IPF PARTICIPATES IN THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THREE BELGIAN ANTARCTIC RESEARCH PROJECTS



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On 9 December 2009 at the University of Liège, Belgium, the IPF participated in the annual meeting of three Belgian Antarctic research projects: AMBIO, ANTAR-IMPACT & BELDIVA.

- **BELDIVA**: A research project looking at the microbial diversity within a 200 km radius of the new Princess Elisabeth Station;
- **ANTAR-IMPACT**: An expert platform for the inventory of microbial diversity and evaluation of the environmental impact of the Princess Elisabeth Station;
- **AMBIO** (Antarctic Microbial BIOdiversity): A project looking at the influence of geographical and ecological factors on microbial biodiversity in the Antarctic

The meeting included researchers and their respective user committees from the Cyanobacteria Group at the Centre for Protein Engineering at the University of Liège, the Protistology and Aquatic Ecology Laboratory at the University of Gent, the Microbiology Laboratory at the University of Gent and the National Botanical Garden of Belgium.

Consisting of a morning and afternoon session, the meeting served not only to provide an overview of the

research partners' recent activities, but also an occasion to have an internal discussion about future steps to take in each of the research projects.

During the morning session, the partners presented the ongoing research and results currently being conducted on microbial diversity in Antarctica. In the last session of the morning, Dr. Bruno Danis (from the users committee) presented the SCAR-MarBIN database of Antarctic marine species he's developed as well as the future AntaBIF (Antarctic Biodiversity Information Facility) database of all known species living in Antarctica he is in the process of developing. AntaBIF will be an essential tool for managing and sharing the terrestrial biodiversity data in Antarctica.

In the afternoon session, a workshop entitled "Antarctic Climate, Biodiversity and Invasion" was held for a wider general public audience. Dr. Pete Convey from the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) and Dr. Ad Huiskes from the Dutch Institute for Ecology (NIOO KNAW) gave talks about the invasion of non-native species in Antarctica. Following this, Dr. Elie Verleyen, who won last year's InBevBaillet Latour Fellowship, gave an overview of the now finalized BELSPO HOLANT (Holocene climate variability and ecosystem change in coastal East and Maritime Antarctica) project. The afternoon session was topped off with Dr. Hendrick Segers from the Belgian Biodiversity Platform, who presented his organization and highlighted the important activities it undertakes in promoting research on biodiversity in Belgium and the rest of Europe.

The IPF has been regularly participating in these annual meetings for a number of years to stay abreast of Belgian research activities being conducted in Antarctica and be able to communicate to the general public about these activities and their findings through outreach and education initiatives.