

The Fourth Balkan Botanical Congress “Nature without Borders”, Sofia, 20-26th June 2006

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The motto of the Fourth Balkan Botanical Congress, organized under the patronage of the Chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, was aptly selected: 328 specialists altogether took part in the Congress, from 26 nearby and faraway countries (Serbia and Iran), with similar or distant floras (Greece and Belgium, the Ukraine, Russia). They all were directly related to the eight thematic areas (symposia) which focused on problems from sub-cellular to ecosystem structure of the plant world, its protection *in situ*, *ex situ*, on ethnobotany, and training on different levels. The papers at the three plenary sessions delivered by leading contemporary botanists – Prof. Arne Strid (Sweden), Prof. Giuseppe Venturella (Italy), Prof. Vladimir Stevanović (Serbia) – in resembled character theoretical overviews. That strongly contributed to a very interesting and creative discussion that ended with the following well-defined general conclusion: the Balkan Peninsula (especially its mountainous regions) is a still functioning speciation centre producing new species. The Congress was held in the Vitosha Park Hotel. One hundred and fifty scientific papers were presented and analysed in four auditoriums. There were spon-

taneous meetings, deliberately-sought contacts and partnerships. The festive mood ran high already at the official opening of the Congress, when its participants were honoured with welcome addresses by the Deputy-Chairman of the National Assembly Petar Beron, Deputy Minister for the Environment and Water Yordan Dardov, BAS Chairman Acad. Ivan Yuhnovski, and the representative of the business circles Dipl. Architect L. Pelovski, from Glavbolgarstroj (main sponsor of the Congress).





Four hundred posters were presented at the poster sessions, many of which with the merit of artworks. Nature is the botanists' greatest lab. That is why, on 23rd June a one-day hiking trip was organised to Mt Vitosha: impressive with the pinnacles of its highest peak Cherni Vruh, draped in fogs, white with hail, and sparkling in the sun. Other excursions were arranged to the Rila, Pirin and Rhodopi Mts after the end of the Congress. The closing session included

a review of the Congress' work, awarding of diplomas to winners of the photo competition held between the participants and, above all, a discussion of how to select the next host- country of the Fifth Balkan Botanical Congress. Many participants expressed their satisfaction with the work and organisation in the Book of Opinions. The Proceedings of the Congress, amounting to over 200 pages, will be sent to all authors.
