

Editorial

M. Traugott¹, A. Juen¹ and W.O.C. Symondson^{2*}

¹Institute of Ecology, Mountain Agriculture Research Unit, University of Innsbruck, Technikerstrasse 25, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria: ²Cardiff School of Biosciences, Biomedical Sciences Building, Cardiff University, Museum Avenue, Cardiff CF10 3US, UK

This issue of the *Bulletin of Entomological Research* is a little different, in that it includes eight papers from a conference held last year at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, entitled 'Molecular approaches to study trophic interactions: current progress and future directions'. Details of the meeting can still be found at www.mti-symposium.at. The meeting was organised to bring together researchers in the growing fields of molecular analysis of predation and parasitism. The aim was to discuss and synthesize the latest progress in these fields, to discuss techniques, to identify promising avenues for future research and to stimulate cooperation and collaboration. A major objective was also to attract those new to, or interested in, using these approaches and to provide a workshop that would help them get started and to understand the advantages and limitations of molecular approaches. The meeting was deliberately cross-discipline, bringing together people working on vertebrates and invertebrates, terrestrial and aquatic systems, but all with a common interest in trophic relationships and their study using molecular approaches.

There were over 70 researchers and students from 15 countries at this highly diverse, three-day conference. Four sessions were held and introduced by keynote speakers, each an international leader in his field: Simon Jarman (Australian Antarctic Division, Australia) introduced the session on predation in aquatic systems, and Andrew King (Cardiff University, UK) provided us with an overview on

predation in terrestrial systems. The session on the analysis of blood meals was opened by Steven Torr (University of Greenwich, UK), while Matt Greenstone (USDA, USA) provided (remotely) a keynote address on molecular approaches to study endoparasitism. The keynote presentations were followed by an array of highly interesting talks, complemented by posters.

This special issue of *Bulletin of Entomological Research*, therefore, includes papers from this techniques-based meeting that are by no means all entomological. Our justification for this diversion from our usual editorial policies is that the molecular approaches used are widely applicable across taxonomic divisions. Thus, a technique developed to detect dietary components in the guts of krill might be equally useful to someone working on predation by carabid beetles or ladybirds. We make no apologies, therefore, for including papers on the gut microflora of lumbricid earthworms and the diets of rock lobsters alongside more familiar entomological studies on predation and parasitism. These papers clearly demonstrate that molecular analyses are providing us with exciting new ways to study trophic relationships within food webs in a range of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

We would like to thank all participants at the Symposium who made this conference such a rewarding and productive meeting, but especially those who have contributed to this special edition. We look forward to regular future symposia in this fast-moving field.