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# Vodka, Bison and Metabarcoding

- Editorial -

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The start of last month saw the occurrence of the Fifth Metabarcoding Spring School held in BiaBowieja National Park, Poland. A variety of scientists attended from all over the globe to learn, share and inspire with unique stories of metabarcoding.

The scientists at the Mammal Research Institute PAS in BiaBowieja National Park hosted this year's workshop. And our hats go off to them for the organizational skills, warmth and hospitality. During the week, experienced metabarcoders gave lectures on their trials and tribulations in the field of metabarcoding, sparking conversations between the attendees. The end of the first day saw flash talks from all participants of the event, creating an icebreaker and showing the wide variety of applications for metabarcoding, including, dietary studies, environmental health, fundamental ecology and exploration of rare and ancient habitats.

Pierre Taberlet (who is rumoured to run 8000 PCR a day!) taught technical aspects such as DNA extraction in the field, optimal PCR setups and experimental design, from well-tested and established methods at the LECA laboratory, France. Although each metabarcoding application is specific, complex environmental samples definitely have their own unique way to be dealt with!

Eric Coissac and Frederic Boyer, accompanied by the lovely Aurelie Bonin shared their knowledge of bioinformatics. Guiding the metabarcoders through OBItools software. After overcoming the brain ache of learning to code, students were equipped with the skills to design primers and analyse sequences.

Lunch times, and evening meals accompanied endless conversation with strong bonds building between international partners. However, something we must also not forget about this marvellous event was its location. Surrounding the research centre there were open green paddocks of wild flowers surrounded by natural Polish woodland. The wildlife was nothing short of extraordinary, with European bison exploring us to get up at dawn (3:30 am!!) and study their mysterious movements in the early morning fog. The lesser-spotted eagle soared through the air, whilst swallows danced in the skies, and red deer lept gracefully through the meadows. On a field excursion into the park participants got to stare in awe under the mighty oak trees, taste wild garlic, and sneak a peak at woodpeckers hiding in the treetops.

This workshop was an inspirational event for newcomers and experienced users of the metabarcoding community, allowing like-minded people to converse and learn from each other whilst having a great time surrounded by beautiful nature.

Thank you to everyone who participated in this workshop and previous events, we hope the world of metabarcoding will continue to grow and flourish from our networking!

That's all for now from the metabarcoding team!

If you have any news, publications or job postings to share email:

Melissa.brandner at metabarcoding.org

If you like what you hear here and are keen to get involved with the metabarcoding network join the talk.metabarcoding.org forum where you can share ideas and ask questions! And keep a look out for the next metabarcoding spring school!

Photo credit: A big thanks to Camilla Ryan for the gorgeous photos from the workshop.