

Preface

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The 8th International Conference on Coelenterate Biology (ICCB8) was held on 1–5 December 2013 in Eilat, the southernmost city of Israel, known for its splendid coral reefs and enthralling desert. The unique combination of deep-blue clear waters, surrounding colorful granite rocks, and pleasant climate ensured the highly welcoming atmosphere for the more than 260 Coelenterate scientists, students, and guests from five continents and 30 countries who attended the conference. It began with a welcome reception on Sunday evening, 1 December, at the conference venue, the Magic Palace Hotel. Sessions were held all day Monday and Tuesday, and on the mornings of Wednesday and Thursday.

The conference included 12 plenary lectures representing a wide variety of topics and disciplines. On Tuesday, an afternoon poster session took place, accompanied by beer and other refreshments. This session facilitated fruitful meetings and splendid discussions between students and established researchers. Following this, the ICCB8 Photography Competition was held, which was judged by the members of the organized committee. The conference was concluded with the award of prizes to the best student presentations and best photographs. In addition to the reception, the social events included a Wednesday afternoon visit to the Eilat Underwater Observatory and the Interuniversity Institute for Marine Sciences, a gala dinner and party at the Dekel Beach, Eilat.

The conference was followed by two satellite workshops on “*Nematostella*”, organized by Ann M. Tarrant (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, USA) and on “ocean acidification” by Maoz Fine (Interuniversity Institute for Marine Sciences (IUI) in Eilat, Israel).

The Red Sea, and Eilat in particular, have offered through the centuries highly significant landmark studies, including those with a global impact on coelenterate studies. The Israeli Mediterranean coast constitutes a model of a living laboratory for the study of invasive coelenterates that impact the entire region and beyond. The knowledge acquired in Eilat and the Israeli Mediterranean has found worldwide

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Coelenterate Biology: Advanced Studies on Cnidaria and
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dissemination, and both these regions continue to attract scientific expeditions, world-renowned researchers, and generations of enthusiastic students and divers.

The ICCB8 theme, “Our past and present achievements: Gateway to future inspiration”, ensured a perfect gathering place for an exchange of achievements and encounters with colleagues, scholars, and students. The conference encompassed aspects of the biology of cnidarian groups and ctenophores, including those occurring in pelagic and benthic environments, from shallow to deep sea in all regions. Both the sessions and the two satellite workshops included disciplinary and cross-disciplinary plenary session presentations. The ICCB8 has assuredly continued the tradition of the previous seven ICCB meetings,

significantly advancing our knowledge on coelenterates and conducting to the exchange of novel findings among peers and students.

The ICCB8 could not have been organized without the wholehearted help and commitment of many. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all those who contributed to making it possible. An especially warm word of thanks to our sponsors—the conference could not have taken place without your generosity.

Following a thorough review process, 15 articles (200 pages) submitted by ICCB8 participants have been accepted for publication by the guest editors and the editors of *Hydrobiologia*. It is hoped that this ICCB8 issue, similar to the preceding volumes, will constitute a major reference to coelenterate researchers and students for the years to come.