

# Oak Open Days – Portugal/Spain

## 27-30 October 2010

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### Wednesday 27

The participants met in the lobby of the Holiday Inn in Lisbon at 20h00. By 21h30 everyone had arrived and we were carried off to dinner at the exhibition center that was host to the Exposition Universelle in 1998. Afterwards we visited the grounds where oaks had been planted to landscape the area in 1998: *Q. mas* Thore (or, more precisely, *Q. petraea* (Matt) Liebl. subsp. *huguetiana* Franco and Lopez-Gonzalez) as well as numerous other more common taxa such as *Q. cerris* L., *Q. xturneri* Willd., and *Q. frainetto* Ten.. We had a rather surrealistic nocturnal botanizing experience in this ultra-modern site with the contrast of powerful urban lighting and the sombre ground on which to look for acorns!



Strolling the Dehasa, Portugal

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## Thursday 28

We were off to an early start, as was to be the case every day hereafter. We headed for Montemor, southeast of Lisbon, to discover *Q. alentejana*, a new species (in publication) typical and endemic to the Alentejo region of Portugal, as well as its weeping form (from which Dirk Benoit collected scions). Our guide during this visit is Pr. Carlos Pinto.

Our next stop was at Vendas Novas to observe pure populations of *Q. lusitanica* Lam. as well as hybrid populations of this species with *Q. suber* L. and *Q. faginea* Lam. subsp. *broteroi* (Cout.) A. Camus. Carlos Pinto explained how to distinguish pure *Q. lusitanica* : the leaf margin should be entire, without teeth or lobes at the base, and the acorns should be short and large. When there is hybridization with *Q. suber*, for example, the base of the leaf margin will have teeth and the acorn will be much longer.

We crossed the border into Spain and Carlos took us to lunch at a local inn to eat bifanas, a delicious speciality of Extremadura that we all enjoyed heartily.

On the road again for a two-hour ride, our next destination was Guadajira (Spain) and the Arboretum de la Orden, center for biodiversity studies and Francisco Vasquez' fief. Here we admired a collection of local *Quercus*, and in particular *Q. canariensis* Willd, *Q. faginea* and its subspecies *broteroi*, and *Q. alpestris* Boiss. We visited the ultra-modern propagation greenhouses and had our first presentation. The presentations were very interesting but the language barriers were difficult for everyone – except for Dirk Benoit! Finally, we returned to the bus again for our final destination of the day, Badajoz (Spain) for dinner and the Hotel Rio.



Learning about the trees of Lisbon's Ajuda Botanic Garden, the first botanic garden established in Portugal (1768), from its director, Dalila Spirito Santos

photo@Timacheff

## Friday 29

We left for Almendral (Spain) to be transported in 4-wheel drive vehicles to an enormous *Q. rotundifolia* Lam. with a circumference of 4.5 m and 500 years of age: El Romo, or Monumental Holm Oak, in a typical dehesa (see International Oaks, Issue N° 13, 2002, page 5). After, we entered the Valle de Santa Ana and found more *Q. alentejana* as well as two rather small specimens of *Q. robur* L. subsp. *extremadurensis* O. Schwarz and the hybrids of these two taxa.

Back in our bus, we headed for Fregenal de la Sierra to admire a very large and old *Taxodium distichum* and to have a wonderful lunch provided by the parents of one of Francisco's students, Maria. Expecting a picnic, everyone was surprised to be served a pantagruelien lunch composed of Extremaduran specialties that we all enjoyed immensely. The rain that commenced during our lunch was to stay with us for the remainder of the trip but this did not stop us from exploring the most southern location of a pure *Q. pyrenaica* Willd. forest – with an enormous acorn production!

Back in the bus we went, and on to Monesterio for a second conference hosted by the local city Council. We ended the day in a restaurant where we enjoyed a marvelous dinner of both cooked and raw wild mushrooms (amongst others, Amanites des Césars, Bolets, Russules)

## Saturday 30

We left at 8h00, in the rain, for a 2-hour bus ride and arrive in a mixed dehesa of *Q. suber* and *Q. rotundifolia* in a prehistoric site called Les Almendres where there is a cromlech (prehistoric monument of megaliths), astonishing both in its



The group admires Encine el Romo, one of the largest and oldest *Quercus rotundifolia* trees in Extremadura, Spain  
photo©Timacheff

dimensions and age (7000 years). As we leave, our bus breaks down and we have to wait for a new one to arrive. Following this we leave for Evora to explore a forest of *Q. coccifera* subsp. *rivas-martinezii* J.H. Copelo et J.C. Costa. We collected acorns in torrential rain, lunched on bifanas in the bus, and returned to Lisbon with a stop on the way near Setubal to visit a site with *Q. faginea* subsp. *broteroi*.

Once in Lisbon we went directly to the Jardin Botanique de Ajuda which we visit accompanied by light rain. Doctora Dalila Spiritos Santos, director of the garden and a very pleasant person, explained with much humour the history of this garden in which there are a large number of essentially exotic plants. We exchanged acorns in an ancient green house with an all-marble interior.

Our last dinner together was as lively and gay as the entire trip, thanks to Francisco's team composed of young men and women from amongst whom it would be hard to decide who was the nicest. They all largely contributed to the success of these Oak Open Days.

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