

REPORT ON STUDYING IN PLYMOUTH (PHYTOPLANKTON WORKSHOP)

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Programme: 2nd International Marine Phytoplankton Identification Workshop

Period: from 2nd to 13th July 2012

Place: Citadel Hill Laboratories, Marine Life and Environment Science Resource Centre, Marine Biological Association, Plymouth (UK).

The 2nd International Marine Phytoplankton Identification Workshop was jointly run by the Marine Biological Association (MBA) and the Sir Alister Hardy Foundation for Ocean Science (SAHFOS). The international experts, Prof. Carmelo Tomas, Dr. Karen Steidinger, Dr. Diana Sarno and Dr. Ian Probert, were the professors in charge of the workshop. A total of 20 students, coming from the United Kingdom, Italy, Portugal, Finland, Estonia, Saudi Arabia, Namibia, Ghana, South Africa, the United States and Argentina, took part of this event.

The main topics covered during the workshop were the classification and taxonomy of the major marine microalgal groups (diatoms, dinoflagellates and other marine flagellates), but there were also practicing classes on methodologies and techniques including: sampling, settling and slide preparation, cell counting, isolation, microscopy and culturing. Likewise, a great diversity of specimens were observed during laboratory sessions, using more than 70 living cultures from the MBA Culture Collection and fixed field samples.

The possibility to attend to this relevant workshop represents a big impulse to my research career. As part of my work, I routinely analyze phytoplankton samples from different Argentine and Antarctic poorly known environments. Consequently, the identification of species, genus or even higher groups it is a hard challenge for me. In this sense, to take part in the MBA Workshop gave me the opportunity to improve and update my knowledge of marine phytoplankton taxonomy. The practice and skills acquired during this training will help me solving my current problems with species identification.

On the other hand to attend the workshop allowed me to establish new contacts for future research. Concerning this last point, it was really invaluable to meet some of the most renowned phytoplankton taxonomist in the world. They were all very friendly and gave me the chance to discuss with them about particular problems I have during the identification of some poorly known taxa. Given that the taxonomy of some marine flagellates is a research field that is currently relatively unexplored in Argentina; this first contact with international experts could result in the establishment of new cooperation programs in the near future.

From my point of view, the dissemination of the knowledge acquired during this training in my institution will be mainly related to the formation of human resources. In fact, since this year I have started to advice two candidates to postulate to their doctoral studies at La Plata University in the fields of harmful algae blooms and Antarctic phytoplankton.

On the other hand, I hope the gained experience be useful in the organization of a South-American course on taxonomy and toxicology of harmful algae, to be held in Argentina during 2014. This course, which had a first edition in November 2007, is now being planned together with Dr. Martha Ferrario and collaborators (University of La Plata) and Dr. Nora Montoya and collaborators (INIDEP), in answer to the increasing problems related to harmful algae blooms in the region and the importance to disseminate knowledge in this field.

For all these reasons, I consider that the participation in the 2nd International Marine Phytoplankton Identification Workshop at the Laboratory Citadel Hill (Plymouth, UK) has represented an invaluable opportunity for improving my academic formation and also for establish scientific collaborations with highly qualified investigators.

Finally, I would like to mention that my participation in this relevant workshop would have not been possible without the support of the Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (POGO). For that reason, I would like to express my gratitude to POGO authorities and secretariat for the travel grant awarded to me. I am also very thankful to the workshop organizing committee, Drs. Richard Pipe, Maria Jutson, Claire Taylor and Gemma Brice, as well as the workshop professors.



Dr. Gastón O. Almandoz