

The 7th International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions

by Lisa Drake and Thomas Therriault

From August 23–25, 2011, the 7th International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions—the first held in Europe—was convened in Barcelona, Spain. Approximately 150 scientists, policy makers, and regulators from 20 countries in North America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia and New Zealand arrived in Barcelona to exchange ideas and discuss the latest findings and progress in the global effort to understand and reduce the delivery, establishment, and spread of marine invasive species.

The Scientific Steering Committee (SSC) for the conference was composed of researchers from the international community: Jeb Byers (University of Georgia, U.S.A.), Jeff Crooks (Tijuana River NERR, U.S.A.), Lisa Drake (SSC Co-Chair; Naval Research Laboratory, U.S.A.), Graeme Inglis (National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, New Zealand), Anders Jelmert (Institute of Marine Research, Norway), Emma Johnston (University of New South Wales, Australia), Whitman Miller (Smithsonian Institution, U.S.A.), Henn Ojaveer (Estonian Marine Institute, Estonia), Gil Rilov (National Institute of Oceanography, Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research, Israel), Gemma Quílez-Badia (SSC Co-Chair and local host; World Wildlife Fund, Spain), Thomas Therriault (Fisheries and Oceans Canada), and Chela Zabin (Smithsonian Institution and University of California-Davis, U.S.A.). Also, two technical advisors provided helpful input in preparing the conference: Jim Carlton (Williams College, U.S.A.) and Judith Pederson (MIT Sea Grant College Program, U.S.A.).

The SSC benefited greatly from the work of the Local Organizing Committee, which was very capably led by Gemma Quílez-Badia and included: Ernesto Azzurro and Pep Gasol (Marine Science Institute of Barcelona, Spanish Council for Scientific Research), Xavier Turon (Centre for Advanced Studies of Blanes, Spanish Council for Scientific Research), and Luis Valdés (Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO, Paris).

In addition to the efforts by the SSC and its advisors, the Local Organizing Committee, and three student interns, the conference received generous support from the North Pacific Marine Science Organization (PICES), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), CosmoCaixa (Barcelona) and “La Caixa” (Barcelona). Fittingly, the conference was held at the sleek and modern CosmoCaixa, a state-of-the-art science museum.

The three invited plenary speakers began each day with timely and novel approaches to issues of invasive species research. Bella Galil (National Institute of Oceanography, Israel Oceanographic and Limnological Research, Israel)

opened the conference by discussing the history of invasions to the Mediterranean Sea as well as gaps in our knowledge in this region. Fabio Bulleri (Dipartimento di Scienze Botaniche Ecologiche e Geologiche, Università di Sassari, Italy) gave a thought-provoking talk suggesting that invasive species researchers should consider potential positive species interactions that can occur due to some invasions and how these relationships might be included in invasion models. Lastly, Graeme Inglis (National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research, New Zealand) provided insight into the dynamics of transporting species by shipping and the role of initial population size in successful colonization. All plenary presentations were well received and became a starting point for continued discussion during coffee breaks, meals and especially over drinks.

The Marine Bioinvasions Conference series continues to grow in popularity. This year’s conference theme was “*Advances and gaps in understanding marine bioinvasions*” and, due to the many submissions for oral presentations (almost all of which were accommodated), the days were long with talks organized in two concurrent sessions. Oral presentations were 15 minutes followed by five minutes for questions, which delegates felt was a good format, as it allowed conference participants to actively interact with speakers during the sessions. In addition to general sessions, several special topic sessions were organized including: region-specific invasion research (this year, the Mediterranean Sea), application of new genetic tools for reconstructing invasion histories, ship biofouling as an understudied invasion vector, factors promoting the establishment and spread of invasive species, and management and eradication efforts. In addition, a poster session that included approximately 40 posters was held at the museum on the first evening, and allowed presenters and attendees to mingle and learn about the latest findings in a relaxed atmosphere that included food and drinks (always a good motivator for discussions).

An important part of conferences is the opportunity to informally discuss presentations, meet new colleagues, and forge new collaborations. The breakfasts, coffee breaks, and lunches (held on site and consisting of traditional Spanish foods), allowed these happy interactions to proceed. On the second evening of the conference, a reception was held on the museum grounds as the sun was setting. Conference delegates were free to explore the museum during the day and were able to sightsee or go clubbing around the fabulous city of Barcelona at night.

The input and participation of early-career scientists historically has been an important aspect of the Marine



Recipients of PICES travel grants for the 7th International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions, left to right: Amy Fowler (U.S.A.), April Blakeslee (U.S.A.), Joao Canning Clode (U.S.A.), Paul Edwards (Canada), Sam Collin (Canada), Catherine Clarke Murray (Canada), Gail Ashton (U.S.A.) and Francis Choi (Canada). Missing from photo: Michael MacGillivray and Anais Lacousière-Roussel (Canada); Max Castorani and Annick Drouin (U.S.A.).

Bioinvasions Conferences. Indeed, this conference was no different. Thanks to contributions from the sponsoring organizations, it was possible to provide travel support to 22 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows who applied.

PICES supported the travel of eight graduate students (Max Castorani, Francis Choi, Catherine Clarke Murray, Samuel Collin, Annick Drouin, Paul Edwards, Anais Lacousière-Roussel and Michael MacGillivray) and four postdoctoral fellows (Gail Ashton, April Blakeslee, Joao Canning Clode and Amy Fowler).

In summary, the plenary talks, along with all of the presentations—approximately 140 papers and posters—engendered lively discussions during the sessions, the breaks, and the social events. The topics of the presentations were impressive: new ideas and approaches to invasion biology, clever field studies to address emerging hypotheses, and research results used to inform international policy. This clearly illustrates how the field of invasion biology has advanced since the first conference in 1999, owing largely to the researchers and policy makers who attend these conferences!

In Barcelona, the SSC members developed a strategic plan for future conferences. Our goals are to increase the geographic breadth of these meetings (since all but two of seven conferences have been held in the United States) and to encourage participation by researchers and decision makers from areas typically underrepresented at this forum: Asia, Central America, South America and Africa. To that end, we devised the following schedule of conference locations: 2013 – Canada, 2015 – Australia, and 2017 – South America. We are excited about the upcoming conferences and are confident they will strengthen existing collaborations and promote new ones. In fact, planning has begun for the 8th International Conference on Marine Bioinvasions, tentatively scheduled for the summer of 2013 in Vancouver, Canada, so feel free to contact any of the SSC members, especially your PICES representatives, and keep an eye out for further details in future issues of PICES Press.



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Dr. Thomas Therriault (Thomas.Therriault@dfo-mpo.gc.ca) is a Research Scientist with Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) at the Pacific Biological Station in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Tom is working on a number of aquatic invasive species research questions both within DFO and through the second Canadian Aquatic Invasive Species Network (CAISN II). He is the Principal Investigator for the Taxonomy Initiative of PICES Working Group 21 on Non-indigenous Aquatic Species that includes rapid assessment surveys (RAS) for non-indigenous species. Within PICES, Tom serves as Vice-Chairman of Science Board and Chairman of the FUTURE Advisory Panel on Anthropogenic Influences on Coastal Ecosystems. He is a member of the Marine Environmental Quality Committee and the PICES/ICES Study Group on Developing a Framework for Scientific Cooperation in Northern Hemisphere Marine Science.