

# Flukes and snails re-visited

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## Preface

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to edit this special supplement on trematodes and their snail hosts. The task has been made much easier by enthusiastic authors, who have contributed an excellent mix of authoritative reviews and research papers and made exceptional efforts to keep to deadlines. I must also acknowledge Dr Les Chappell, the co-ordinating editor, who has been the bedrock, providing the gentle prompts and professional advice when required.

Those with longer memories will recall the book from which we take our title '*Flukes and Snails*' by Chris Wright published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd in 1971. This rather special volume set out many new ideas and interpretations concerning the relationships between flukes and snails. The book found its way onto the shelves of malacologists and parasitologists of the day and indeed made a significant impact on thinking and future research. Many of the chapters in this supplement find supportive quotes and citations from the original, illustrating the pioneering value of Wright's endeavours. Fortunately, the publishers must have over-estimated sales, as for many years students and others could find the paperback version in the bargain basements of book shops all around London. Could it be that Chris, to his credit, used his persuasive powers to convince the publishers of the importance of the subject that was so dear to his heart?

This supplement to volume 123 *Parasitology* will testify to the progress that has been made over recent years in unravelling the complexities of the snail-

parasite relationship. The papers draw on the considerable expertise of leading research scientists from around the world and cover many different aspects including ecology, parasite transmission, parasite interactions, evolutionary biology, molecular systematics and snail defence systems. By necessity the subjects reflect the main research interests of the contributors but, taken as whole, I hope the supplement will provide a useful overview of snail-parasite interactions. More importantly, I hope it will also provide a stimulus for future research. For snail-parasite biologists there is much to do and much to be learnt by incorporating new techniques to study the intricacies of host parasite relationships. Genomic and post-genomic studies are set to revolutionise much of biology; the schistosome genome project is making good progress ([http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted\\_sites/schisto/index.html](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/hosted_sites/schisto/index.html)) but greater efforts are needed to unravel the complexities of the molluscan genome.

In the following pages will be found fascinating accounts and details of the complex interactions between trematodes and their intermediate hosts. Those that read carefully may well find small differences of opinion and interpretation and identify areas where further study is required. One thing however is quite clear 'the final laugh is still with the flukes and their snail hosts' (Chris Wright 1971, *Flukes and Snails*).

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