

MarBEF training

"Biodiversity, phylogeny and ecology of Porifera" training course, Station Marine d'Endourne, Marseille, France, 17-30 July 2005

By Maïa Fourn

THIS COURSE WAS aimed at scientists looking for an overall approach to actual research in biology, ecology and chemistry of Porifera. As well as the theoretical lectures, the main objective was to share with students the experiences of fieldwork and laboratory techniques. The course met a continuing demand from young scientists (researchers and technicians) of different disciplines, such as molecular phylogeny, ecology, and embryology and chemistry.



Participants were completely immersed in the subject – lectures, tutorials, laboratory work and fieldwork were alternated during the two weeks. A number of specialists gave lectures, and time was always reserved for discussions. The lecturers were all present and available during the training course. Informal exchanges and discussions during coffee breaks and meals were much appreciated by the students. At the end of each day, the students could present briefly their current research subject and express their difficulties. These presentations often led to constructive exchanges with the other participants.

The course was organised by Dr Nicole Boury-Esnault of the unity "Diversity, evolution and MARine functional ecology" (DIMAR), situated

at the Station Marine d'Endourne, Marseille. The CNRS (formation permanente), the European Network of Excellence MarBEF, the IRD and the PACA Region, in addition to the collaboration with different services of the Centre d'Océanologie De Marseille (COM), brought financial support to fund this workshop. About forty people representing eighteen nationalities (Russia, Brazil, Japan, Fiji Islands, Australia, European countries, etc) participated on the course, 26 of whom were students. Six participants came from institutes belonging to the MarBEF European Network of Excellence.

In the evaluation questionnaire, participants expressed their enthusiasm for the training course. The quality of the lectures, the



A number of participants brave the French waters.

practical work and the diving sessions were very much appreciated. Informal discussions were encouraged, and many resulted in potential collaboration projects and/or new perspectives on their own research.

We were delighted to host all the participants of the workshop, through which a platform was created that allowed a number of interesting exchanges on sponge research. We believe that the diversity of the sponge specialists present, coming from different fields (chemistry, ecology, phylogeny, etc) and the variety of teaching methods (lectures, tutorials, lab work, field work) contributed to the success of the training course. We are happy to know that projects for new meetings in this field were discussed between participants during the course.

More precise information is available on the MarBEF website at www.marbef.org/training/porifera/. As a contribution to the spreading of scientific knowledge, certain lectures given during the training course are available along with the programme, and a list of the participants, as well as a few photos!

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