

21ST INTERNATIONAL CAVE BEAR SYMPOSIUM THE NETHERLANDS, 2015



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21st INTERNATIONAL CAVE BEAR SYMPOSIUM 2015

From Thursday September 10th until Saturday September 12th the 21st International Cave Bear Symposium 2015 (ICBS 2015) took place in the Netherlands at Leiden, Hellevoetsluis and Rotterdam.

It has been organized as a 'co-production' by the Werkgroep Pleistocene Zoogdieren (WPZ, Dutch society for Pleistocene Mammals) and Speleo Nederland, with the cooperation of several museums and universities. <http://icbs2015.pleistocenemammals.com/>

Although they don't possess any caves and finds of cave bear fossils are questionable, the Netherlands are unique in paleontological terms. While sediments that are found near the surface are of a relatively young age (Holocene), the fossil record is also particularly rich in Pleistocene material, mostly due to being bounded by the North Sea. In Pleistocene glacial times, the North Sea was dry land and densely populated by mammoths, bisons, woolly rhinoceroses and horses, closely followed by carnivores such as cave lions, cave hyenas, wolves and brown bears – evidence of which still is commonly found. During the ICBS 2015 participants could experience Dutch paleontology to the fullest.

85 professional and amateur paleontologists and speleologists have participated, coming from 13 countries, from Mexico to Russia and from Sweden to Italy.

On Thursday morning registration took place in Naturalis Biodiversity Center (the Netherlands' National Museum of Natural History) at Leiden. There participants received a booklet with detailed program and abstracts of presentations and posters ([pdf](#)) and they were welcomed with a presentation about the history of paleontological research in the Netherlands. Afterwards they could make a (guided) tour through the fossil exposition and in particular the fossil carnivore collection of Naturalis. In the afternoon they visited the nearby Archaeology Faculty of Leiden University, where they were introduced to present archeo-/paleozoological research, could visit the laboratories and admire the collection. Afterwards 'ice breaker' drinks were offered by the faculty. Then they had to drive to (the region of) Hellevoetsluis, for about 70 kilometers in rush hour, in the busiest part of the Netherlands, where the majority of the participants had booked a hotel or camp site.

On Friday the traditional 'fieldtrip day' was planned. In the morning one could visit the fishing fleet and fish auction in Stellendam. One could go on board of the ships, that regularly bring in mammal fossils from the North Sea, for a guided tour, there was an exhibition of finds (that also could be bought), and freshly caught and baked fish was offered for lunch! In the afternoon Futureland was visited, the visitors center of Maasvlakte 2, with information of the making of Maasvlakte 2 (the new sea harbour of the Port of Rotterdam) and of the paleontological and archaeological research that is taking place at the Maasvlakte 2-beach. Then a one-hour boat trip was made to experience the enormous extent of the harbour, followed by a fossil excursion on foot on the Maasvlakte 2-beach. Several interesting fossils have been found by the participants. This day was concluded by a well-organized and very enjoyable barbecue in a restaurant on the beach at the Oostvoorne Lake, a former bay of the North Sea.

On Saturday one was indoors all day, in the new (and not yet officially opened) History Land, a museum for paleontology, archaeology and history in Hellevoetsluis. First participants were welcomed by the director of the museum, followed by 14 interesting oral presentations in four sessions (evolutionary trends, ancient DNA, isotopes and new finds, ecosystems). These sessions were concluded by presenting the EuroSpeleo 2016 video and giving a presentation of the 22nd ICBS to be held in Poland from 21 until 29 September 2016. During the coffee-, tea- and luncheon breaks the visitors could experience the museum, visit a bookstand, read and discuss 13 scientific posters, and examine several show cases with mammalian carnivore fossils found by WPZ-members.

Then there were drinks, and in the end the conference dinner, consisting of several typical Dutch 'hotchpotches', much appreciated by the participants.

The final day, Sunday, the 'Natuurhistorisch museum' (the Natural History Museum) in Rotterdam was on the program. The Director gave an introduction to the paleontology of the Netherlands – not just the Pleistocene – after that one could visit the museum in small groups. At lunchtime everybody said goodbye. Some colleagues took the opportunity to stay some more days in the Netherlands, to study the cave bear and other fossil mammals in the collections of the museums and of private collectors.

Some concluding remarks.

It was an interesting and enjoyable symposium, with a good mix of people attending.

Although the participants during an ICBS normally visit one or more caves, sometimes high in the mountains, this change of viewpoint (sea, beaches, ships) was much appreciated by the foreign visitors. And to be honest, the weather (nice temperatures, sun) did help!

The proceedings will be published in 2016 as a special issue of the WPZ scientific journal 'Cranium'.

And we were mentioned by Nature! http://www.nature.com/news/fishing-for-fossils-in-the-north-sea-1.18409?WT.ec_id=NEWS-20150924&spMailingID=49621594&spUserID=MTc2NjQwNDQ3MAS2&spJobID=763295825&spReportId=NzYzMjk1ODI1S0

Some statistics:

85 participants from 12 countries (93 registrations from 14 countries, but unfortunately 8 colleagues registered but could not attend, so had to cancel).

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------|
| Austria | 9 |
| Belgium | 4 |
| Czech Republic | 1 |
| France | 2 |
| Germany | 14 |
| Italy | 2 |
| Mexico | 1 |
| Poland | 5 |
| Russia | 1 |
| Slovakia | 1 |
| Sweden | 1 |
| <u>The Netherlands</u> | <u>44</u> |
| 12 countries | 85 participants |

At least 20 colleagues from museums, universities, fishermen, etc. helped in one way or another.



Final Budget

ICBS 2015

Expenses

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Wednesday programme | |
| € 100,- | |
| location | |
| coffee/tea | |
| Thursday programme | € 150,- |
| location | |
| coffee/tea | |
| lunch | |
| Friday programme | € 300,- |
| location | |
| coffee/tea | |
| lunch | |
| Saturday programme | € 2.000,- |
| location | |
| coffee/tea | |
| lunch | |
| conference dinner | |
| poster boards | |
| chairman scientific sessions | |
| exhibition material and insurance | |
| Sunday programme | € 50,- |
| location | |
| coffee/tea | |
| | |
| Symposium programme and information booklet: | € 100,- |
| Organisational costs: | € 750,- |
| Volunteer expenses: | € 150,- |
| Printing costs scientific proceedings: | € 2.200,- |
| Postage scientific proceedings: | € 1.000,- |

Total: € 6.800,-

Income

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Participants (via registration fee): | € 3.100,- |
| Partners: | |
| Werkgroep Pleistocene Zoogdieren | € 1000,- |
| Speleo Netherlands | € 500,- |
| European Speleological Federation (money) | € 500,- |
| European Speleological Federation (rope) | € 250,- |
| Sponsors: | |
| North Sea Fossils | € 250,- |
| Radiocarbon.com | € 500,- |
| Gravin van Bylandt Stichting | € 700,- |

Total: € 6.800,-

