



Biology News

Newsletter of the School of Biological Sciences (incorporating Botany & Zoology)

On-line at www.bio.usyd.edu.au/Newslett/frontpage.htm

Issue 5 Summer 2008

HEADSPACE



It is a pleasure to write my first Head of School column for *Biology News*. Let me begin by thanking Mike for the fabulous job he has done over the last 3 years as Head. He has left the school in great

shape: a vibrant research community, a top-rate teaching program and an improved physical environment. He even managed to get us all behind a 5 year strategic plan!

I am excited at the prospect of leading the School over the next few years. I expect it will be period of intense engagement with other schools and faculties in the University as we explore creative and novel opportunities for collaborative teaching and research. Our strength in ecology and environmental sciences places us central in initiatives around sustainability and our cellular, molecular and physiological approaches to study organisms are at the interface with Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture Food and Natural Resources and the School of Molecular and Microbial Biosciences. Indeed we are currently involved in various discussions with these partners about a joint cell biology major, collaborative teaching of mycology and the potential for further co-ordination in molecular-genetics teaching.

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ISOBEL BENNETT, MARINE BIOLOGIST EXTRAORDINAIRE

BY PROF MARIA BYRNE
DIRECTOR ONE TREE ISLAND RESEARCH STATION

Isobel Bennett, a dedicated scientist who devoted her life to marine science, education and conservation passed away in January 2008, aged 98. For many marine biologists Isobel's books on intertidal life and the Great Barrier Reef are a key source of information and inspiration. With no formal training Isobel had an outstanding career as a marine biologist and led an action filled life in her many expeditions from the tropics to the Sub-Antarctic.

Isobel was born in Brisbane in July 1909 and was devastated when she had to leave school age 16 to enrol in a business college to get a job. Isobel's career underwent a major change when Dr. William Dakin, Professor of Zoology, University of Sydney hired

her as a research assistant for his book on the history of whaling. She spent days at the Mitchell Library going through logbooks of whaling captains.

Isobel was then immersed at the other end of the zoological spectrum, working on plankton. In the introduction to their

important monograph, *The Plankton of the Australian Coastal Waters off New South Wales*, Dakin and Colfax (1940) wrote that the work could not have been done without the research assistance of Miss I. Bennett – at sea and in the laboratory – and that sorting the plankton was almost entirely her work.



Isobel Bennett holding a large conch shell at Heron Island. Photo: Pittwater CEC

In 1945 Isobel's research changed to the intertidal animals and plants and she became a champion of the seashore. The research involved surveys of rock platforms and mud flats along the NSW coast with Elizabeth Pope of the Australian Museum. These surveys were challenging because travel was difficult and permission was required to sail on the lighthouse ship to distant locations. The outcome was *Australian*

Seashores (Dakin, Bennett and Pope, 1952), the first book of its kind in Australia which had 11 editions. Isobel photographed the animals and plants for the book. For the 1987 edition Isobel, age 77 years rewrote the book updating the taxonomy and extending its coverage from Queensland to Western Australia. Cont. on page 2....

Our academic year is off to a good start. We have had strong enrolments in our first year units of study, including some of the 7 students with a UAI of 100 attracted to the Faculty of Science this year. Nearly a quarter of our intake of honours students has come to us from other Universities. Scott Keogh from ANU has been invited to give this year's Allen Keast Lecture on 2 May followed by a weekend with the postgraduates at Warrah. Our facilities for teaching have been enhanced with the hand over this week of two newly developed laboratories in the Badham building. These laboratories will be shared teaching spaces for the School and the Faculty of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources. Our collaboration in teaching and development of these labs must be an example of inter-Faculty co-operation. The labs will be officially opened on Monday 17, 5pm Badham Lab 2 and everyone is welcome to come and inspect the new facility. As a consequence of this development, we now also have a substantial increase in office space within the re-developed Stephen Hales Lab.

Professor Peter Waterhouse has officially joined us as a Federation Fellow this month. Peter's appointment is joint between the School of Biological Sciences and Molecular and Microbial Biosciences, with his labs based in MMB. Peter will remain working in Canberra at the CSIRO Division of Plant Industry until his labs are completed, expected in September.

A particular highlight of the start of this year has been the inaugural meeting of a steering committee to form a Biological Alumni Association. The committee plans to use 2008 to "Get Connected" with as many lost Alumni as possible working towards an official launch of the Association at Warrah early in 2009. To facilitate this re-connection, the group will hold a cocktail party in August and a Barefoot Bowling function after that. If you are a lost alumnus or know others who maybe, please visit www.usyd.edu.au/alumni to enter contact details. I look forward to meeting Alumni and friends of the school in the coming year.

Robyn Overall
March 2008



She replaced the black and white photographs with colour, assembling over 500 images. Isobel authored several other books on the shore; the Fringe of the Sea (1966), On the Seashore (1969), Discovering Lord Howe (1979) and Discovering Norfolk Island (1983). In 1959 she was among the first women to participate on expeditions with the Australian National Antarctic Research Expedition and made several trips to Macquarie Island. Her book the Shores of Macquarie Island was published in 1971.

In 1963 Isobel, age 54 was appointed as a Visiting Associate Professor by Stanford University for the Te Vega Expedition. The Te Vega, a beautiful yacht was converted into a research and marine-biology training ship and participated in the International Indian Ocean Expedition. During the voyage Isobel taught postgraduate students. She recalled many fond memories of this highlight of her career. Mike Hadfield, Professor of Marine Biology, University of Hawaii was a student on the voyage and remembers Isobel's lively lectures

(1978), a text used by many students studying tropical marine biology. Isobel led 23 student field trips to Heron Island for the Biological Society of the University of Sydney.

Isobel always maintained her interest in marine life. In her 80's she assisted the Coastal Environment Centre at Narrabeen with education projects and workshops. A CD of her photos of intertidal life is available at the Centre. Isobel's photography is superb. When asked how she obtained such wonderful underwater shots for her Great Barrier Reef book she smiled and said – the secret is not to get your camera wet! At her memorial service we were shown a slide show of her photos of the sea and the marine invertebrates that she loved.

The loss of Isobel is particularly sad for her sister Phyllis who was her soul mate in life. Phyllis was a dedicated carer of Isobel and with the assistance of friends and family kept her at home for as long as possible. Although we will miss Isobel, her legacy lives on through her books, photographs and oral histories.



Isobel Bennett in Fiji on the Te Vega expedition. Photo: Prof Mike Hadfield

and taking notes on a ship tilted over 30 degrees and rolling over ocean swells. Isobel is also well known for her book The Great Barrier Reef (1971). This book underwent several editions and was a major contribution, portraying the first general overview of the GBR. Isobel became familiar with the GBR working with the Great Barrier Reef Committee from Murray Islands in the north to Swain Reef in the south. She was also the co-editor of A Coral Reef Handbook



Te Vega yacht where Isobel conducted research and training.

Photo: Prof Mike Hadfield

SPOT LIGHT

DR SLADE JENSEN

I am interested in microbial evolution and the mechanisms that facilitate genetic exchange between bacteria. Horizontal gene transfer (HGT) plays an important role in the acquisition of new properties, such as pathogenicity and antibiotic resistance, and is therefore a driving force in “short-term” evolution, allowing bacteria to be masters of adaptation.

The development of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria is a major healthcare problem around the world and strains commonly become resistant by acquiring pre-existing resistance determinants from the bacterial gene pool. Mobile genetic elements, such as plasmids, transposons and insertion sequences, play a central role in facilitating HGT and therefore promote the acquisition and spread of these resistance determinants. As such, bacterial populations can rapidly become resistant when exposed to an antimicrobial agent. Strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* “Golden Staph” are a major cause of hospital-acquired infections and most clinical strains contain multiple resistance plasmids.

My research focuses on characterising DNA segregation mechanisms in staphylococci, in particular, plasmid partitioning systems which contribute to the stable maintenance of multiresistance plasmids in the absence of selective pressure (i.e. antimicrobial agents).

Why is research into this field important? Multiresistant staphylococci are a major



cause of nosocomial infections and are now emerging as a significant cause of infections in the wider community. Therefore, apart from the general pursuit of knowledge, which I think is still very important, my research may provide opportunities for the development of targeted interventions to disrupt plasmid carriage and reduce the incidence of antimicrobial resistance within healthcare facilities. Such approaches are urgently needed to maximise the efficacy of existing and future antimicrobial therapies.

Recently PhD student **Anthony Brzoska** and I have been involved in a successful international collaboration with a research group from the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center at the University of Texas, USA. We have determined a key structure of the DNA segregation mechanism of an *S. aureus* multiresistance plasmid, which serves as a model system for the movement of DNA in dividing cells. This work revealed the structure of a protein-DNA

complex called the segrosome, which is required for the movement of DNA in dividing cells to achieve faithful inheritance of genetic information – a process that is fundamental to all living things. It also didn't hurt that the research was published in *Nature*.

Slade Jensen (left) is part of the Molecular Genetics Laboratory, which is located in the Macleay Building at the University of Sydney. Co-chief investigators are Prof Ron Skurray, Dr Neville Firth, Dr Bruce Lyon and Dr Stephen Kwong.



*Perfectly spherical cells of *Staphylococcus aureus*. Photo: <http://textbookof-bacteriology.net/staph.html>*

CSIRO STUDENT RESEARCH SCHEME

Build a bigger and brighter generation of Australian researchers.....Motivate the science students of today.....

Be part of The 2008 CSIRO Student Research Scheme

The Student Research Scheme is a national program that offers selected senior secondary science students, the opportunity to complete a brief research project under the supervision of practicing researchers in laboratories, offices and field study areas.

If you are interested in supervising a student, contact: Rachel Rothwell, Student Research Scheme Coordinator, NSW
E: srs.nsw@csiro.au or rachel.rothwell@csiro.au
T: 02 9490 8428, Monday & Wednesday (10:00am – 5:00pm)

Project nominations close Friday 11th April 2008

EDITORIAL

Issue 5 of *Biology News* is dedicated to Isobel Bennett (1909 – 2008) – pioneer marine biologist and member of the School of Biological Sciences for almost 40 years. We received an overwhelming demand from School members for a tribute to this much loved and respected alumnus. The result is a compilation of photos and articles contributed by various members of staff who knew Isobel. With this edition we join Isobel's family and friends to celebrate the life and legacy of this amazing woman.

~ Carla Avolio and Katie Jakes

HATCHES, MATCHES & DISPATCHES



Meet Sam, second child for Jo and Tex Walker. Sam was born on Thursday 31st January weighing in at a very healthy 4.45kgs. Family well and happy.

DISPATCHES

After 8 years working in this department **Emilie Cameron** is finally leaving us, heading off to greener pastures of New Jersey. Emilie extends her thanks to everyone that has helped with her research and remarked that Sydney University was a great place to work.

WHO'S NEW?

Dr Donya Tohidi Esfahani started on March 3 as a Postdoctoral Fellow in Molecular Genetics, reporting to Greg Sword.

Dr Sylvain Dubey, a Senior Research Associate already on campus, officially starts sometime in May in the Rick Shine lab.

Dr Ligia do Mendeleh is a Research Associate in the Shine lab and commenced on February 22nd.

Dr Karine Berthier is a Postdoctoral Fellow, supervised by Greg Sword started in the School on February 11th.

Mr Marcus McHale is a Research Assistant in Ben Oldroyd's lab.

Daniel Chambers is the new Computer Services Officer, a welcome addition to the team.

Mr Norman Menezes is the new School Finance Officer to replace Louie, and he is housed in Science Road Cottage.

Mr Jesse Silverman joins the science communicator team until June

HEAD OF SCHOOL'S MORNING TEA

"The official handover"

The final Head of School's morning tea (under Mike's leadership) was held over in Carslaw on January 30 and it was standing room only, as everyone wanted to wish Mike a hearty farewell and thank him for all he has done for the School over the last 3 years. There were a few speeches and much eating and drinking to welcome Robyn to the role.



HEAD OF SCHOOL'S FAREWELL DINNER

This function was held on the evening of January 30 in the Thai restaurant, downstairs at the Bank Hotel in Newtown. It was a farewell to Mike, and a welcome to Robyn Overall as the incoming Head of School. There were around 40 attendees at the dinner, who greatly enjoyed a banquet menu, a collegial atmosphere, and nice wines.



CLAYTON'S CRICKET MATCH



After 3 weeks of heavy rain, it was a lovely sunny day for the cricket match and picnic in Victoria Park. Tables were set up under the trees and laid with chicken, salads and fruit. Unfortunately, no-one remembered to bring the cricket gear but nobody seemed very distressed by that, as we were forced to sit around and chat instead! A nice way to catch up with some new people in a relaxed setting.



Victoria Park is a great venue close to the University – just as well, considering that it costs upwards of \$500 to hire green space on campus!

PRIZES, AWARDS AND GRANTS

Prof Rick Shine has been awarded the prestigious Burnet Medal and Lecture for biological research by the Australian Academy of Science. He is one of three scientists from the University of Sydney to take out awards given by AAS for 2008. The awards were announced in January and recipients will receive their awards in a ceremony as part of the Science at the Shine Dome event held in May, where Rick will present the 2008 Macfarlane Burnet Lecture on 7 May as part of his award.

Kaye Placing has won a Distinguished Service Award from the Science Teachers Association of NSW, for her contribution to science education and work for the Association spanning 10 years. Kaye works with **Alex Hugman** for UniServe Science, providing support for science educators in schools and universities.

SciFER grants for 2008 have been awarded to **Dr Liz May** and **Dr Osu Lilje**. This project aims to track changes in student learner profiles from first to third year.

MEDIA

Ground-breaking work by **Dr Dan Warner** and **Prof Rick Shine** on the adaptive significance of TSD in Jacky Dragons was featured in several newspapers, including the Canberra Times on 22 Jan 2008.

Beyond the Cute and Cuddly written by **Prof Chris Dickman** for the Australian on 23 Jan depicts marsupials as fascinating Australian icons, but more importantly as integral components of our environment.

Prof Steve Simpson and **Dr Fiona Clissold's** research on diet, longevity and reproductive success of *Drosophila* appeared in over 14 newspapers on 18 Feb, various radio shows and a mention on Google News.

VISITING PROFESSOR



Photo: Fritz Geiser

Prof Fritz Geiser from the Department of Zoology at the University of New England is here as a visiting professor for five months from early February.

Fritz received his undergraduate degree at University of Hohenheim, Stuttgart, moving overseas soon after to begin his PhD in Adelaide which he completed in 1985 jointly through Flinders University and CSIRO. He was a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Washington and University of Adelaide before settling in the Department of Zoology at University of New England where he is now Professor and Coordinator of the Research Centre for Behavioural and Physiological Ecology.

Fritz's research is in the field of thermoregulation and energetics of Australian terrestrial fauna. His March 7th public lecture - *Who's Hot and Who's Not: hibernation and daily torpor in Australian mammals and birds* – held at DTA lecture theatre covered the surprisingly vast array of Australian mammals and birds that exhibit large fluctuations of core body temperature, showing that some pygmy possums are able to lower their body temperature down to a staggering 1°C.

Whilst in Australia, Fritz will be working with **Prof Mike Thompson** to publish research on tuatara energetics which was conducted during a previous collaboration. He will be with us until mid May, after which time he will leave for Africa to attend the Comparative Physiology conference in Kenya and the International Hibernation Symposium in Namibia.

OUTREACH

CSI's solve a murder at this year's Siemens Science Experience

By Louise Freys and Sarah Masters

In the criminal justice system, the forensic evidence provided by Crime Scene Investigators has become an integral part of catching a killer. At the University of Sydney our team of Cool Science Investigators is drawn together from high schools across NSW to solve the shock killing of a prominent scientist. This is the story of their investigation.

8am, Tuesday 8 January. Cleaners find a body in a cabin in the Blue Mountains.

The crime scene is scattered with the remnants of a slap dash meal of orange juice and strawberries, strands of hair, a bloodied hunting knife, cracked and warped floor tiles, a pair of glasses and a cache of decaying and unidentifiable bones. The police bag the evidence and hunt down a preliminary list of suspects.

Enter our crack team of 110 Cool Science Investigator's (CSIs). Budding scientists called upon to use their knowledge to put away a ruthless killer. Using the evidence provided by the police, they work their way through a number of workshops where they eliminate suspects one by one.

Holed up in the biology labs, the CSIs tried their hand at DNA analysis on the strands of hair and compiled fingerprint profiles of the suspects, identifying matches and placing suspects at the scene of the crime. Using the gory art of forensic entomology, which relies on the life cycle and size of blowfly larvae found on the victim's body and ambient temperatures of the crime scene to estimate the age of the corpse, they pin the time of death down to a nine hour interval.



CSI - Crime Scene Insects and maggots - not every student's idea of fun

The chemists are set loose on the investigation and really get things alight - burning fabrics to identify a stray piece of cloth found at the crime scene. Through careful cross-referencing they identify the sample as wool, a match to two suspect's attire. With suspects and motives rife, the chemists turn their attention to cause of death. Using the Prussian Blue test, they analyse the orange juice for cyanide. The juice returns a positive test result, a violent blush of blue forms in the sample when Iron (III) chloride comes into contact with cyanide.

Plant energy biology also played a role in solving the crime. Students learnt how



Fire Starters - if this is science...I'm enrolling!

to extract DNA and use forensic botany to identify different plant species in a muddy footprint found on campus. The footprint contained white wattle (*Acacia linifolia*), bottlebrush (*Callistemon subulatus*), river oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) and the large-leaf yellow teatree (*Leptospermum morrisonii*). These species of plants were found at the crime scene, incriminating two of the suspects.

Our anatomists worked tirelessly to identify whether the skeletal remains found under the floor of the cabin were the bones from a dead animal carcass or human. Reconstructing the skeleton and comparing this to reference human remains they conclude that the bones are not human. With this red herring cast aside, the CSIs are better able to focus their investigation.

Thinking like physicists the CSIs were hard at it testing theories on exactly what caused the damage in the floor at the cabin door. Were the cracks formed by electric current flowing through the floor,

from prolonged exposure to UV rays or from the sudden impact of a mallet? Liquid nitrogen is discovered to be the cause of the cracks, and theories get thrown around as the CSIs attempt to explain its presence in the middle of the Blue Mountains. The most plausible theory centres on the use of liquid nitrogen to force oxygen out of the room, in the attempt to asphyxiate anyone inside.

Riding on the success of their liquid nitrogen investigation, the physicists use their knowledge of the refraction of light and the workings of the eye to match glasses found outside the cabin to those worn by one of the suspects. A sample of the victim's hair proved to be radioactive. Further testing showed it to be gamma radiation, employed as part of a medical treatment (otherwise known as radiotherapy), eliminating the possibility of radiation poisoning as a cause of death.

To aid our CSIs in their search for the truth, they were given the chance to bend the ears of experts in the field. Chief Forensic Pathologist Jo DuFlou wowed the CSI's with real life images and examples of life as a forensic pathologist. Detective Senior Sergeant Craig Harris provided a wealth of information about police forensics with examples of a number of interesting cases. In addition, many experts at the University including Dr Denise Donlon, Dr Judith Field, Associate Professor Tony Masters and Dr Clio Cresswell provided the CSIs with an array of useful information, often relating directly to the case.

Using their scientific knowledge our CSIs manage to untangle a complicated web of intrigues, deception and multiple murder plots. Through their commitment to scientific investigation the CSIs brought their evidence to bear on their witness during a dramatic and heated trial.

When asked about their time as CSIs, our budding scientists spoke of the breadth of science as a discipline, the exciting career opportunities that they previously had not known existed and the great time they had exploring this case with other young scientists. All of our CSIs walked away with their passion for science re-ignited and now, armed with the knowledge of the wide ranging possibilities, eager to begin their careers in science.

SIMS OPENS ITS DOORS FOR ALL

The Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS) at Chowder Bay held its annual Open Day on Sunday 2 March. The whole-day event – which boasted everything from scientific talks to touch pools for wildlife lovers – attracted an estimated 1000 people through the new facilities with about 20 scientists there to lend a hand. The Open Day was an opportunity for researchers from all the partner organisations to showcase the diverse range of current and future projects to be hosted at SIMS. As one of the found-



er members, the University of Sydney is keen to establish and maintain a major presence in the labs at Chowder Bay. SoBS was represented by **Dr Ashley Ward**, who outlined his programme of work on the sensory ecology of fishes. Many other SoBS researchers – including **A/Prof Ross Coleman, Dr Adele Pile, Prof Mike Thompson, Prof Maria Byrne** – are soon to begin work at the newly opened labs and in doing so will contribute to the establishment of SIMS as one of the world's main hubs for marine bio research.



*Some visitors from New Guinea were delighted to finally find “nemo”.
Photo: SIMS*



The touch tank was a great success especially with younger visitors. Photo: SIMS

At the end of the day the scientists (left) who helped, enjoyed a barbecue overlooking the harbour. Photo: SIMS

BIOLOGY WELCOMES FIRST YEAR STUDENTS AT O-WEEK

At this year's O-Week, freshly enrolled biology students were treated to a memorable day when SoBS opened the doors of Heydon-Laurence building to host a Biology Welcome Activity on 28 Feb.

Promotion for the event started at Enrolment Day in Jan, when hundreds of students were given Welcome Cards (right) inviting them to spend a morning learning about the exciting opportunities that await them in biology, meeting future lecturers and enjoying a lunch on us.

The day couldn't have gotten off to a worse start. At exactly 10:45 am, fifteen minutes before the event was due to kick-off, the weather suddenly turned from partly cloudy to torrential rain. Within minutes Science Road was transformed into a river, and the event organisers were left wondering if any students would show.

Incredibly, about 80 students braved the down pour and arrived – saturated – at DT A Lecture Theatre where they were welcomed by the new director of First Year Biology, **Dr Adele Pile**, who gave tips on surviving first year uni. Students were then shown biology live-in-action with a DVD showcasing the famous Simpson Desert fieldtrips, followed by desert veteran **Chin-Liang Beh** introducing Maurice, the very well behaved Black Headed python, much to the delight and horror of audience members. **Dr Ashley Ward** and **Dr Charlie Warren** closed with fascinating talks on animal behaviour and plant ecophysiology, giving the new students a taste of what's to come in their degree.

The day finished on a high note with tech staff cooking a delicious lunch, **Prof Robyn Overall** meeting the new students and Maurice the python working the crowd. Thanks to the academic staff who spoke at the event, **Claudio Muhlrud** and tech staff who worked the BBQ and **Kathy Kuzmanovic** for producing the promotional cards.

In Nature, there is no such thing as a free lunch...



...but there is in Biology!

Find out how to get yours...

Isobel Bennett ~

memories from

The School of Biological Sciences

Prof Tony Underwood – occupant of Isobel's former office at the far north-western corner of the Zoology Building on the first floor

Isobel Bennett, AO, was a long-time (1933-1970) member of the Department of Zoology. She was well-known to many current and former members of the School who worked with her as academics in teaching and laboratory classes or knew her after she retired from the School.

I knew her before I arrived here, having met her in the U.K. when I was a graduate student. By the time I got here, she had retired (I was in her former office, which I still think was inspirational!). Over the subsequent years, she interacted with many of my Honours and Postgraduate students. She met them on the shore, or they contacted her, for *knowledge*. She knew so much about animals and plants in coastal habitats that it was always valuable to get her views or opinions. More importantly, she spent a lot of time with community groups, notably at the Pittwater Council's Coastal Environment Centre at Narrabeen. She retained a sharp memory for places along the coast she had sampled or described and knew an enormous amount about the life-histories and general biology of just about anything you can find in the sea in NSW.

Isobel would not have fared well under RQF processes – but she was a wonderful example of someone who developed expertise in a broad area of natural history. She remained, to the end of her life, involved and concerned about coastal environments and a supporter of the School and the University. Because of their relevance and broad scope, her efforts would still have fitted well with the School's current strategic plans. Without a doubt, many marine biologists and innumerable members of the public are better informed as a result of Isobel Bennett's efforts.



Photo: Howard Whelan

Valerie Morris – SoBS member since 1963 – remembers Charles Birch saying to her, 'you must meet Isobel, she knows everything about marine animals'.

Isobel Bennett was a fiercely energetic and independent person who knew the value of Australia's marine fauna and made no bones about letting others know it as well, through her writings and verbal communications. It has been a tragedy that her knowledge and influence in marine studies has faded in recent times. In memory of her, we should do our utmost to re-establish the importance of the endemic marine fauna on the world stage and its value to marine science.

ISOBEL BENNETT: AWARDS &

APPOINTMENTS

- 1953 Galathea Medal (Denmark)
- 1962 Honorary Master of Science (MSc) University of Sydney
- 1963 Associate Professor, Te Vega Expedition, Stanford University, USA
- 1972 Honorary Research Associate, Australian Museum
Honorary Life member, Australian Coral Reef Society
- 1974 - 1979 Co-opted to the NSW Fisheries Department
- 1982 ANZAAS Mueller Medal
- 1984 Officer of the Order of Australia (AO)
- 1988 Whitley Memorial Award, Royal Zoological Society of NSW for best photography of the GBR
- 1995 Honorary Doctor of Science (DSc (Hon)) University of NSW
- 2000 Adjunct Professor, Southern Cross University
- 2000 Ruth Readford Lifetime Achievement Award
- 2000 Pittwater Gold Medal for Conservation of the Coastal Environment



Isobel receiving honorary life membership of AMSA, presented by Prof Maria Byrne. Isobel is pictured here (in red) wearing her famous *Glaucus* brooch.

From left: Dave Booth (UTS), Isobel Bennett, Maria Byrne, Phyllis Bennett-Isobel's sister. Photo: Austr. Marine Sci. Assoc.

ALUMNI

DIARY DATES

Sydney Science Forum

April 16

5:30-6:45 pm

Eastern Avenue Auditorium

DARK HORIZONS: The Future of Deep
Sea Exploration

Dr Adele Pile & Prof Maria Byrne

Biological Sciences Seminars

First Semester 2008

Fridays 1-2pm,

DT Anderson Lecture Theatre, A08

March 14

THE TRANSIENT OASIS: How eddies
drive oceanic production.

Dr Tom Bibby

Ocean Biogeochemistry and

Ecosystems, University of Southampton

The **2007 Postgrad Seminar Series** will start on Wednesday 3 March and continue most Wednesdays thereafter from 1-2 pm in DT Anderson Lecture Theatre in A08 www.bio.usyd.edu.au - click on **Seminars**

Alan Keast Lecture and Postgraduate weekend: May 2 – 4.

The second Alan Keast lecturer will be SoBS alumnus **A/Professor Scott Keogh** from the School of Botany and Zoology at Australian National University. Scott will give a School seminar and spend the weekend at the Warrah field station, Pearl Beach, mentoring and interacting with the postgrad students. Alan Keast, BSc 1951, MSc 1953, and currently Emeritus Prof. Queens University, Canada, donated \$10 000 to the School in 2004 towards the establishment of a visiting lecturer in Conservation Biology.

**Alan Keast seminar:
May 2, 1 – 2pm
Eastern Ave Lecture Theatre
Everybody Welcome!**

SIMS Open House



Looking for a fun, marine-themed day out that's fit for the whole family?

SIMS is open to members of the public on the first Friday of every month at 10am for a 2 hour tour (see page 7 for coverage of the annual SIMS open day) For bookings contact **Tori Pollard**, SIMS Membership Coordinator
Email: tori.pollard@sims.org.au
Tel: 9969 2664

PRIMARY SCIENCE MENTORING

MyScience is looking for mentors to inspire and support science education for primary school students.

MyScience – a collaborative project involving The Science Foundation for Physics – assists primary teachers and pupils to learn how to develop skills in scientific investigation.

Mentors help pupils develop their own science projects, and then assist with fine-tuning those projects with a goal of submitting their work in the STANSW's Young Scientist Awards Scheme.

Mentors can be from all fields of science: biology, chemistry or physics.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, contact:

Alex Viglienze

Science Foundation for Physics

Tel: (02) 9036 6188

Email: alexv@physics.usyd.edu.au

Web: www.myscience.com.au

WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS?

With this edition of Biology News we continue our initiative to find out what our Biology Alumni are up to now. We invite you to send us your business cards (put your speciality and graduation date on the back e.g. genetics, '88). Cards will be mounted in a frame in our First Year Biology corridor to inspire new students with the wealth of career opportunities that await them!

Please send to: Alumni Committee
c/o Science Road Cottage A10
University of Sydney, NSW 2006

PRIVACY ASSURANCE: The information you provide may be used to maintain contact and keep you up-to-date with information about the University, its services, events and achievements. It may be passed on to groups affiliated with the University, such as alumni organisations and foundations (local and overseas), SU Sport and residential colleges. If you do not wish to receive this information, please contact Advancement Services (fax 9351 5688, or email alumni@vcc.usyd.edu.au). The University abides by the "NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act"

ALUMNI AWARDS 2008

Alumni Awards recognise outstanding achievements made by alumni locally and outside Australia in community service and their professional field. The Awards recognise activities and service which often go unrecognised within the wider community, including:

- Innovation
- Stimulation of new ideas and services
- Dedication
- Creativity
- Leadership
- Community spirit

Do you know an alumnus of Biology who has made an outstanding contribution to their community? Nominate them for an Alumni Award! Nominators can be SoBS staff members, alumni or students. Nomination forms can be found at:

www.usyd.edu.au/alumni/activities

-click on **Awards**

Nominations close Friday 30 May

THE SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

The School is planning to establish a Biological Sciences Alumni Association and is seeking volunteers to form the committee. If you are interested in volunteering to help the School build a strong and vibrant alumni network, please contact: **Carla Avolio**

Tel: +61 2 9351 4543

Email: carla.avolio@bio.usyd.edu.au

Volunteers will benefit greatly from their involvement by gaining invaluable social and networking contacts and further strengthening leadership, project management, marketing and admin skills.