Fifth Japan-Germany Colloquium Held on “Evolutionary Genomics”

On 8-11 March, the JSPS Bonn Office held a colloquium on the theme “Evolutionary Genomics,” venued in Bad Honnef on the outskirt of Bonn.

The colloquium organizers were Prof. Dr. William Martin, Institute of Botany III, University of Duesseldorf, and Prof. Dr. Naruya Saitou, National Institute of Genetics. They selected the participants and planned the sessions. Twenty-five speakers were selected mainly from the cadre of young participants, including six female researchers, from Germany and Japan. The Japanese participants comprised research associates and postdoctoral researchers, with the exception of the organizer. The following seven sessions were held over the two-day event: (1) All things start small..., (2)...and things can get tangled, (3) Duplications and development, (4) Getting things sorted into their proper places, (5) The dynamic chromosome..., (6)...and the even more dynamic chromosome..., and (7) Evolution at work in the wild.

In all the sessions, very active Q&A periods exceeded the time parameters. They gave the participants the chance to ask the speakers directly about the intricacies of their research, creating a give-and-take that was both stimulating and inspirational. Many larger academic conferences, attended by mostly male researchers, have an insular feeling about them. In contrast, the Q&A periods in this smaller-scale colloquium allowed an open discussion enriched by inputs from the female participants. Observing this setting, the Bonn Office staff gained a renewed perception that good old face-to-face exchange can still outrival the new communication modes available over the Internet.

On the last day, Prof. Dr. Martin was kind enough to lead the group of Japanese participants on a tour of his university’s Institute of Botany III. The experience was very much enjoyed as it offered the young participants a glimpse of an overseas research environment.

During breaks and meal times, the staff observed Japanese and German researchers talking over plans to start new joint initiatives. It is our hope that holding this colloquium has given context and impetus for advancing new collaborative projects in and around the field of evolutionary genomics.

— JSPS Bonn Office