



## EDITORIAL

### **'Taxonomy, Evolution and Classifications of Lichens and Related Fungi' 10–11 January 1998**

Progress in lichen systematics at all taxonomic levels has probably never been so rapid as today. The refined understanding of natural relationships provided by new character complexes derived directly from the genome, and new methods of analysing data, is likely to lead to future dramatic changes in our classifications and concepts of taxa. Thus, it was seen as highly appropriate to dedicate a Symposium to issues in lichen taxonomy, evolution and classification, to develop an integrated picture of the status of modern lichen systematics, as well as providing a valuable opportunity to assess future challenges.

This joint meeting of The British Lichen Society, The Linnean Society and The Systematics Association was organised by Dr Mats Wedin and Dr William Purvis. The meeting was held in the rooms of The Linnean Society of London, in conjunction with The British Lichen Society Annual General Meeting, and attracted 80 delegates from 18 countries. The programme included three half-day sessions focusing on taxonomic issues from infra-specific to above family level, including several contributions covering more philosophical aspects. The meeting was a very successful event, and we are pleased to be able to publish all of the 15 contributions in this double issue of *The Lichenologist*. We wish to thank all the speakers for their valuable efforts.

It was clear from many of the papers presented that phylogenetic analysis is now widely accepted as the most useful method for analysing natural relationships in lichens. Several speakers in all three sessions presented investigations based on ribosomal DNA sequence data. The presentations showed that many lichen systematists with a 'traditional' background are taking up molecular techniques, and they will clearly be able to address many of the most interesting problems remaining in systematic lichenology today. The importance of not formalising the molecular findings into nomenclature until results are corroborated by several investigations and supported by 'traditional' data-sets was widely stressed. These views were strongly supported by the audience, which contributed many lively debates. For many delegates, the Symposium became the event when the value of molecular systematics finally became obvious.

This editorial provides an opportunity to thank the three organising Societies for the generous financial support given towards the meeting, and for the travel support granted by the British Lichen Society and The Linnean Society to enable several delegates from Eastern European countries to participate. We owe a particular debt of gratitude to the Executive Secretary, Dr John Marsden, and his staff of The Linnean Society of London for all their help and support, especially the Meetings Officer, Ms Marquita Baird, for the

administration provided. We feel very honoured that, for the first time in their history, The Linnean Society allowed their splendid rooms to be used on a Sunday.

**M. Wedin, T. Tønsberg and D.H. Brown**

The Senior Editor of *The Lichenologist* is pleased to have this opportunity to acknowledge, with considerable gratitude, the rôle played by Mats Wedin in initiating, developing, implementing and guiding the Symposium to a successful conclusion. Subsequently, Mats was also responsible for organising the process of reviewing manuscripts and confirming that authors had responded appropriately to the objective suggestions made by the many voluntary referees, who dealt with manuscripts both fully and rapidly. Where appropriate, the editors of this issue have accepted manuscripts that retained much of the flavour of the original lecture, rather than insist on the more usual formal format.

**D.H. Brown**