



80th Anniversary of Efremov's Taphonomy (9th International Meeting on Taphonomy and Fossilization (TAPHOS) and 6th International Council for Archaeozoology Taphonomy Working Group (ICAZ-TWG) joint meeting)
Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, Spain 5 – 11 June 2022

This joint meeting was held in recognition of the 80th anniversary of Efremov's 1940 paper defining taphonomy as a scientific discipline and was held at the Aula Magna of the Universidad de Alcalá, Spain in June 2022, postponed from September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This special celebration was organized by the 9th TAPHOS Congress and the 6th ICAZ-TWG Meeting. We also commemorated the 30th anniversary of the first meeting on Taphonomy and Fossilization (now known as TAPHOS) and the special contribution to the theory of taphonomy by Sixto Fernández-López, as well as the 30th anniversary of the publication of the masterpiece *Owls, Caves and Fossils* by Peter Andrews (the basis of small mammal taphonomy methodology). We were especially honoured to have the participation of **Kay Behrensmeyer** as the keynote speaker of the opening session and **Christiane Denys** who gave the farewell keynote speech at this special celebration.

Despite the two-year postponement of the Congress due to COVID-19, we were still able to appreciate the special relevance of 2020 to our discipline and celebrate the aforementioned anniversaries. The pandemic resulted in the absence of around one tenth of delegates; however, although they were unable to attend in person, they were able to send in pre-recorded video presentations to be played during their congress sessions. Unfortunately, Peter Andrews was also unable to attend in person due to illness but luckily was able to follow the conference online. The pandemic did not reduce overall delegate participation significantly, with 123 participants in total of which 25 % were students. The meeting brought together vertebrate and invertebrate researchers from palaeontology, archaeology, geology, biology, histology and zooarchaeology, focusing on all aspects of taphonomy, *i.e.* forensic scholars, palaeoecologists, palaeoclimatologists. The participants travelled from around the world, with many scientists attending from across Europe as well as South, Central and North America.

The Congress began with a field-trip to the World Heritage sites of Atapuerca (Burgos) on 5th June, led by **Isabel Cáceres**, **Paula Mateo-Lomba** and **Héctor del Valle** from the Institute of Human Paleocology and Social Evolution (IPHES). The next day, another field-trip took us to the Valle de los Neandertales site in Pinilla (Madrid), hosted by **Enrique Baquedano**, **Belén Márquez**, **Bárbara Rodríguez** and **Cesar Laplana** from the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology. On 9th June a half-day mid-conference trip was made to the open-air site of Batallones (in Torrejón de Velasco, Madrid), led by **Soledad Domingo**.



Some of the Congress participants. Photo: William F. Keyser.



Field-trip to Cerro de los Batallones led by Soledad Domingo. Photo: William F. Keyser.

The opening of the Congress sessions took place on 7th June and participants were welcomed by the Vice-Rector and Dean of the Universidad de Alcalá (Margarita Vallejo Givés and Luis Rivera Galicia, respectively) and the director of the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology (Enrique Baquedano) as co-hosts of the Congress. Thanks to these institutions, as well as to the Vice-Dean Purificación Granero and Jose Raul Fernández del Castillo of the Foundation, we had a magnificent setting to celebrate our Congress, the Aula Magna. This conference hall was especially appropriate with sufficient space and ventilation to be COVID-19 secure, and all the facilities made the meeting as brilliant an event as it deserved to be.

The opening keynote by **Kay Behrensmeyer** entitled “What is Taphonomy in 2022?” updated us on the state of the art of taphonomic research methodologies and research subjects. This summary also displayed the new conception and perception of taphonomy amongst different research subjects, topics and professionals, as she noted, “some researchers even today ignore that what they are doing is actually taphonomy”. The sessions that followed were organized by ‘taphosystems’, a term proposed by **Sixto Fernández López** that refers to fossil associations and the external environment in which they were preserved. These sessions aimed to facilitate connecting experts from different backgrounds working on similar environments and were: open air, marine and karstic taphosystems, then experimental taphonomy and other environments. Each session alternated between podium and poster presentations and received a lot of comments and questions from the audience, leading to interesting discussions.

The Congress was supported by several palaeontological and archaeological institutions, foundations and societies: the Palaeontological Association (Grant-in-aid number PA-GA202003); TaphEN, a French working group supported by the European Union and the French Centre National de Recherche Scientifique (TaphEN-CNRS, Actions 2022); the International Council for Archaeozoology (ICAZ Congress Support); and the ArchaeologyHub of the CSIC (AII’2022 4_001). Other institutions such as the Foundation of and the Universidad de Alcalá, the Faculty of Economics, the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology, the City Hall of Alcalá, the Society of Friends of the Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales (SAM-MNCN, and especially Josefina Cabarga, who helped us massively with the Congress accounting work) all greatly facilitated the organization and celebration of the 80th Anniversary of Efremov’s Taphonomy congress. Student grants were given thanks to the Palaeontological Association, ICAZ and TaphEN. Transmitting Science (<www.transmittingscience.com>) also offered a free course to be awarded to a student presenter who provided excellent responses to questions from the audience; this was given to **Zohar Turgeman-Yaffe** from the University of Haifa, Israel.

The Congress closed with a final session on Saturday 11th June at the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology. **Oscar Cambra Moo** paid homage to the contributions of Sixto Fernández-López with a dynamic talk entitled “The preservation and conservation dilemma: a contribution to Sixto Fernández López’s theoretical framework of taphonomy”. At the end of the

talk he proposed a blind test with these two terms, which opened a debate on the difficulty of maintaining the nomenclature and the ‘false friends’ that also exist in our research fields. This is especially noticeable as we collaborate with specialists from very different fields and carry out cross-cutting research with very different researchers and disciplines. The debate also extended to the difficulty of publishing databases and experimental works and reinforced the need to promote the *Journal of Taphonomy* or create a new one. The Congress made clear the need to validate taphonomic modifications and processes through experimental work and long-term field monitoring, collecting not only specimens but also data (videos, photographs, maps) to upload and share online.

The tribute was given to Sixto Fernández-López in person and Peter Andrews received the tribute from Yolanda Fernández-Jalvo who flew to the UK to present the award. This tribute was also extended to Kay Behrensmeyer and Christiane Denys. The four received the homage from the Congress organizing committee and delegates for their outstanding contribution to our knowledge of taphonomy. A final keynote entitled “Microfaunal taphonomy comes of age: a tribute to Peter Andrews” was given by Christiane Denys. All contributions, both podium and poster presentations, as well as keynote speeches have been published in a special issue of the *Journal of Taphonomy* (volume **16** (1-4), 2022), featuring a full-colour front cover of Sixto Fernández-López and Peter Andrews. The journal generously granted open access to the Congress participants until the end of 2022. The Congress closed with a farewell party in the main hall of the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology, and the participants were invited to reconvene for the future meetings, with the 10th TAPHOS to be held in Ferrara, Italy and the 7th TWG-ICAZ in either France or Israel, as yet to be decided. We hope to see many PalAss members there!



Images from the farewell party at the Regional Museum of Archaeology and Palaeontology. The left-hand image shows part of the organizing committee and the honourees, L-R: Aida Gutiérrez, Ana Marín-Arroyo, Marta Moreno, Sixto Fernández-López, Kay Behrensmeyer, Christiane Denys, Paloma Sevilla, Angel Domínguez and Sara García-Morato (absent: Lucía Agudo, Peter Andrews and Yolanda Fernández-Jalvo). Photos courtesy of Yolanda Fernández-Jalvo.

Yolanda Fernández-Jalvo

Museo Nacional de Ciencias Naturales, Madrid, Spain

FURTHER READING

ANDREWS, P. 1990. *Owls, Caves, and Fossils: predation, preservation, and accumulation of small mammal bones in caves with an analysis of the Pleistocene cave faunas from Westbury-sub-Mendip, Somerset, UK*. University of Chicago Press, Illinois. 239 pp.

EFREMOV, I. 1940. Taphonomy: new branch of paleontology. *Pan American Geologist*, **74**, 81–93.

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