Climate Change: the Karst Record (4th ed.)

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The quant tourist destination Baile Herculane, Romania, known for its Roman thermal bath, was host to Climate Change: the Karst Record IV from May 26 to May 29, 2006. The meeting was hosted by the “Emil Racoviță” Institute of Speleology and the Romanian Society of Speleology and Karstology and sponsored by the Karst Waters Institute. The Ferdinand Hotel provided an excellent setting for three days of presentations which were followed by a field trip to the Danube Gorge and Ponicova Cave (Fig. 1). Two optional extended field trips were held beginning on May 30, 2006, one to the Southern Carpathians, the other to the Western Carpathians.

The Karst Record conference series began in 1996 in Bergen, Norway. Since then Karst Record conferences have been held in Krakow, Poland (2000) and Montpellier, France (2003). The next Karst Record conference is scheduled to be held during the summer of 2008 in China.

During “Climate Change: the Karst Record IV”, 148 scientists from 27 countries came together to present research in seven themed sessions entitled Present-day Karst Environments; Karst Evolution, Karst Modeling, Paleokarst; New Techniques and Instrumental Advances; Climate Reconstructions; Sea-level Changes; Fossil Remains in Karst and Paleoclimates; and Theoretical and Applied Karstology (off topic contributions). Five keynote speeches were given: Speleothems, what do they tell us about climate, the timing of climate change, and the migration of desert borders (M. Bar-Matthews, A. Ayalon, A. Yaks, A. Franklin, B. Schilman, A. Almoli-Labin and A. Matthews), Speleothems as recorders of flooding and insights into the Earth’s hydraulic cycle (J.A. Dorale), Speleophysiology: a key to understanding high-resolution information in speleothems (I. Fairchild, A. Baker, L. Fuller, A. Borsato, R. Miorandi, S. Frisia, D. Mattey, E. McMillian, C. Spötl, B. Andreo, I. Vadillo, and F. Carrasco), Unfinished businesses (D. Ford), Speleothem geochronology and climate change: practice and prospects (D. A. Richards, P.L. Smart, and D.L. Hoffmann), and The importance of the Romanian karst for modern human origins research (J. Zilhão).

The main section of the conference ended with a one day field trip lead with the help of Cristian Goran. Participants had the opportunity to hike up the Danube Gorge cliffs, see the statue of Decebal, King of ancient Dacia, an old monastery which overlooks the gorge, and Ponicova Cave.

Two five day field trips left Baile Herculane on May 30, 2006. Dr. Silviu Constantin led a trip to the Southern Carpathians where participants visited the Topolnita-Epuran Cave System, karst depressions on the Medehini Mountain Ridge, Cloșani underground laboratory, Bulba-Ponoarele, Sohodol, Oltet, Galbenul Gorges, and historical regions of the Southern Carpathians. The second trip was led by Dr. Bogdan Onac. This trip, to the Western Carpathians, visited Cioclovina Cave, Gârda Valley, Șărișoara Ice Cave, Bears Cave, Criș Gorges. Participants had planned to visit Wind Cave; however, intense rainfall flooded the cave preventing entrance. Participants in both field trips stayed in a variety of speleo-huts, hostels, dormitories, and local bed and breakfasts while enjoying superb home cooked meals.

Paleoclimate records make it abundantly clear that abrupt global climate changes have occurred in the past (Bradley, 1999). “Climate Change: the Karst Record IV” provided an avenue which advancements in both analytical techniques and research philosophies were unmistakable. As a result of the wide range of experience from all researchers present, knowledge of reconstructions of past climatic conditions derived from paleoclimate proxies continues to grow stronger and more complete.

REFERENCES


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