

17<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Malacology Phuket, Thailand. July 18-24 2010  
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I am grateful to NZMSS for assistance that allowed me to attend this 6 day conference in Phuket.

The conference included 4 days of oral presentations plus a 3 hour poster session on the Tuesday evening. It brought together 380 scientists and graduate students from around the world, with oral presentations covering a wide range of topics, including the ecology, evolution, classification and genetics of both terrestrial and aquatic molluscs. An all-day field trip to the Phuket Marine Biological Centre, its aquarium and the Shell Museum was very interesting from taxonomic, evolutionary and physiological aspects. . The conference programme is an official publication of the Chulalongkorn University Museum of Natural History. It contains all the abstracts and contact addresses of the participants and will be a useful resource for the future.

I found attending the Congress both helpful and challenging. I was one of only three New Zealand students attending the conference. My oral presentation, 'Potential for cockle aquaculture in NZ' was well received, and I received constructive feedback. Social interaction over breakfasts and lunches as well as at the official functions has broadened both my knowledge and confidence. It was great to be able to talk with so many scientists and students about numerous diverse topics

My PhD research focuses on population dynamics and shellfish bed restoration strategies for the NZ cockle, *Austrovenus stutchburyi*, so I attended as many of the bivalve presentations as possible. Of particular interest to me was a student paper looking at gonad development and spawning times of several populations of blood cockle (*Anadaragranosa*). This showed that environmental parameters influence CI which in turn is related to the spawning time. However, discussions with the author of a student poster 'Studies on Giant clams in NT, Australia' were particularly useful. This study, looking at the diminishing stocks of these clams, has a similar focus to my research in NZ, where there are also local declines in cockle stocks linked to over-harvesting and anthropogenic impacts. I intend to maintain contact with this student because I feel we can be of help to each other.

From a broader perspective, most of the papers presented in the Aquaculture symposium have some relevance to NZ, either from a conservation or commercial point of view. A paper looking at the farming of Thai abalone was very enlightening, as it highlighted problems along with possible solutions. One presentation I really enjoyed was given by Winston Ponder on the last 50 years of Australasian Malacology where he covered the progress made in understanding diversity and systematics giving credit to the leading-edge studies conducted by NZ scientists. The showing of movies about opisthobranchs was a visual treat, with diverse and beautiful photos of these colourful animals.

Again, thank you NZMSS for your support enabling me to attend my first overseas conference and have this experience.