

Subject: [Test] MSI Newsletter Update - March 2024

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From: Marine Studies Institute

To: MSI Coordinator



Marine Studies Institute

March 2024 Newsletter



Recent Events

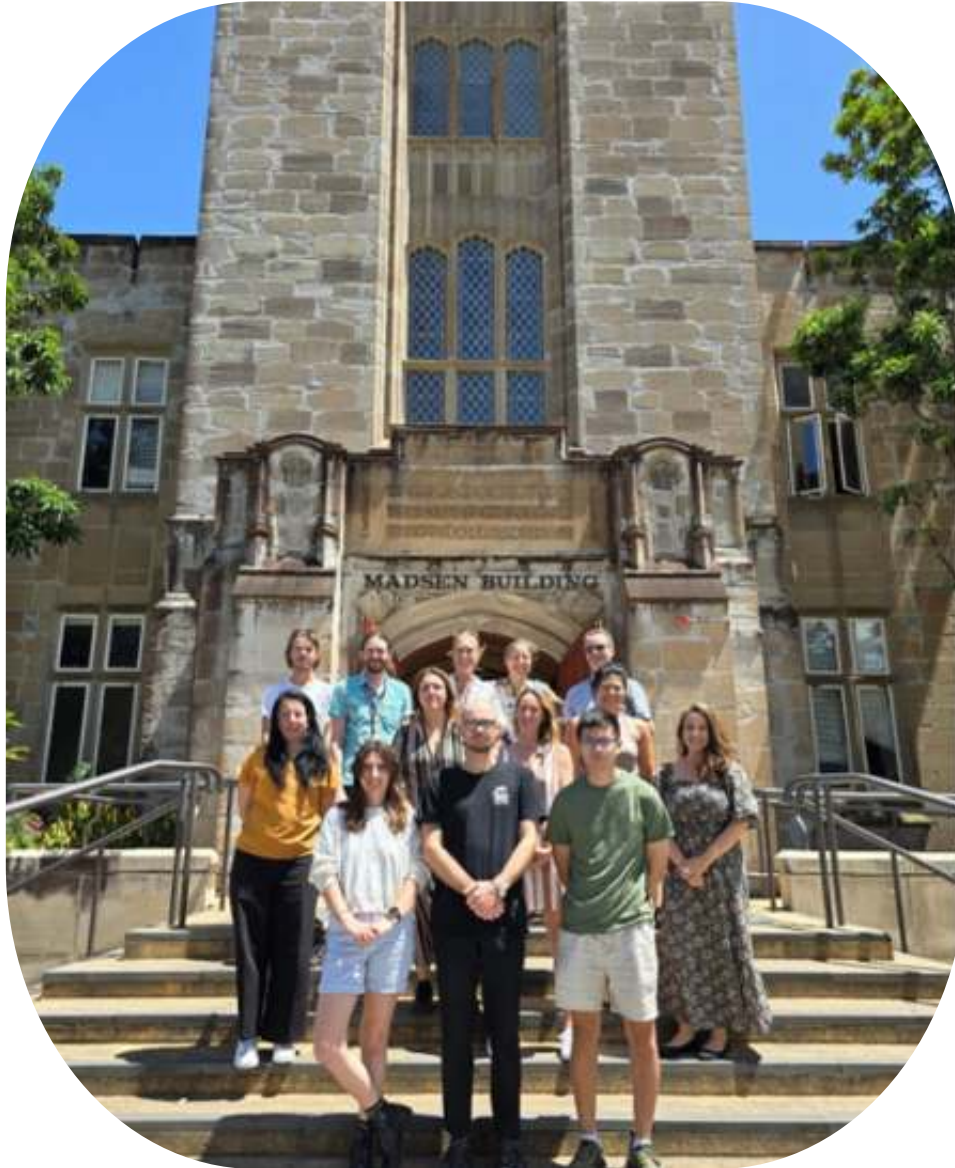
One Tree Island Collaborative Research Workshop

MSI hosted the first Research Collaboration Workshop in February. The workshop brought together researchers from various departments to discuss their work at the One Tree Island Research Station and potential opportunities to collaborate in the future.

As a result of the workshop datasets will become more accessible to researchers through a shared database and online dashboard. Logistics of working at the OTIRS will also be made easier through the sharing of information between researchers.

If you have data to share or want to be involved, let us know.

We intend to hold more such workshops in the future, so watch this space!



MSI Connecting Marine Students





Building an MSI Network

Welcome to all marine undergrads and postgrads!

MSI hosted food fuelled welcome events for the undergrad and postgrad students. We host these events each semester to give our marine students a chance to meet, bond, and share their passion for marine research.

MSI has been working towards building connections between students and researchers working in the marine space across the university departments.

COMBINED COASTAL FIELDTRIP 2024





The Combined Coastal Fieldtrip to Worimi (Port Stephens) with Students from GEOS 3X09, MARS 3888 and MARS 5001 on 15-17 March was an enriching experience. Throughout the weekend, students had the opportunity to immerse themselves in the rich cultural and environmental heritage of the region. After setting up camp, students engaged in a cultural immersion experience at the beach led by Dr Mitch Gibbs. Saturday was filled with beach activities and exploration, with students participating in various activities including using drones to survey coasts, measuring depth and understanding sediments. The final day began with a visit to the Dark Point transgressive dune field, followed by a coach journey back to Sydney.

Led by Professor Ana Vila-Concejo and supported by a dedicated team of MSI staff and volunteers from the School of Geosciences, the fieldtrip fostered learning, respect for Indigenous knowledge, and a deeper understanding of coastal management practices. All participants left with not just memories of the picturesque landscapes but also a more developed appreciation for the cultural significance and ecological diversity of Worimi Country.

SPOTLIGHT



Dr Pat Hutchings

Senior Fellow

Marine Invertebrates Collection

Australian Museum Research Institute

Dr Pat Hutchings is one of MSI's long term collaborators. Her research focuses on the systematics, phylogeny and ecology of polychaetes and the role they play in benthic ecosystems. Dr Hutchings has published extensively on the Australian polychaete fauna using both morphology and molecular techniques. This has included studying marine invasive species. Pat has also undertaken experimental studies on the bioerosion of coral substrates and how rates are changing with climate change. Pat is committed to mentoring and training the next generation of polychaete researchers and have supervised PhD and postdocs from Australia and from overseas. She has served on numerous state and national committees including being a member of the Resource Assessment Committee "biodiversity and World Heritage" Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, 2000, which was heavily involved in the development of the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef which was declared in 2004 and which legislated that at least 20% of each bioregion was designated a "green zone" (no-take zone); and she was also involved in the subsequent development of the Outlook reports. Pat was a member of the "soft bottoms!" group which identified and characterised the 40 non reefal bioregions on the GBR which were important in developing the zoning plan.

What advice would you give to career marine scientists?

I arrived from the UK not knowing anybody in Australia, so I joined AMSA and the

ESA and rapidly became a member of their council which was a very good way to meet people and develop my network. Later I became very involved in the Australian Coral Reef Society and also the Royal Zoological Society of NSW serving as President for several years for both these societies. I strongly believe that playing an active role in such societies is a two-way street and a good way to really get to know people and really know what is going on in your particular field. So, it is critical to develop a good network as the Australian marine community is a small one and this certainly facilitates the development of collaborative projects.

As researchers at the Australian Museum cannot be the primary supervisors for MSc or PhD, I was always willing to give guest lectures or run courses at Australian universities to develop my contacts and be willing to co-supervise students. Also, when I first arrived in Australia there was nobody working on polychaetes so had to develop contacts in universities and government agencies and became involved in joint field work around Australia and various ecological surveys which involved collecting and identifying the benthos. This led not only to me publishing taxonomic but ecological papers with my colleagues. I believe that developing an extensive network across the marine biological community not only in Australia but internationally is critical for a career in marine science and can open up many opportunities.

How do you see your area of research contributing to the most pressing environmental issues?

Basically, correctly identifying your animal is crucial, how can you manage a marine community if you do not know the components? How do you know if your management plans are actually working if you don't know what is present? While a lot of emphasis is given to the fish and the mega charismatic animals, ie those occupying the top of the food chain, we also must look at the bottom of the food chain which really drives the food chain. Given that many of the benthos have short life spans, they are going to react far quicker to changes in water temperatures and changes in ocean currents as many have a pelagic larval stage while their adult stage is sedentary or permanently attached to the substrate, so it is very important to study this part of the marine ecosystem and are critical indicators of change.

Also, knowledge of benthic communities which tend to be dominated by polychaete not only in terms of nos of species but also nos of individuals, need to be included in the development of zoning plans for marine parks and their management strategies, - which must be regularly reviewed as the distribution of the biota changes with climate change.

The need for more taxonomic research – and more collaboration between universities and museums which host important collections which are continually being added to, which can provide not only taxonomic information but answer such questions as changes in distribution of species over time including invasive species as well as things like diets, changes in skeletal structure, detection of invasive

species. The importance of systematics needs to be taught at universities and this is an ideal opportunity for collaboration between museums and universities and ensuring that we foster the next generation of systematists.

I believe that we taxonomists need to develop interactive keys to the major marine invertebrate groups, which will facilitate their correct identification by ecologists of their samples, and the polychaete people are doing this now- so watch this space!!!!.

MSI Alumni

Did you do marine studies at Sydney University?

If so, we would love to add you to our list of MSI Alumni. We want to find out what weird and wonderful things you are doing and where your studies take you. You may also have the opportunity to share your experience and advice with our current students.

If you would like to be added to our MSI alumni database, please reply to this email and let us know.

#Coast2Cast Podcast



In early 2021, Ana Vila-Concejo (University of Sydney) and Giovanni Coco (University of Auckland), decided to interview coastal scientists, engineers and oceanographers from around the world about research and non-research topics. The idea was that, as COVID madness continued, students and scientists around the world could still "meet" coastal scientists and hear directly from them. This podcast has grown into a successful global marine outreach.

Listen to #Coast2Cast in [Spotify](#), via [PodBean](#) or directly from the [Coast and](#)



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Marine Studies Institute

Email: sydney.msi@sydney.edu.au

Phone: 02 8627 0450

School of Geosciences | Faculty of Science

Rm 308, Madsen Building F09 | The University of Sydney |

NSW | 2006



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY



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