published in a special volume of 'Biological Conservation' (vol 59, nos 2 & 3, 1992). The contributions to this Uppsala symposium showed clearly that many species of European mosses, hepatics and hornworts are threatened. Most authors stressed the urgent need for conservation measures, assuming that this sort of biodiversity too should have standing.

During the symposium in 1990 the 'European Committee for Conservation of Bryophytes' (ECCB) was founded. The board of it was obliged to support bryophyte conservation on a national level, to work out the bases of co-ordinated international efforts in Europe, and to organize more symposia on this topic. The second plenary meeting of the ECCB took place in Zürich during the second symposium. The manuscript of a Red Data Book on European bryophytes could be presented to the delegates, and it was decided to keep active.

The Zürich symposium was planned to deal mainly with the practice of conservation including the non-bryological aspects of the problem. The organizers were and are aware of the fact that law and legislation, pedagogy, psychology and politics are extremely important for the implementation of conservation plans. Therefore, they invited in addition to bryologists two jurists, several pedagogues, a psychologist and a biologist being familiar with EU politics. Unfortunately, pedagogical aspects could not be dealt with because the invited pedagogues were organizing a nearly simultaneous congress on environmental pedagogy.

Beside the lectures most of which are published in this volume, fourteen posters were presented during the symposium.

The first symposium day was dedicated to **the scientific bases of bryophyte conservation**. The contributions to this topic were as diverse as: the relevance of studies in population ecology for conservation purposes, illustrated later by an example of hornwort populations, possible correlations between pollution, morphology and species decline, changes in water and snowbed vegetation due to pollution, a survey of rare hepatics in the Arctic, the significance of distribution patterns in rare and threatened Scandinavian species, genetic aspects of rarity, and even similar problems of a bryophyte-like fern.

The practice of bryophyte conservation was the main topic of the second day. The proportion of contributions to this compared with those to the first day's topic reflects the scarceness of experience in practical work. A general survey on the most up to date and the most commonly used conservation measures was presented, as well as examples from Sweden, from the Netherlands, from Ireland, from Britain, from the Tatra Mountains, and from more southern parts of Europe.

Some change was given to the symposium the third day by an excursion to two places in the Swiss Alps. In the first locality a population of the very rare *Scopelophila ligulata* was studied, and in the second place several species of the Swiss Red List could be found among others. A short report and a list of species is published in 'Meylania' no 7 by Schnyder (1995).

The workshop of the fourth day began by lectures on juridical aspects, psychological foundations and EU policy implications of the conservation of lower plants. They were followed by the

activities of two working groups, one dealing with psychological problems, the other one uniting political and juridical aspects of the symposium topic. The issues of the first one are summarized at the end of part III of the present proceedings. The work of the second one resulted in a number of resolutions presented at the end of this volume.

The editors thank colleagues and friends who contributed in various ways to the symposium. Special thanks are addressed to the colleagues of the organizing committee, Felix Gugerli, Heike Hofmann, Andreas Müller, Niklaus Müller and Norbert Schnyder. The following institutions substantially sponsored this congress:

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- The Swiss National Foundation
- The Swiss Bryological and Lichenological Society
- The International Science Foundation
- The Botanical Society of Zürich
- The Bank of the Canton of Zürich
- The City of Zürich

In particular, these proceedings could be published due to the efforts of many reviewers and due to the financial assistance of the 'Committee for the Flora of Cryptogams' and the 'Zürich University Association'. We are very grateful to them all.

Let us hope that the discussion on threatened organisms, bryophytes or not, will not end as long as it is necessary. Let us continue and increase the efforts for their conservation until they receive the esteem they merit.

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