

EVOLUTION AND CONSERVATION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC ISLANDS

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By M.V.Hounsome¹

Proceedings Editor

Islands have always held the fascination of biologists. They often have unique floras and faunas, with high proportions of endemics, and they offer the promise of solutions to evolutionary problems that are intractable when viewed from larger land masses. They can also be attractive and exciting places, populated by charming people with distinctive island cultures. No wonder, then, that biologists from mainland Europe were attracted to the North Atlantic islands, which were so conveniently placed on their doorstep. The result has been that more is known of the islands' fauna and flora than is known from comparable areas of continental Europe, but that most of the work has been carried out by foreigners. This historic situation has now changed, with the emergence of universities on the islands themselves, and of a new generation of enthusiastic resident biologists.

The Manchester conference can be seen as marking the end of an era, or, more positively, the start of a new one. It brought together, often for the first time, biologists from the islands themselves; more than half the authors of the papers in the two conference publications come from the islands. It seems that the Manchester conference has been a catalyst in a now self-sustaining reaction, and that we may see a plethora of research papers originating from

¹Keeper of Zoology, Manchester University Museum, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, UK

the islands. Already there are plans for further conferences, locally organised. Let us hope that local interest in natural history and conservation continues to grow and that resources are found to preserve the unique faunas, floras and habitats to be found on these fragile islands.

More than a hundred people from ten countries attended the Manchester conference, which was supported by The Linnean Society. It was jointly organised by Martin Jones at Manchester Polytechnic (now Manchester Metropolitan University), Laurence Cook at Manchester University, and Mike Hounsome at Manchester University Museum. The twenty-six contributions in this volume, together with the seventeen published by The Linnean Society, reflect the more formal aspect of the conference. The 110 delegates produced 37 lectures, 5 conservation workshops and 54 poster displays - a total of 96 presentations - surely a record of participation!

This conference volume concludes with the abstracts of the conference papers already published in the *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*. Thanks are due to the editor (Dr D.R. Lees) and Harcourt Brace & Company for this opportunity to give readers the full flavour of the Manchester Conference.