

Update on POGO Capacity Building

POGO Visiting Professorships

Last year's Visiting Professorships were awarded to Profs. Lisa Levin and David Checkley, both from Scripps Institution of Oceanography, who spent 6 months (Jan-June 2011) of sabbatical leave teaching and mentoring at the National Marine Information and Research Centre (NatMIRC).

They spent an intensive seven days with 37 UNAM Biology and Fisheries students in March. They lectured at the University of Namibia in Windhoek on general marine ecology, bioinvasions, ocean observing, and climate change and fisheries. The students were taken to the Henties Bay marine facility where they sampled four salt ponds, reflecting a salinity gradient from 35 to 200 ppt. Measurements, collections, and observations included water and sediment properties, planktonic and benthic algae and invertebrates, and birds.

The collections provided material for lab work over the next two days and assignments emphasized pond characterizations (species composition, abundance diversity) and ecosystem-level processes. Group presentations were given and discussions were held by the students. Additional activities at Henties Bay included two lectures on climate change (covering deoxygenation, acidification, natural and anthropogenic fisheries variations) and a rocky shore field trip to illustrate concepts given in lecture in Windhoek.



Prof. Levin and UNAM students on the rocky shore in Solitude (central Namibia).

During their stay, they spent a lot of time mentoring students and scientists, including their hosts, Drs.



Prof. Levin teaching at the Henties Bay field station.

Bronwen Currie and Anja Kreiner. This included advice on benthic survey/sampling design, sampling methods, isotope analyses and species identification, advice on the Continuous Underway Fish Egg Sampler (CUFES) and discussion of Northern Benguela ecosystems and fisheries.

They also established a Friday afternoon lecture series at NatMIRC. During the regular Friday seminars, all interested staff members (typically 15-20) were invited and joined discussions on several aspects of the pelagic system in the Northern Benguela. These seminars were very popular and provided an excellent opportunity at NatMIRC to exchange ideas on a regular basis. They also spent one week at the University of Cape Town (UCT), hosted by Prof. Coleen Moloney. They taught, lectured, and interacted with students and staff in the Departments of Zoology and Oceanography.

"Prof. Checkley showed great interest and understanding for the challenges faced at NatMIRC," commented Dr. Anja Kreiner. "I consider ourselves very fortunate that he spent six months at our institute and I am sure that many of the ideas sparked through discussions with him will be taken further and contribute to a better understanding of our marine system and improved management of our fisheries."

The next year's Visiting Professors have now been selected. Prof. Walker Smith (Virginia Institute of Marine Science, USA) will be visiting Lam Ngoc Nguyen at the Institute of Oceanography in Nha Trang, Vietnam, for 4 weeks in March 2012. Training will be on the use of fluorescence in oceanographic studies of coastal waters of Vietnam.