

# **British Ecological Society Mires Research Group (MRG)**

## **Meeting 9<sup>th</sup> September 2003**

Meeting notes by Dr M. Jane Bunting, University of Hull

### **1. Report on Field Visit and Thematic Topic**

Feedback from fieldtrip participants was very positive, both from active MRG members and from other ecologists. The idea of a field trip linked to future BES meetings was strongly supported. Some organisational problems had arisen, especially in relation to conference registration; it was felt that numbers would have been higher if there had been space to indicate field trip attendance on the form, and if it had been possible to register more easily for the additional night's accommodation.

The thematic topic had produced a full day of interesting and thought-provoking papers, and had attracted reasonable audiences. It was also noted that our Thematic Topic had been scheduled so as not to clash with the Long Term Ecology Thematic Topic (TT2), which we much appreciated.

It was unfortunate that the keynote paper for TT1 was timetabled at the same time as that of F. Vera, whose recent book is controversial and interesting to both site managers and palaeoecologists, therefore effectively 'splitting' this part of the audience. Several MRG members very much wanted to hear Vera's talk, and although we appreciate the challenges of timetabling such a complicated meeting, wondered if there might be some way in which the programme could be checked for such clashes. Alternatively it was suggested that all keynote speakers might be scheduled for different times, as attending a keynote was a good way to get an insight into a different field of ecology, therefore appealing to the generalists amongst the BES membership.

### **2. BES Support for the 7<sup>th</sup> INTECOL International Wetlands Conference, Utrecht, 25-31 July 2004.**

Jane Bunting reported that she and Nicki Whitehouse had had a symposium accepted for the INTECOL meeting, entitled 'Palaeoecology and long-term wetland function dynamics'. The symposium contains papers on invertebrates, non-pollen microfossils, vegetation signals of hydroseral dynamics, palaeohydrology, testate amoebae and the use of simulations, although details will not be finalised until the end of September.

It was agreed that Deborah would approach the BES to see if they might be able to offer support for graduate attendance at this major meeting, which occurs every four years.

### **3. ‘Integrating Wetland Hydrology and Ecology in the UK’: joint MRG-BHS meeting**

The BES is providing some support for this meeting, and Deborah asked for ideas for possible speakers to represent the MRG. It was agreed that more information about the meeting was needed, and some possible contributors were identified. Frank Chambers noted that we should argue for a late start and end for the meeting, as it was very hard to get into London for a reasonable price before 10 in the morning; a start time of 10-30 or 11 would be helpful.

### **4. BES meeting at University of Lancaster, Sept 7-9 2004**

Andy Baird had kindly agreed to be involved in organising a pre-meeting field visit, possibly to Wedholme Flow (excuse spelling); the was enthusiastically supported.

We agreed not to apply for a Thematic Topic, feeling that every 2-3 years would be better.

We also agreed to email PhD students on the MRG list who will be in their third year, and students who had offered posters at this meeting, encouraging them to offer posters or papers to the session.

### **5. Web pages**

The MRG still does not have control over its webpages, although Deborah has been trained in the necessary skills. Hopefully something will happen soon...

### **6. Forthcoming report and budget request to the BES**

The report would be based on the MRG minutes, which Jane Bunting agreed to type up.

The budget request should cover our requirements for the Lancaster meeting, for example for travel to Wedholme Flow. This led to some discussion about how far such field trips should be opened up to any BES member, how this would affect the quality of the visit, and whether it might affect BES support (do they support only the interest groups?). It seemed to be generally felt that this wasn't a major issue.

### **7. Nomination of MRG secretary**

Deborah explained that she was now at the end of her first three year term as MRG Secretary, and asked whether anyone else wanted to take on the role. The BES permits three consecutive terms for secretaries, and it was agreed that Deborah was doing a good job (especially as her proximity to London meant she could attend BES meetings, which had clearly benefited the society), and her aim to make the BES both a Research Forum and a source of information was generally accepted. Therefore Deborah will continue as secretary, with help from other MRG members as necessary.

The topic of a more regular newsletter came up, and Jane Bunting offered to try to get something going for the next year, circulated mostly via email but with the option to send paper copies to those who prefer this method. Lisa has the current version of the email list available, and a notice could be placed in the Bulletin to encourage people to renew their membership.

## **8. Any Other Business**

Frank Chambers explained about the Cheltenham Science Festival in May, supported by the BAAS, and suggested that he should contact the BES Education Officer to see whether the BES would be able to sponsor something, contribute, or even suggest a speaker who could communicate well with a lay audience.

Deborah requested any general feedback on the meeting and the BES, which she could pass on. We wished to emphasise that overall the meeting had gone well and we were happy with the organisation. That said, some points for consideration were raised:

- see comments about booking forms under point 1
- Direction FROM the lunch venue as well as to it was felt necessary
- More information on how to find the shuttle bus from station to conference was requested. This year had been especially confusing as Manchester Piccadilly has two entrances and the bus was at the less obvious one
- Information about travel by public bus or coach would be helpful, as this can often work out cheaper and, especially if travelling on Sunday to attend a Monday fieldtrip, can be more reliable than the railway.
- Having a day rate for the meeting was a good idea - but there were still some issues; pre-booking and allowing day attendees to have lunch would help. Also, it was not clear if there had been a student rate for day attendance.
- The price of food and accommodation is beginning to seem high. Whilst we appreciate that universities need to charge appropriately to support their students and meet their budgetry

constraints, we did feel that it might be a good idea if the booking details listed some cheaper alternatives locally as well as some more expensive/comfortable/en suite ones. This might be particularly useful for student attendees. Some indication of how easy it is to find alternative places for evening meals around the venue would also be helpful.

- It was noted how nice it had been to have some non-UK speakers at the TT, and discussed how to encourage others to consider attending - although the title 'BES' might sound quite regional, we were told that the meetings were the second largest ecological gathering in the world after the Ecological Society of America. It was proposed that we should produce some MRG/BES publicity material to take to 2004 international meetings such as INTECOL Wetlands (see item 2), possibly including this in our budget request. We also identified that advertising future TTs or fieldtrips could use listservs such as the American 'ecolog' list to expand awareness of our activities.