

European Champion Tree Forum
4th Meeting,
Valsaín, Spain, 10th to 14th October 2014

Report compiled by Gordon L Mackenthun (ECTF Secretary)

The 4th Meeting of the European Champion Tree Forum took place in the little village of Valsaín, north of Madrid and not very far from Segovia in the Region Castilla y León. We were guests of the Centro Nacional de Educación Ambiental, CENEAM, which is the environmental education centre of the Spanish Ministry of the Environment.



Besides 18 regulars a number of Spanish colleagues joined us for some of the excursions. As always, we were a happy crowd, everybody talking to old friends and making new acquaintances.

Being slightly different from the first three meetings, the focus in 2014 was on excursions and on actually visiting – and measuring – monumental trees. Everybody's heartfelt thanks go to Susana Dominguez Lerena who did all the organisational work, of which there was plenty.

Tree measurements

David, György, Marc and Roel compiled the complete list of trees measured. The list is attached to this report as Appendix I.

Presentations

Half a day was reserved for presentations. We heard:

Andrea Krůpová

European Tree of the Year

Newcomer Andrea Krůpová from Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation had informed about the concept of European Tree of the Year contest. The main aim of the contest is to find trees important for communities, support people in the community and encourage them for other local environmental actions, draw public attention to a tree as a natural capital and heritage. Winners of national contests are nominated into European contest in November and voting takes place online on www.treeoftheyear.org during February. Winner of the contest is announced at the European Parliament in Brussels in spring. Andrea talked about progress that contest made since 2011 when it has started. In the beginning 5 countries were involved and since then 14 countries will take part in 2015. Organizer of the contest – Environmental Partnership Association is searching for organizations (mainly environmentally focused NGO's) which are interested to organize national Tree of the Year contest in their countries.

David Alderman

Climbing the tallest tree / Use of drones in dendrometry

David's presentation was on tree recording using drones and began with a short film by the BBC about climbing the tallest tree in Britain and Ireland. The tree, a 67m tall Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) is growing in the picturesque location of Reelig Glen in the Highland's of Scotland. The woodland here is home to four tallest tree species and has been recognised as a special place for champion trees since the 1950's and has shared at various times the tallest tree since 1993. The film crew used a drone to take some spectacular shots above the canopy of the trees and close-up views of the climber.

There was a warning about recreational and professional tree climbers not taking special care of these trees when climbing. Images obtained from a later climb showed damage to the upper stem due to the use of climbing spikes.

The use of drones to record the height of trees had been tested by the Tree Register with the owner of a historic garden. A quad-copter drone had originally been purchased by the owner to use its camera to inspect the roof of the house. By setting the drone's on-board laser altimeter to ground level at the base of a tree, it could then be flown level with the top of the tree and the height above ground recorded. The top of the tree can be identified by viewing the drone's camera on a laptop screen. Judging that the drone is flying level with the tip of the tallest branch is a challenge, but the test flights showed that it was possible to obtain the same measurements as when using a hand-held laser clinometer from the ground.

The experiment showed that in areas where the top of the tree could not be seen or recorded using a hand held device, a drone was a genuine alternative. The drone could also help identify the tallest trees in a stand of trees. On the day this was being tested the biggest problem to overcome was the wind. Heavier and more powerful drones can overcome this problem, at a cost! Further testing and use of drones in tree recording will take place during 2015.

Davíd Mingot

Main facts of the 'Comunidad de Madrid' singular trees

Madrid County is located in the Kingdom of Spain, just in the middle of the Iberian Peninsula (southwest of Europe) and it is where the city of Madrid is located. All these aspects (climate, geography, population, history, etc) help us to explain the complete range of veteran and special

trees that you can find in the main historical cities and also in the forest areas. Many of these trees (257) were catalogued by the County in 1992 and they are known as 'Singular trees'. This catalogue is not only a list it also provides law protection, publicity and special treatment. 30 % of the trees included belong to exotic species and 73% are deciduous. It is thought that the 'Tejo de Barondillo' (*Taxus baccata*) is the oldest tree in Spain being 1000-1300 years old (estimated age), the tallest tree is called 'Plátano de la Trinidad' (*Platanus x hispanica*) in Aranjuez with 47.5 metres in height, and the largest tree by girth, the 'Secuoya Gigante Casita del Príncipe II' (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) has a perimeter of 9.2 m. Since 1992, nearly 40 catalogued trees have died and 10-20 trees are decrepit or they have lost their singularity. This reason is why the Madrid County Government is now searching new trees to be included in the catalogue. Nowadays 475 new trees have been studied and soon 76 trees will be selected to replace the dead and decrepit ones.

Gordon L Mackenthun

The biggest, tallest and oldest trees in the world

In his talk Gordon gave a short overview over what "biggest" might mean. Judging by volume and biomass of a tree, the "General Sherman" (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*) is the biggest of them all with a trunk volume of 1487 m³ and a biomass of 1121 t. By girth and diameter the "Árbol del Tule" (*Taxodium mucronatum*) is the biggest at 36.2 m girth measured by Robert van Pelt in 2005. However, there are some uncertainties as to how exactly this measurement was made. For a while the "Stratosphere Giant" (*Sequoia sempervirens*) was considered the tallest tree in the world, standing 112.9 m tall. As a champion tree it was replaced by "Hyperion", 115.6 m, discovered in 2007. The claim by Swedish scientists that "Old Tjikko" (*Picea abies*) is 9550 years old and thus is the oldest living tree in the world has no factual basis. Instead, "Methuselah" (*Pinus longaeva*) was for a long time considered to be the champion of old age at 4846 years. Just last year an even older living tree, as yet unnamed, was discovered, 5065 years old. If the discussion turns from individual trees to clonal organisms, "Pando" (*Populus tremuloides*) is a candidate for the longest living genome in trees, estimated to be at least 80000 years old.

György Pósfai

Update on the Hungarian Champion Tree Website (Dendromania.hu)

Currently ~2000, mostly native trees are catalogued, the numbers growing by about 200/year. There is a genus-specific lower limit of girth to make the list (500 cm for oaks, 600 cm for poplars, 300 cm for maples, etc). There are 460 trees with a girth over 6 m. The website forum is a meeting place for tree-hunters. Beyond about a dozen of regular tree-hunters, hundreds of occasional contributors report big trees found in the country. All new items are checked and measured by G.P. An annual field meeting of the „dendromaniacs” is organized each year. In the presentation specific emphasis was given to the black poplars of Hungary. Having ideal growth conditions on the undisturbed floodplains of the big rivers (Danube, Tisza, Maros), the black poplars grow exceptionally big in Hungary. In their relatively short lifespan of 150-200 years, they can reach a girth of 10 m. In 2013, a new champion was found in the Gemenc region near the Danube river. This healthy black poplar has a girth of 1200 cm. Finally, the Gemenc forest with its big poplars and willows was suggested to be the site of the next ECTF meeting in May 2015.

Lutz Krüger

Present status and changes of the German Champion Tree Initiative

As representative of the German Dendrology Society (DDG) Lutz presented the current status and changes of the German Champion Tree Initiative.

In the beginning all participants appreciated and reminded of our friend and ECTF contributor Ralf Tegeler who passed away in 2013.

The German Champion Tree Community launched a revised Champion Tree Register in 2014, providing a consistent and more user friendly frontend and improved data maintenance capabilities (<http://championtrees.ddg-web.de>). Actually more than 4.000 remarkable trees have been registered and documented in the register. Beside the registration of additional, exciting German

Champions, key focus is to permanently ensure register data quality, e.g. establishing a validation of Champion Tree measurements carried out by various community members.

Lutz proposed to jointly discuss future ECTF structure and objectives in Valsain. He also suggested to develop closer co-ordinations between national Champion Tree communities and to initiate additional European Champion Tree projects.

Marc Meyer

When men met the redwoods.

It is commonly admitted that the coast redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*) was imported into Europe around 1840. The first botanical description of the tree is accredited to Archibald Menzies in 1794. These statements are not taking in account that the Spaniards did meet the redwoods long before any other Europeans as they were sailing along the North Coast of California, exploring it. Of course a standing redwood might not directly be seen from a ship but many signs certainly got their attention. Native Americans were using redwood canoes to navigate and to fish on the ocean. Huge redwood trunks are often seen ashore, drifting to the South as they are carried by the strong California Current. Spanish ships went up to Oregon as early as 1542. The first detailed description of a sequoia was written by Father Juan Crespi, a friar of the Portola expedition in 1769. Father Pedro Font took the first measurements (girth and height) of a coast redwood in 1776. This tree still stands and gave its name to the city of Palo Alto. In 1791, Thaddeus Haenke, a Czech botanist of the Malespina expedition made the first botanical description of the tree. A large part of his collections was shipped to Spain between 1791 and 1799. Out of these collections there could have been coast redwoods planted in Spain in the early 1800's. I am still trying to find one of these but up until now all stories linked to these hypothetical survivors appeared to be false. But the quest goes on.

Nieves Herrero

Bosques sin Fronteras

The non-governmental organisation "Bosques sin Fronteras" developed a project for 5 years selecting the tallest, the biggest and the oldest trees of any natural species living in Spain. The tree-candidates were collected by contacting Forest Services involved in the management of the area where the trees were located, by the information of the local authorities, and by citizens who feel they could add some detail. Many trips were done to visit the candidates, measuring them and, when it was possible, collecting some fruits or seeds from them.

We used the seeds to know the reproductive power of the tree, we carried out some analysis for the purpose: empty seeds, seed health. When we had a large quantity of seeds, we run out a germination test in order to obtain some seedlings. If not many seeds were collected we use them for a viability test like excised embryo or Tetrazolium test. Usually the candidates didn't produced a large amount of seeds, because sometimes they were the only individual in the surrounding area.

The project had also an educational aspect, involving schoolchildren, by trips to a nursery where they were run in the activities. At the end they were gifted a little tree to take care of.

Roel Jacobs

Activities of the Belgian Dendrology Society

In his talk Roel gave an update on the activities of the Belgian Dendrology society. 2569 new introductions were made in the database BELTREES in 2013 and 2014, which can be consulted on www.dendrology.be. He explained that qualified members verify parks, arboreta and private gardens regularly and systematically. All major and certainly rare specimen trees are recorded. In the second part of the talk Roel presented pictures of his meetings with the trees of Rob McBride in Shropshire and Wales, and Gyorgy Posfai and his dendromaniacs in Hungary. He elaborated on the fact that there is no such thing as THE picture of a champion tree. Such a tree will only show its real self in several pictures. Roel demonstrated this in a series of images of the Welsh tree of the year and the biggest *Populus nigra* in Hungary. Special attention was also given to the consistent elaborate and precise measuring method of Gyorgy Posfai, who demonstrated it on several occasions during our stay.

Sophie Barr

Introduction to Virtual Trees and 3D Models of Landscapes

Sophie introduced us to virtual trees and landscapes. Tree vision is subjective, but scientists have built models to represent their architecture or their interactions with the environment. In the 80ies, CIRAD research center elaborated the software AMAP, to grow various species at a specific season and age, chosen from a virtual seeds bank with algorithmic variation from one individual to another. It is now possible to be as precise on virtual trees as on virtual buildings, and modelize realistic landscapes (images, films, real time fly-through or mobile pedagogical applications with augmented reality). If based on ethical practices, these 3D visualizations become expertise tools, understood by all professionals and decision makers, and convenient for concertation with the public. 3D representations can gather all relevant informations about a site or a project, to present or verify its features. Sophie showed us examples of levels of detail used for virtual trees, and some 3D visualizations projects she directed in GVA (landscaping, transport or planning projects, wind study, mobile virtual tour ...). She presented also a geomatic innovation very useful to detect, separate and localize trees and measure their total height and crown girth. This method developed by French National Geographic uses RGB nearIR high-res aerial photographs, and the digital surface model of the territory. It has been tested in a Natura 2000 area of Nantes by Sophie, and more thoroughly by Canton of Geneva who now uses it to complete its 'classic' tree register, even in unaccessible or private areas.

More presentations:

Rob McBride did an update of his widespread activities (details: www.treehunter.co.uk).

Yannick Morhan gave us an introduction to his work at A.R.B.R.E.S (details: www.arbres.org).

Bernabé and José Moya presented two new books: *El "sistema ciprés" de barreras cortafuegos: Selvicultura preventiva* and *Monumental trees and mature forests threatened in the mediterranean landscapes*.

Luboš Uradníček talked about the age of ancient oaks (<http://is.mendelu.cz/lide/clovek.pl?id=3341;zalozka=13;studium=42484>).

Planting a tree for Ralf Tegeler

Our friend and colleague Ralf Tegeler passed away in November 2013. Most of us remember him attending the ECTF meetings in both Wespelaar and Białowieża. A yew tree was planted in his memory in the "Arboreto Maximo Laguna" on the premises of CENEAM in Valsaín.



Tejo

Taxus baccata L.

En torno a esta especie de árbol se han creado numerosas leyendas relativas principalmente a su longevidad y a las propiedades tóxicas de sus frutos. Era muy común la plantación de un tejo en los cementerios ya que, por su follaje perenne y su larga vida, simboliza el triunfo de la vida eterna.



ALTITUD: 700-1500 m
 CRECIMIENTO: MUY LENTO
 EDAD MEDIA: 400 AÑOS
 EDAD MÁXIMA: 1000 AÑOS
 REPRODUCCION: SEMILLA,
 ACODO, ESTAQUILLA
 INERTO

Tejo donado por el Servicio de Material Genético (DGPFG-MAGRAMA) y plantado
en memoria de Ralf Tegeler
1958 - 2013
 Dendrologo, amigo y compañero
 12 de Octubre 2014 European Champion Tree Forum

The lower part in the inscription reads:

This yew tree is donated by the Servicio de Material Genético (DGPF-MAGRAMA) and planted in memory of Ralf Tegeler (1958 – 2013), dendrologist, friend and colleague, 12th October 2014, by the European Champion Tree Forum.

On behalf of the Deutsche Dendrologische Gesellschaft, Lutz Krüger made a short speech which was followed by a minute's silence.

Next meetings

Quite a number of interesting proposals were made during our stay in Valsaín.

- 5th ECTF meeting:
Thursday, 23rd to Sunday, 26th April 2015, Gemenc Forest in the Duna Drava National Park in Hungary.
As for the 2015 meeting, György Posfai wants to invite us to in the Duna Valley in Southern Hungary. He points out, however, that this is not meant to be regular meeting with presentations and everything but an excursion.
Details were sent out on 27th January 2015.
- 6th ECTF meeting in 2016:
Luboš Uradníček and his colleagues volunteer to organise the next regular ECTF meeting in Brno, Czech Republic which will include presentations and plenary sessions as well as excursions.
Details will follow.
- 7th meeting in 2017:
Most likely, the meeting will be held in England, in fact the birthplace of the ECTF, probably in Cambridgeshire, Essex and Hertfordshire (close to Stansted Airport). A number of questions need to be sorted out. TROBI has a new volunteer, Philippa Lewis, who is their new European Representative and will be helping organise the meeting.
Details will follow.

Project

David Alderman is proposing a project which may currently be named "ECTF focus tree". David has prepared an elaborate project draft for discussion which is attached as Appendix II.

The aim is to widen as well as to deepen the collaboration among the various groups and initiatives under the ECTF umbrella and also to give valueable and educational information to a broader audience. Please refer to the proposal for details.

Website

Lutz Krüger and I think that it is about time that the ECTF should have its own website.

The domain name is <http://www.champion-trees.eu>.

The website ought to give some general information on the ECTF, who we are, what our objectives are, give all the links to national initiatives, and similar items.

Lutz will look after the technical side of the ECTF website while I will look after the content. Currently we see the following points for the future website:

- The ECTF – Who are we? What are our objectives?
- The reports of the ECTF meetings
- Future ECTF meetings
- Links to the national initiatives
- Picture gallery
- About and disclaimer

There exists already the draft of a Who are we / What do we want paper. It was sent out in November. The current version is attached as Appendix III.

Unfortunately, the response was rather restrained. Still we feel, we should go ahead with the construction of the website. Upcoming proposals or corrections can be incorporated at any time. The website needs to be considered as a work-in-progress.

Gordon

Gordon L Mackenthun
(ECTF Secretary, Hon.)



In the Aranjuez Gardens

Appendix I: Valsaín Measurements, 4th ECTF Meeting, October 2014

Appendix II: Project proposal "ECTF focus tree"

Appendix III: Statement: Who are we? What do we want?

VALSAIN MEASUREMENTS ECT-FORUM October 2014

By Gyorgy Posfai, David Aldermann, Marc Meyer & Roel Jacobs

Madrid, Royal Palace (Campo del moro)

Sequoia sempervirens 612 cm

Matabuena

Quercus pyrenaica 516 cm

Juniperus thurifera 757 cm/150; 737 cm/130; 684 cm/0-130 minimal x
15 m

Monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos

Cupressus sempervirens x 25 m

Sequoiadendron giganteum 792 cm/150; 809/130; 35 m height

La Granja (Palacio Real de La Granja de San Ildefonso)

Front Garden

Calocedrus decurrens 277 cm

Abies pinsapo 255 cm

Abies pinsapo 389 cm

Abies pinsapo 418 cm

Abies pinsapo 466 cm

Cedrus libani 706 cm

Fagus sylvatica 456 cm

Sequoiadendron giganteum (King) 1172 cm/130; 1148 cm/150; 41 m height

Sequoiadendron giganteum (Queen) 1480 cm/130; 1450 cm/150; 46 m height

Sequoiadendron giganteum (at the beginning of a path)(behind Fontana de la Selva) 946 cm; 43.6
m height

Sequoiadendron giganteum (at the end of the path) 970 cm

Sequoiadendron giganteum (in the private part) 956 cm

Sequoiadendron giganteum (in the private part) 1088 cm

Sequoiadendron giganteum (in the private part) 748 cm; 48 m height

Sequoiadendron giganteum (in the private part) 1030 cm, 50 m magas

Abies pinsapo (in the private part) 580 cm, 31 m height (EUROPEAN CHAMPION!) (WORLD
CHAMPION)

Abies pinsapo (2nd one) 466 cm x 29,5 m

Andromeda section of the park:

Sequoiadendron giganteum 1115 cm x 38 m

Cedrus libani 633 cm minimal/0-130 cm x 31 m

Sequoiadendron giganteum 1290 cm; 38 m height

Sequoiadendron giganteum 911 cm; 35.8 m height

Pseudotsuga menziesii 433 cm; 37 m height

PINUS FOREST:

Pinus sylvestris n° 142 280 cm x 25 m

Guadarrama

Ulmus minor 436 cm x 21 m

Aranjuez

Taxodium mucronatum (near entrance) 683 cm (first of a line of 8) (EUROPEAN CHAMPION! If I (Roel) noted it correctly. This was the first & close to the guard's kiosk, who chased us from the lawn) If not correct then the one at the pond is the champion)

Taxodium mucronatum (at pond) 672 cm x 38 m (I made a note that Marc and I agreed on 38m although happy to go with Marc's taller measurement. There was one tall branch but I must have missed it! David)

Magnolia grandiflora 242 cm x 25 m

Cupressus sempervirens (with Fernandez) 253 cm x 38 m

Celtis australis 345 cm

Liquidambar orientalis 436 cm x 32 m (EUROPEAN CHAMPION!)

Catalpa bignonioides 275 cm x 24 m

Carya illinoensis 398 cm x 48 m (probably EUROPEAN CHAMPION!)

Platanus x hispanica 751 cm x 48,8m

Celtis laevigata 299 cm

Platanus x hispanica (forked) 792 cm x 35 m

Taxodium mucronatum 649 cm

Taxodium mucronatum 626 cm

Platanus x hispanica (padre) 658 cm

Madrid, Park Retiro

Taxodium mucronatum 570 cm, 24.4 m height

A European Focus on Trees

No.1: Wild Black Poplar (*Populus nigra ssp. nigra* and *ssp. betulifolia*)

The European Champion Tree Forum (ECTF) working in partnership to collate and publish European champion tree data for a particular tree species.

Why?

- To give ECTF supporters the opportunity to contribute to a European wide research paper on the distribution, growth and performance of one species
- To publish a report to help raise awareness of the ECTF
- To produce data only available through co-operation of ECTF supporters
- To provide evidence of partnership working for a possible future European funded project

How?

Contributors will compile data and images on the chosen species and supply this information to the editor in the style of the template (Appendix I). For many this information will already be available. However, some may wish to update the information by re-visiting trees.

The text is to be provided in English with a copy in the contributors own language if thought appropriate.

An Introduction will be written in English with a translation in other languages.

The Report will be compiled and circulated for corrections and approval before publishing.

Data from non ECTF countries will be sourced from www.monumentaltrees.com or other websites and the source of the data acknowledged.

Country data will appear alphabetical within the report.

A summary of the biggest, tallest and oldest trees of this species in Europe will be created.

The Report will be published as a pdf

The Report will also be printed as a limited edition for ECTF members by The Tree Register (Britain and Ireland)

Who?

The Tree Register, as founding organisation of ECTF, have offered to be editors and compile and publish this first official ECTF publication.

The report will be a ECTF report

All contributing organisations and individuals will be equally represented

All relevant logos, websites and contacts will be published.

When?

ACTION	TIME	RESPONSIBILITY
Project and template circulated	January 2015	David/Gordon
Champion trees visited, recorded and photographed if required	June 2015	All ECTF
Text for template completed	July 2015	All ECTF
Draft Report compiled by Tree Register (Britain and Ireland)	August-September 2015	David/Tree Register
Proof reading & Final changes	September 2015	All ECTF
Publication	October 2015	David/Tree Register

The electronic version of the final report can be updated as further information is provided, annually or as agreed by ECTF.

It is recognised that some people or organisations may have little or no information on the selected species. This knowledge may still be relevant and useful for future research.



Wild Black Poplar at the Dragon House Hotel in Somerset, England
Photo by Bryn Andrews courtesy of www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk

APPENDIX I

EUROPEAN FOCUS ON TREES - REPORT TEMPLATE

Country:
Organisation: Include website, email, postal address, logo (jpg file)
Contact: Name of person providing the information, email and any other contact details for publishing
Species No.1: Wild Black Poplar (<i>Populus nigra ssp. nigra</i> and <i>ssp. betulifolia</i>)
Historical information e.g. natural distribution, management, timber uses, folklore Include a photograph of typical ancient wild site or old tree in situ
Species status Current status of tree e.g. rare, endangered Details of any national or local protection
Distribution of species General description of where to find specimens and if data is available to include; estimated numbers of trees, number of trees recorded, number of male and female trees etc: Include a distribution map if available and a photograph of a tree in an urban or less typical site.
Champion Trees – List details of the largest girthed tree/s (Top 1-5) Include recorded data e.g. where girth recorded (at 1.3m), year recorded, where growing etc: Include photograph/s
Champion Trees – List details of the tallest tree/s Top (1-3) Include recorded data e.g. how height recorded (laser hypsometer), year recorded, where growing etc: Include photograph/s
Monumental Trees – List details of any Historic/Heritage/Remarkable trees (1-3) Include recorded data e.g. girth, height, year recorded, where growing etc: Include a photograph and description of 1-3 trees remarkable for features other than champion
Growth rate data and ageing General observations or from data, such as repeated measurements if available
Current national or local projects Record details of any relevant projects relating to this species e.g. propagating and planting, conservation
Acknowledgements Include recorders names, organisations or any sponsors who helped compile the data – if relevant
References List any organisations, websites, books, papers, documents and authors if referred to within the report

NB All tree data can be provide in separate tables or spreadsheets

The European Champion Tree Forum

The European Champion Tree Forum (ECTF) is an organisation of tree-lovers but in particular, people who take an interest in the biggest, tallest, oldest trees – referred to as "champion trees" – in their respective countries. Our main activities are; finding, measuring, documenting, publishing and promoting all monumental trees. Many of us are individually or within our national organisations, involved in actively protecting monumental and champion trees.

Who we are

Besides the champion trees some of us take an interest in all trees of outstanding beauty, historic trees, trees with an artistic value and trees with a story or a legend connected to them. Collectively these are called "monumental" trees.

The ECTF is currently an informal organisation. Since there is no formal structure – except a voluntary position of Secretary who seeks to co-ordinate the group – we consider ourselves to be a club rather than a society, a union or a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Most of us, though, are members of our national dendrological societies, work at university institutes or have some other professional affiliation with tree-related institutions. We refer to ourselves colloquially as "tree-hunters".

Currently we have a contact list of more than 100 friends and colleagues representing groups, societies and institutions from Ireland to Romania and from Spain to Estonia. Of these, around one half take part in the regular exchange of information, news, pictures and opinions.

Our main events are the ECTF meetings which are held at somewhat irregular intervals. The first meeting took place in Wespelaar, Belgium, in 2010, followed by meetings in Bonn, Germany (2011), Białowieża, Poland (2013) and Valsaín, Spain (2014). The next three meetings are planned for in Hungary (2015), the Czech Republic (2016) and England (2017).

The meetings normally combine excursions to monumental trees in the vicinity, with presentations featuring the progress in recording national data bases of champion trees and other issues of wider interest. Just as important is the individual exchange of views and opinions, often resulting in joint projects and visits.

Other tree enthusiasts may be invited to join us, either to just become informed of the ECTF and national activities, meeting like-minded people or, by taking an active part in developing the future of our group and helping to shape an organisation with a pan-European impact on tree matters.

Our objectives

- To hunt, find and discover all monumental and champion trees
- To measure, photograph and document monumental and champion trees
- To share and publish data and information to promote the value of monumental and champion trees
- On a European level the ECTF supports the "European Tree of the Year" contest and other initiatives of supra-national and pan-European character

Many of us are involved in actively protecting monumental trees and individuals and groups within the ECTF network aim at supporting local initiatives that care for the preservation of their trees. Often expert advice can be made available to help preserve a monumental tree.

We believe it is important to promote these remarkable and valuable trees to the general public. Trees are often threatened to be felled because of urban development, road building or other infrastructure construction. Sometimes monumental trees are cut down because of pure ignorance. In our opinion:

- Trees have many positive effects on human life such as; filtering dust out of the air, casting shade, providing oxygen. The bigger the tree the better its overall usefulness.
- They give structure and pattern to streets, roads, squares, buildings.
- Trees were and still are of overwhelming importance for the economy.
- Big trees can play an important role in influencing climatic change.
- Big, tall, old or otherwise remarkable trees are an important feature in our landscapes, villages, towns and cities.
- Big, tall, old or otherwise remarkable trees often are a part of our childhood memories.
- These trees connect us with our past as well as with our future.
- Monumental trees often stand for an event in history, for some legend or myth, for a local episode and sometimes for some superstition.

Old (veteran) trees often touch our hearts in a way no other living being can and are better suited than most other organisms to teach us all, young and old, of the wonders of nature.