

news

The Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF 2008)

In July 18 through 22, 2008, Barcelona will host the 3rd Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF 2008), the biggest European interdisciplinary meeting of scientists, and research promoters and managers. More than 5.000 scientists are expected to attend the meeting, as well as visitors interested in the social diffusion of science. In addition to the scientific sessions, many outreach activities will be organized either at the meeting venue, in Montjuïc or around the city. The Catalan Foundation for Research and Innovation (FCRI) is the local institution coordinating the meeting.

The ESOF are biennial meetings organized by EuroScience, an independent institution established in 1997, which now has more than 2,100 members in 40 countries. Euroscience membership comprises researchers, research managers, politicians and representatives of private companies. Euroscience is a grass-roots organisation open to research professionals, science administrators, policy-makers, teachers, PhD students, post-docs, engineers, industrialists, and in general to any citizen interested in science and technology and its links with society. It represents European scientists of all disciplines (including social sciences and the humanities), in the public sector, universities, research institutes as well as business and industry.

Major aims of ESOF 2008 are: (a) presenting scientific and technological developments at the cutting edge from natural sciences to the social sciences and the humanities; (b) Stimulating the European public's awareness of and interest in science and technology; and (c) Fostering a European dialogue on science

and technology, society and policy by offering a platform for cross-disciplinary interaction and communication on current trends and future roads for science and technology, their interaction with society and policy and the role of the public.

Research Park at the Autonomous University of Barcelona

On October 19 2007 the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) Research Park was inaugurated. The Park is a joint venture of the UAB, the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) and the Institute of Agriculture and Food Technology Research (IRTA). In addition to the UAB departments and research teams, the Cluster comprises small and medium enterprises incubators, entrepreneurial R+I units and scientific technical services at the UAB campus, as well as Torre Marimon Farm, where agriculture research will be carried out.

Lynn Margulis, Doctor Honoris Causa by the Autonomous University of Barcelona

On June 6, 2007 the Autonomous University of Barcelona conferred the academic title of Doctor Honoris Causa to Lynn Margulis, North-American biolo-

gist author of the symbiogenesis theory to explain the evolution of eukaryotes. In 1967 Margulis proposed that the nucleus and several cytoplasmic organelles would have originated from separated organisms that entered prokaryotic cell with which they established symbiotic relationships. She predicted that, if organelles were prokaryotic endosymbionts, they would have their own DNA, which would differ from the DNA of the eukaryotic cell where they dwell. Her prediction was proven in the 1980's in mitochondria, centrioles and chloroplasts. Margulis' theory, rejected by mainstream biology for many years, currently has received wide support. She has collaborated with James Lovelock to the development of the Gaia theory, which considers the Earth as a living system in which the atmosphere, the geological support and the living beings interact and influence to each other.

World Conference on Science & Technology Parks

The 24th World Conference on Science & Technology Parks took place in Barcelona on July 2, 3, 4, 2007 having as its general topic "Creative Jobs and Creative Companies — Key Factors for Growth and Competitiveness". The conference was organized by the International Association of Science Parks (IASP), a non governmental organization founded in 1984 to connect science parks professionals worldwide and provide services to drive growth and effectiveness for its members. The

IASP is in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, and is a founding member of the World Alliance for Innovation (WAINOVA). Science Parks are organisations that promote and manage the flow of knowledge and technology amongst universities, R&D institutions, companies and markets, and facilitate the creation and growth of innovation-based companies through incubation and spin-off processes. The local entity coorganizer of the 24th AISP Conference was the Park Tecnològic del Vallès, which is the first of its kind in Catalonia, it having been founded in 1987.

Invasive species spreading throughout Mediterranean ecosystems: zebra mussel and Asian tiger mosquito

Zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*) and Asian tiger mosquito (*Aedes albopictus*) are two invasive species that have spread throughout Mediterranean ecosystems and have already established in Catalonia. Zebra mussel was first detected in 2001 in the last part of the Ebro River and genetic studies revealed similarities with populations settled in France and Italy. Since then, this species has been found not only in upper parts of the Ebro River but also in other aquatic ecosystems of the Iberian Peninsula. The Catalan Water Agency has been in charge of managing the invasion since Autumn 2006. Three kinds of action lines have been designed: prevention of the invasion, detection and immediate application of control measures, and reduction and eradication—whenever possible—of the populations. Asian tiger mosquito is a species native of southeastern Asia that has expanded westbound. It entered the Iberian Peninsula through Catalonia, where was first detected in 2004 in Sant Cugat del Valles, near Barcelona. Even though the insect poses no public health risk, it is very ag-

gressive, flies and attacks at daytime and can be abundant in gardens or other places where there is stagnant water or any open container containing water where its larvae can develop. Eradication of tiger mosquito is virtually impossible once it has settled in an area. The only thing to do is trying to prevent it from being around. As the tiger mosquito has a short flight range, (less than 200 m) control can be achieved eliminating any possible containers or pools of standing water.

AWARDS

Contributions to Science Most Visited Article Award 2006

During the acts of delivery of the Prizes *Sant Jordi* of the *Institut d'Estudis Catalans*, in April 24, 2007, the article "Phytoremediation: principles and perspectives" by Joan Barceló and Charlotte Poschenrieder, published in *Contributions to Science* 2(3): 333-344 (2003), has received the MOST VISITED ARTICLE AWARD 2006 delivered by this journal.

Acute and diffuse contamination of soil and water by heavy metals and metalloids cause wide, environmental and social concern. Among the techniques used to cleanup affected sites, phytoremediation has recently emerged as a new, cost-effective, environment-friendly alternative. This review focuses on metal hyperaccumulator plants and their potential use in phytoextraction technology.

Harold A. Mooney awarded the 2007 Ramon Margalef Prize in Ecology and Environmental Sciences

Stanford University researcher and professor Harold A. Mooney was award-

ed the Third Ramon Margalef Prize in Ecology and Environmental Sciences. Mooney, considered to be a pioneer in the study of plant physiological ecology, is an international leader in the study of environmental problems related to the loss of biodiversity and climate change. His research focuses on the phenomena that affect global changes, including ecological invasions and the degradation of ecosystems. Studying both the adaptations of individual plants and changes within terrestrial ecosystems, especially ecosystem function, productivity and biodiversity, are approaches that have allowed Mooney to show how human-induced ecological disturbances modify the functioning of the Earth as a whole.

Joan Massagué recipient of the 2007 Passano Award

Joan Massagué, chair of the Cancer Biology and Genetics Program in the Sloan-Kettering Institute, New York is the recipient of the 2007 Passano Award for the originality and importance of his work elucidating the mechanism of action for transforming growth factor-beta (TGF- β) signaling. The TGF- β family of proteins, which can both activate and inhibit cell growth, can act as a tumor suppressor in early stages of cancer and as a promoter of metastasis in the later stages of tumor progression. Much of Massagué's recent work has focused on metastasis, and his team has identified sets of genes that drive the spread of breast cancer to the bone and the lungs. Since 1945, the Passano Foundation has presented an annual award to a person or persons that have made an outstanding contribution in medical research and whose work has been carried out in the United States. Since 1945, a number of Passano winners have been awarded also a Nobel prize; these include Edward Calvin Kendall, Edwin Gerhard Krebs, Roger Guillemin, Edmond H. Fischer, Roger Kornberg and Joseph Goldstein,

OBITUARY

Creu Casas (1913-2007)

Creu Casas, Professor Emeritus of Botanics of the Autonomous University of Barcelona, and a member of the Institute for Catalan Studies (IEC) passed

away at age 94 on May 20 2007. In 1978, Casas became the first woman elected to be member of the IEC, in the Section of Biological Sciences. She was also member of the Royal Academy of Farmacy of Catalonia. A specialist in briology, she worked until her death in the study of mosses and other briophytes on the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. Her last book was

Handbook of mosses of the Iberian Peninsula and the Balearic Islands: Illustrated keys genera and species, which she coauthored with her collaborators Montserrat Brugués, Rosa M. Cros and Cecilia Sergio, illustrators Anna Barrón and Iolanda Filella, and was published by the IEC Servei de Publicacions in 2006.