

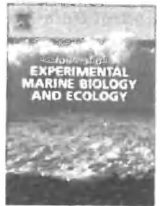


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Obituary

Prof. John Stuart Gray (1941–2007)



Professor John Stuart Gray passed away on Sunday 21st October 2007 at the age of 66 after a long and determined fight against pancreatic cancer. John will be remembered as an outstanding scientist and a leading benthic ecologist and was instrumental in moving benthic ecology and studies of pollution from observation to hypothesis testing. In scientific debates he was a positive, though resolute, colleague, who preferred practicing science far above the managerial burden. His strong input, his eminent skills and direct responsiveness, yet open approachability for young and older colleagues alike, made him one of the icons of marine sciences worldwide. The world has lost a great ecologist and marine benthic ecologist in particular.

Born in 1941, John gained his B.Sc from the University of Wales (Bangor) in 1962, following this with a Ph.D at the Marine Science Laboratories, again Wales (Bangor) in 1965. His thesis was on the ecology of marine meiofauna, at a time when studies of this size

component of the benthos were only just beginning to emerge. Specifically, he worked on the experimental ecology of the archianelid *Protodrilus symbioticus*, examining its behavioural responses to light and temperature and the factors responsible for the attractiveness of particular intertidal sands. This won him the Zoological Society's T.H. Huxley prize for 1965, a bronze Henry Moore maquette, and was the springboard for his subsequent career in which he developed the study of the marine benthos, in terms both of its appeal as a system for the study of biodiversity and its utility for the understanding of man-made impacts, especially pollution.

From Wales John moved to the University of Leeds as an Assistant Lecturer in 1965, joining the staff of the Wellcome Marine Laboratory in Robin Hood's Bay, and was rapidly promoted to Lecturer in Zoology in 1967. There he formed a dynamic group working on sediment ecology, building a strong international research reputation, and actively contributing to the teaching programme in the Department of Zoology.

In 1976 he gained his D.Sc., based on his research publications, from the University of Wales and in the same year was appointed Professor of Marine Biology and Head of Department at the University of Oslo. Here his research output mushroomed, making major contributions to his main fields of interest: experimental approaches to ecology of marine sediments; effects of pollutants on marine organisms (in particular development of techniques for the early detection of pollution-induced effects on organisms); and the measurement and scales of marine biodiversity. The environmental importance of these topics is now increasingly recognized, and in no small measure John's international activities made significant contributions to their promotion. He was a Foreign Member of the Norwegian Academy of Arts and Science, a Member of the European Environmental Research Organisation (EERO), a Member (and former chairman) of the UN's Group of Experts on Scientific Aspects of Marine environmental Protection (GESAMP), Chairman of the UN's Group of Experts on Effects of Pollution (GEPP) and former President of the European Marine Biology Symposium. He was on the Editorial Boards of Continental Shelf Research, Estuarine Coastal and Shelf Science, Marine Pollution Bulletin, Marine Ecology Progress Series and *Ophelia*. He was Honorary Visiting Professor at Plymouth University UK and the City University, Hong Kong and held Visiting Professor appointments at Duke University, N. Carolina, University of Washington, USA and James Cook University, Australia. He chaired the International Expert Panel on the Øresund Link between Denmark and Sweden and has also chaired many international and national evaluation committees.

John was a member of the Biological Committees of both the Norwegian and Swedish Research Councils, but also always maintained close connections with his homeland. He was a member of the UK Natural Environment Research Council for two terms of three years, and during that period chaired the Higher Education Affairs

Committee and Marine Sciences Committee. It was while he was chairman of this latter committee that the proposal for the Land Ocean Interaction Study (LOIS) was developed and then funded in his last year. Having nursed the proposal through its early stages, John was the natural choice as chairman of the LOIS Steering Committee, which he effected with consummate patience and skill. The breadth and boldness of the original planning had much to do with John's foresight. LOIS was NERC's largest 'community research project' designed to run from 1992 to 1998 with a total funding of £30 million. It involved eleven NERC institutes and 26 universities. John also collaborated with colleagues at the Plymouth Marine Laboratory for many years and became a valued member of PML's Scientific Advisory Council.

More recently John became involved in a number of European collaborative programmes, notably COST-IMPACT and, right up until the end, MarBEF. Especially for MarBEF he played a crucial role by being willing to take over and organizing one of its major themes when this had serious problems at the start. The current success of MarBEF has a great deal to do with John's engagement at that time.

John was a brilliant and enthusiastic lecturer and teacher, and characteristically pursued his teaching and research activities right up until his passing, despite desperately failing health. In addition to his scientific accomplishments he provided much hospitality, humour and support to the marine science community. His students will remember him as a wonderful mentor, who taught by example and shared not only his scientific knowledge, but also his attitude and wisdom, and the capacity to enjoy both science and the finer things in life, such as how to really appreciate good food and wine! John and his wife Anita were exceptionally fine hosts, welcoming, accommodating and feeding (Anita is a great cook) visitors from all walks of life at their home outside Oslo.

During his career John published over 130 scientific papers, more than half of which were single author, and 3 books. His publications range from those on his speciality, the ecology of marine sediments, to his seminal co-authored 1983 paper that coined the phrase "microbial loop" for which he is on the ISI list of highly cited scientists and which won the 2006 John Martin Award of the American Society of Limnology and Oceanography, for a "paradigm shift in aquatic ecology".

John is survived by his wife Anita and their sons, Martin and Anders.

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