



Paella, sangria and challenging conundrums: six months of Spanish study leave

THE CENTER FOR SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM SOLUTIONS PRESENTS:

Prof Andy Davis

Date: Tuesday 26th March

Time: 16:00 - 17:00

Venue: Building 40 Theatre 131 (40.131)

Refreshments will be provided

ABSTRACT

For academics with teaching responsibilities, time to read and ponder are rare luxuries. Spain provided an opportunity to resolve some conundrums that have been on my mind for a while and finalise publications with Spanish collaborators. The first was a defensive conundrum - why a habitat-forming subtidal solitary ascidian (sea squirt) should possess large quantities of needle-like barbed spicules in its body wall which sits within a tough, leathery tunic (test). An apparent defence behind the ramparts! The answer appears to be the deterrence of specialist ascidian-feeding gastropods. The second was a biogeographic conundrum - why Australia hosts fewer than 1/5 of the freshwater nerite fauna of small Pacific Island groups such as Fiji. An apparent challenge to Island Biogeography theory. An explanation may lie in the connectivity of streams (where adults reside) to the ocean, where larval development ensues; a mode of development termed amphidromy. Over the course of the talk I will introduce the Spanish labs I worked in and the facilities they boast.

BIOGRAPHY

Andy has a long-held interest in the impacts of human activities on marine systems. This has included the effects of a changing climate, particularly ocean acidification on the vulnerable early stages of marine invertebrates. He and his students have interests in the impacts of invasive species on native systems, responses of organisms to metals and other contaminants, and finally how an understanding of biotic responses to the seascape may improve Marine Park design. His current project examining anchoring in deepwater draws heavily on my expertise with sessile invertebrates - particularly the biology and ecology of sponges and ascidians. He has a number of national and international collaborators and his research has taken him to every continent, including Antarctica. Currently he leads a dynamic and productive research group of eight postgraduate students, 4 honours students and a postdoctoral fellow. During his career he has supervised over 50 honours students and 25 postgraduate students to completion. With his postgraduate students he has >140 publications. These include five scholarly book chapters, four of which were invited. Andy has been nominated for two teaching awards in the last 10 years.



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