



Ichnology Newsletter

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Shahin E. Dashtgard and Noelia B. Carmona, Coeditors

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Editors

Shahin E. Dashtgard

Applied Research in Ichnology and Sedimentology (ARISE) Group, Department of Earth Sciences, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, Canada V5A 1S6, Phone +1-778-782-5492, email: sdashtgard@gmail.com

Noelia B. Carmona

Instituto de Investigación en Paleobiología y Geología, Universidad Nacional de Río Negro, Isidro Lobo y Belgrano, (8332) Roca, Río Negro, Argentina, Phone: 0054-2941-427399, email: nbcarmona@iado-conicet.gob.ar

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The Eleventh International Ichnofabric Workshop

June 30 to July 5, 2011, Colunga, Spain

By: *Luis Buatois*

Let us start this report with a simple question: what are the requirements that a scientific meeting, such as a workshop with a strong field component, needs to fulfill in order to be successful? First, it has to be well organized, and the selection of the locale plays in this case a significant role. Second, the scientific level should be reasonably high (that includes not only the quality of talks and posters presentations, but also the quality of the outcrops, planning and leadership of fieldtrips). Third, we have the social aspects, including the overall setting of the meeting, the evening activities, and the general human environment. Because neither of us works for a marketing agency, we have not conducted any systematic opinion pool among the participants, but our perception based on individual talks with colleagues is that everyone who attended the XI International Ichnofabric Workshop would agree that the meeting excelled in these three previously outlined aspects. The Asturias meeting was really GREAT and the three organizers, José Carlos García Ramos, Laura Piñuela and Francisco Rodríguez Tovar, did an amazing job in setting up a highly successful, memorable workshop.

The workshop was held in the town of Colunga, on the Asturias coast, with the scientific sessions taking place at the Museum of the Jurassic of Asturias (MUJA). The MUJA, which came to reality thanks to José Carlos' continuous efforts for more than a decade, is an ideal venue for scientific meetings. The participants were able to attend the sessions, but also to visit the museum and spend time looking at the marvellous trace-fossil collections. Together with the customary conference proceedings (this time including extended abstracts) and fieldtrip guides, additional material was presented, including two beautifully illustrated volumes: an atlas of the Jurassic of Asturias and an atlas of the modern invertebrate faunas of the Cantabrian Sea. After an icebreaker party at the museum on the evening of Thursday June 30th (where the participants had their first contact with Asturian cuisine, a real treat!), the first day of sessions took place during the whole Friday July 1st, including the first set of talks and posters.

The intra-congress field trip took place on Saturday, when we visited Middle Devonian shallow-marine deposits of the Naranco Formation along coastal cliffs of El Tranqueru section. The outcrops are spectacular, and we all gathered around extensive bedding planes densely covered with

trace fossils. This was an excellent opportunity to discuss about a number of ichnologic and sedimentologic topics, from tiering structure to the envisaged depositional mechanism. Later in the afternoon, we visited pre-Romanesque monuments, near the city of Oviedo and the town of Valdedios. One of these sites, the Santa Maria del Naranco monument, was declared a World Heritage Monument by UNESCO in 1985. (Woody Allen's statue is also in Oviedo, but it is more recent and was not included in the tour.) In the evening, we visited the cider factory El Gaitero ("famosa en el mundo entero").

The second day of scientific sessions took place on Sunday during the morning, again including both posters and talks. Overall, the two days of scientific sessions covered a wide variety of topics, including the role of bioturbation in permeability, crustacean burrows, new techniques in neoichnology, the interactions of bioturbation and diagenesis, bioturbation through time, and applications in archaeology, to name just a few. In the afternoon we had the opportunity to explore and admire the Tito Bustillo Cave, another UNESCO World Heritage Monument since 2008. This karstic cave developed in Carboniferous limestone offers outstanding views of paintings of Magdalenian (Paleolithic) age.

The post-conference field trip took place during July 4–5th. The first day we visited Lower Jurassic outcrops of marl-limestone rhythmites along Vega Beach in the morning. This was an astounding opportunity to examine ichnofabrics from a depositional setting which is commonly overlooked in textbooks. The *Chondrites-Phymatoderma* ichnofabrics were particularly outstanding. We spent the afternoon looking at the Villar sea cliffs near the town of Villaviciosa, looking at Lower Jurassic hardgrounds and nodular limestones; what a great opportunity to learn about bioerosion!

On Tuesday, we visited El Puntal cliffs, also near Villaviciosa, this time to look at spectacular specimens of *Rhizocorallium* in Lower to Middle Jurassic limestones. One of these discontinuity surfaces contains some of the most amazing firmground ichnofabrics that we have ever seen—two years before the meeting we visited this outcrop with Laura and José Carlos, and took a photo that we included in our Ichnology book to illustrate this topic. In the afternoon, we went to La Griega beach to look at

Upper Jurassic continental to marginal-marine deposits containing both invertebrate and vertebrate trace fossils. Deciphering the sauropod trackways guided by Laura's expertise was a real treat.

The social atmosphere of the meeting was exceptional; we were really spoiled by our hosts who cared about every little detail during the event. Evening dinners with exquisite Asturian food and panoramic views of the Cantabrian sea, are among the best memories. The ichnofabric workshops continue to rank among the best venues for sharing experiences and exchange ideas for the simple love of doing research in a topic that we all enjoy, far away from the "show business" mindset that unfortunately dominates so many large scientific conferences nowadays. The

workshop was very well attended (probably the largest since the beginning of these meetings in 1991), with 57 participants from 20 countries (Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, Czech Republic, France, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Norway, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, and United States). Interestingly, approximately 50 % of the participants were new to the ichnofabric workshops, showing that interest in ichnology is growing and the location and fieldtrips were attractive and appropriate for the venue. José Carlos, Laura and Francisco should be congratulated for having organized such a wonderful, and unforgettable (for good reasons!) meeting!



Group photo at Tranqueru Beach.



Group photo at the Jurassic Museum.