

Congratulatory address of the Deutsche Botanische Gesellschaft

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Forty years ago, when I was a schoolboy in Berlin, I got a collecting box and went around asking people for monetary gifts for the island of Helgoland. Since then I have been addicted to this site in the North Sea. In 1952, the island was given back to Germany (on the first of March), and our Federal President Theodor Heuss made an appeal to the Germans to support the reconstruction of the island after the severe damage by bombing. I was 15, and my information about the North Sea and the only rocky German island was rather incomplete. I wonder whether there was much more in my imagination than the impressive and famous Schensky photograph "Helgoland bei schwerer See" ("Heavy sea near Helgoland") which I had seen in my father's "Flottenkalender" (naval calendar). But my friend and I competed for the first prize in this street collection, viz. to win a journey to the attractive island. With this desire, we were statistically rather normal Germans.

Since the early 19th century, many mainlanders in our country have been captivated by the magic of the seaside. The islands Rügen and Helgoland, and later also Sylt and Hiddensee, were the hits. For generations, it was compulsory for a German biology student to be introduced into marine biology by a stay in the "Biologische Anstalt Helgoland".

The "Deutsche Botanische Gesellschaft" was founded 110 years ago, or 10 years before the "Biologische Anstalt Helgoland". The founder of our society and first president until his death in 1894, Nathanael Pringsheim, was also one of the decisive supporters of the station on the North Sea island, by his fundamental research as well as through his influence.

It was Pringsheim's recommendation, to incorporate a botanical curator in the staff from the very beginning; and the famous "Strandwanderer" and "Nordseelotse" Paul Kuckuck was appointed botanist on Helgoland upon Pringsheim's and Reinke's recommendation.

Kuckuck is the first highlight in a long and impressive row of excellent botanists on the island – all members of the Deutsche Botanische Gesellschaft. It is a special honour to have among us, the outstanding personality in German marine phycology of our day, Peter Kornmann from Frankfurt am Main, now however, a "naturalized" Helgolander, of course together with his "shadow" and alter ego Paul-Heinz Sahling. The amazing cooperation of these two specialists is a presentation of the whole of Central European

botany to Helgoland and its marine science. Whoever has had the pleasure of being hosted by the Biologische Anstalt may have experienced the special atmosphere of a working place in the midst of all the marvellous algae, but also far away from relatives, libraries, universities and, last but not least, many advantages of mainland life for private concerns. The Deutsche Botanische Gesellschaft is proud of the two front-line scientists, Kuckuck and Kornmann, whose long lives on the island together with their algae presented all biologists with scrupulous reports on speciation, growth and ontogenesis of so many marine beings.

Professor Nultsch, the President of our society, regrets very much having to stay in Berlin where there is a meeting of all the German botanists at this very moment. As a member of the Council of the Biologische Anstalt, Professor Nultsch has spent much time and effort to make known and to ensure what such an institute of basic research needs: independence and support, opportunity to teach and international affiliation.

The Deutsche Botanische Gesellschaft will continue to advocate this policy in the next century of the Biologische Anstalt Helgoland. German botany offers cordial congratulations to an excellent research institute.