



Exploring and documenting diversity in nature

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CETAF – Press release

Warm welcome to Leif Schulman, CETAF new Chair of the Executive Committee

We have the pleasure to announce that on **May 16th, 2019** at the **CETAF45 Governing Board** hosted by the University of Tartu, CETAF's members elected Leif Schulman Chair of the Executive Committee.

A warm welcome to our new Chair Leif Schulman who succeeds Michelle Price who served as Chair two mandates of three years.

In the interview below, we take a closer look at Leif's vision for CETAF and how this benefits the whole Taxonomy community.

1. What is your vision for CETAF?

My vision is that all European natural history collection institutions should form one huge distributed resource for research and education speaking with one voice in central shared issues and sharing common goals in collection management, research and education. I see CETAF as a crucial player in achieving this vision.

2. What is your priority as new Chair of CETAF?

"CETAF is a central hub of collaboration among European NHCIs but not the only one. Especially the DiSSCo initiative, recently accepted on the ESFRI roadmap of research infrastructures, is another extremely valuable consortium. My priority as Chair of CETAF is to work on clarifying the respective roles of CETAF and DiSSCo, and other relevant organisations, such as the European Botanic Gardens' Consortium, and to establish a fruitful division of labour among them. I feel that, currently, the collaborative landscape is too fragmented to be optimal and it's becoming challenging to navigate that landscape both for institution directors and for staff."

3. How do you see the short- and long-term relationship between CETAF and DiSSCo?

"The short-term relationship is quite clear: CETAF supports the creation of DiSSCo and is a key partner in making it happen. In the longer term we, as a community of NHCIs, need to discuss in depth the most beneficial relationship. I do not have a pre-conceived opinion on a definitive solution – I don't think it is even possible to have one, because DiSSCo is still a work in progress."

4. What are your feelings about the IPBES report and how CETAF can contribute to our biodiversity preservation?

“The IPBES report did not, of course, contain actual news for biodiversity professionals. However, it was a unique summary of the dire situation of the living world and extremely important in raising awareness of and boosting the public debate on the importance of conserving nature. CETAF’s members are pivotal in filling knowledge gaps identified in the report and CETAF is very important in communicating the importance of their role to society and decision makers.”

5. What is your favourite place in Finland?

“My favourite place in Finland is my home! Unfortunately, I tend not to have enough time to spend there with my family. In summer, I also very much enjoy relaxing at our summer cottage by one of the thousands of Finnish lakes – and naturally equipped with a sauna!”

Leif Schulman, Chair of CETAF

Leif was born in 1968 in Espoo, just west of Helsinki, Finland, where he also lives today. He studied plant ecology and systematics at the University of Helsinki and completed his master’s degree in 1997. He continued with a PhD project in biodiversity science in the Amazon Research Team of the University of Turku where he defended his thesis dealing with taxonomy, speciation and conservation of Amazonian plants, and graduated in 2003.

Throughout his academic career, Leif has been drawn to the interface between academia and the rest of society. After his bachelor’s degree Leif participated in a project in Tanzania where the remaining rainforests of the East Usambara Mountains were studied and protected. Before completing his doctoral degree, he was drawn into a project in Nicaragua, which focused on developing biodiversity conservation. He worked as a consultant supporting the development of the country’s botanic gardens and herbaria.

In 2001, Leif was appointed Curator of the Botanic Garden at the University of Helsinki. From there he advanced to Director of the garden, then Unit Director of botany at the Finnish Museum of Natural History Luomus, and then, in 2010, to Director of Luomus.

As Director, he has focused on developing a clear collections policy, strengthening the quality of research and, above all, on digitalisation covering both the digitisation of the collections, the development of IT systems, and streamlining digital workflows. The flagship project in this respect has been the Finnish Biodiversity Information Facility FinBIF that Leif initiated in 2012 and has led from the start.

Leif has held numerous national and international positions of trust, such as Finland’s representative in the European Botanic Gardens’ Consortium and Head of Delegation of Finland at the GBIF governing board.

Leif is married to Dr. Maria Hällfors with whom he has a three-year-old son. He also has three daughters and a son from his previous marriage.

More information on our website:

www.cetaf.org

If you need more details about the CETAF, please contact:

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