

Preface

This special issue of the European Journal of Soil Biology presents a selection of papers that were presented during the XIVth International Colloquium on Soil Zoology held in the University of Rouen from August 30th to September 3rd 2004. This colloquium, organised every 4 years in different countries around the world, is the most important scientific meeting devoted to this research field. This volume was co-organised by a Local Organising Committee composed of researchers from the “Laboratoire d’Ecologie des Sols Tropicaux” (LEST, IRD, Bondy) and the “Laboratoire d’Ecologie” (ECODIV, University of Rouen). The tradition of the colloquium is to devote each meeting to a challenging main topic. The Rouen’s edition was dedicated to the study of the relationships between “Soil Animals and Ecosystem Services”, a leading theme of soil ecology that served as a general guide for the selection of the session themes and the classification of oral and poster presentations submitted by participants.

This edition of the colloquium was undoubtedly a great success if we consider the very high number of participants. A total of 365 scientists from 42 different countries were registered during the whole week of the meeting. They presented 324 communications, including 10 invited presentations, 41 oral communications, 259 posters, eight programme presentations and six workshop reports. Presentations were organised in eight different sessions. Two of them captivated most of the contributions: session 2 (Soil Biodiversity) with a total of eight oral presentations and 67 posters, and session 7 (Functional Groups and Bioindicators) with 10 oral communications and 60 posters. The rest of the contributions was presented in session 1 (Man and the Soil Fauna; three oral communications and one poster), session 3 (Nutrient Cycling, Soil Fertility; nine oral communications and 21 posters), session 4 (Ecosystem Engineering; eight oral communications and 29 posters),

session 5 (Food Webs/Biological Controls; eight oral communications and 23 posters), session 6 (Waste Treatment/Detoxification/Ecotoxicology; eight oral communications and 32 posters) and session 8 (Autecology and Biology of Soil Animals; 19 posters). Finally, a special session dedicated to Invasive Species was also included in the scientific programme (five oral presentations and seven posters).

A novelty of the XIVth edition of the colloquium was the venue of six workshops on hot topics of soil animal ecology. Topics were proposed by participants and selected by the Local Scientific Committee. They included: Soil fauna sampling: from plot to landscape scales. Synthetic indices of soil quality based on fauna communities. Faunal/microbial interactions: concepts and methodologies. Linking morphology and functioning in humiferous episolum: soil fauna in existing classification of humus forms. Measuring soil fauna contribution to ecosystem services: protocols and methods. Modelling soil fauna regulations in ecosystems: how to combine the foodweb and ecosystem engineer approach. A report of each workshop was presented during the course of the Colloquium, and several resulted in the redaction of synthesis papers that are included in the present volume.

We wish to thank Timothy M. Vogel, Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Soil Biology for publishing the selected papers of the XIVth ICSZ in this special issue, the Scientific Committees for useful advice and the International Advisory Committee for allowing us to organise this Colloquium. The organisation of the meeting itself was made possible thanks to Jean-Luc Nahel, president of the University of Rouen and to the team at the “Maison de l’Université”. We are also grateful to the Regional Council of Upper Normandy, the “Institut de Recherche pour le Développement” (IRD) and the Scientific Committee of the Uni-

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The next ICSZ will be held in Curitiba, Brazil, in 2008, and will be organised by George G. Brown (EMBRAPA) and Klaus D. Sautter (UNICENP).

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