

## BOOK REVIEW

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Cervantes Ruiz de la Torre, E. (ed.). 2015. *Naturalistas en debate*. Editorial CSIC, Madrid, Spain. 368 pp. ISBN: 978-84-00-09954-1

This book, published by Editorial CSIC, consists of a series of articles/chapters dealing with subjects that are sometimes controversial in the broad field of natural history. As the title suggests, most of them deal with «human» controversies between scientists/naturalists. Some deal with historical facts, disputes, fake results, and even revenge; others deal with relationships between scientists and their institutions or high-level research structures; and most of them point out differences between points of view, or in the ways of approaching particular subjects or discoveries.

The subjects and objectives of this compilation are presented in the first chapter, written by Emilio Cervantes Ruiz de la Torre, the coordinator and conceiver of the book.

All the authors are Spanish and the whole book is written in Spanish, allowing them to freely and fully express their points of view. This does, however, preclude reaching a wider international readership. Most of the subjects dealt with in the book focus on local problems, but this does not mean that the message and conclusions are local—indeed, they could serve as examples of global problems. Abstracts in English or, much better, a final chapter of conclusions in English, would have been very welcome.

Most of the chapters focus on terrestrial natural history, but at least two of them deal with marine subjects. Since *Scientia Marina* is a marine-focused scientific journal, I will focus my final comments on these two articles.

The first of these chapters, written by the ichthyologist Domingo Lloris, deals with «Perplexities and paradoxes of a taxonomist». It provides information and critical thoughts on several issues that are well-known to scientists and the general public but always controversial. One of them is whether greater efforts should be made to correctly identify and name marine species, especially those of interest to fisheries. Strict identification is widely supported by most taxonomists and many zoologists, ecologists and marine biologists, but not by governments due to the difficulty of carrying it out and establishing routines. Inaccurate or deliber-

ate misidentification and/or naming may involve cheating consumers, but implementation of strict identification and naming may make commercialisation more complex and increase the final cost of the product. On the other hand, scientific knowledge and management would increase in quality, reliability, and accuracy, which is also good for the final consumer. The author also provides examples of the need for accuracy and correct identification of material and specimens used for genetic analysis. Accuracy is certainly essential for large databases, which often need precise cleaning and checking before analyses are run on them, whether for scientific purposes or for informing the general public. Basic data need to be sound, because inaccurate data can lead to hasty or incorrect conclusions.

The second of these chapters, written by Juan Pérez-Rubín Feigl, deals with the history of institutional and personal «wars» between several scientific institutions «battling» for leadership and control of marine sciences in the first half of the 20th century. Widely known names such as Mariano Graells, José Rioja, Ignacio Bolívar and Odón de Buen, and institutions such as the Real Gabinete de Madrid, the Estación de Biología Marina de Santander, the Musée Océanographique de Monaco, the Real Sociedad Española de Historia Natural, the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, the Instituto Español de Oceanografía, the Junta de Ampliación de Estudios, and the Spanish National Research Council appear throughout the chapter. The chapter is rather long and difficult to read because of the extensive notes, but it provides useful information. Like most chapters of this book, it is controversial, but this is exactly what the coordinator was looking for: to provide scientific historic information to shed some light and thoughts on problems that are present within the scientific and naturalist community.

As stated above, an English version of at least some of the chapters would have allowed the book to reach a wider community and helped disseminate the knowledge and points of view presented. Nevertheless, the book makes an interesting contribution to the history of scientific disputes.

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