

The 9th SCAR Biology Symposium

One of the most important features of the activities of SCAR over the past 50 years has been the development of distinct communities of scientists interested in particular disciplines. A key element in this development has been the symposia organized by the main disciplinary groups, and biology has been to the fore here. It was one of the first groups to organise an international symposium and from 1962 onwards these meetings have provided both a showcase for the range and diversity of science undertaken as well as an opportunity for colleagues to meet, talk and plan the research of the future.

The first meeting in Paris (France) was followed by ones in Cambridge (UK), Washington DC (USA), Wilderness (South Africa), Hobart (Australia), Venice (Italy), Christchurch (New Zealand), Amsterdam (Netherlands) and now Curitiba (Brazil). Each one of the earlier ones had its own special flavour and we like to think that we achieved this also at Curitiba.

This was the first time the meeting had been held in South America. It proved to be very popular with the participation not only of many of the best know Antarctic scientists, but also young scientists, graduates and even undergraduate students from 31 countries. It had more participants than any previous biology symposium and more than a quarter were students - the next generation of Antarctic researchers! Scientists and students in Latin American countries and other developing countries are usually unable to gain travel funds to attend meetings like this so it was good to see so many young people participating. This was also an important opportunity to make the South American Antarctic biology research more visible to the international community.

The theme of this symposium was "Evolution and biodiversity in the Antarctic". For the first time there were eleven invited keynote speakers, covering all six main topics of the symposium and including not only traditional SCAR scientists but also others involved with other Antarctic organisations. Amongst the 244 papers, 67 of which were presented orally and 177 as posters, 79 were contributions of Brazilian biologists, a unique chance for all to show what has been achieved recently through the Brazilian Antarctic Programme.

As is usual these days there were a whole range of workshops scheduled to take advantage of the meeting including meetings on benthos, the EBA, RiSCC and CAML groups, as well as discussions on Marine Protected Areas, Conservation in the 21st century, International Polar Year and the International Antarctic Institute.

Major symposia only happen because of the unstinting support provided by many institutions and scientists. For their time, funds and advice as well as direct help in running the meeting I am greatly indebted to many people. I am grateful to SCAR for agreeing the venue and providing a grant, to the National Council for Science and Technology (CNPq) and Petrobrás for their financial assistance, and to the Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná, the Universidade Federal University do Paraná, and the Centro Universitário Campos de Andrade for the use of their buildings for the symposium and the workshops.

In ensuring this first Antarctic biology symposium in South America was a success I need especially to thank Professor Metry Bacila and Ana Cristina Greca that made it happen at the Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná, Drs Helena Kawall, Lucélia Donatti and Lucia Campos of the local organising committee, and Thiago Macedo and Ricardo Ronconi from DualBranding for their incredible efforts and dedication throughout all our difficulties.

The climate for publication has changed dramatically in the last few years and a poll of those attending showed that most were unwilling to contribute their papers to a symposium volume as in the past. It therefore proved impossible to provide the broad and comprehensive overview of

Antarctic biological research that has characterized previous symposia volumes. This Special Issue of *Antarctic Science* therefore, contains only a selection of some of the papers presented at the meeting.

This symposium has allowed Brazil to contribute to the development of one of the most important disciplines in Antarctic science. It was a pleasure for me to be able to host so many Antarctic scientists here in Curitiba, to hear the interesting presentations and the animated discussions, and see everyone enjoy themselves at the symposium banquet. Antarctic biology is clearly very alive and very well!

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