

Water is life,
Don't waste a drop!

8th Australian Trichopterist's meeting Melbourne 8-9 November 1989.



Participants: front row from left - David Cartwright, Tim New, Alice Wells; back row - John Dean, Cathy Yule, Arturs Neboiss.

Life for Australian Trichopterists during the last four or five years has been very demanding. Increased pressure on development of natural resources takes its toll of the wilderness areas. Forests are annihilated, ground is dug up for minerals, rivers are dammed and the first to suffer are the small streams. They become choked with silt and life in them is pushed towards extinction. Under such bleak prospects of future the Australian Trichopterists try frantically to take stock of the local fauna.

The meeting was organized at a very short notice to coincide with anticipated visit of several people to Melbourne. It was set for 8-9 November 1989. However, not everything went as planned and with all the efforts, only six were able to attend.

The first day was spent in lively discussions and reports on ongoing and planned studies were presented. Much attention lately has been directed to the far North of Australia, particularly the Kimberleys region and the Alligator Rivers incorporating Kakadu National Park, which is threatened by mining activities. First batches of caddis material was received for identification several years ago. This gave the first glimpse of most interesting and many cases unusual faunal elements. The exploration was taken seriously by Alice Wells who participated in several expeditions and returned with extensive material. Some new Hydroptilidae have already been described (Wells, 1985), several new Oecetis species by Neboiss are going

to press early this year (1990). The Ecnomus species has been incorporated in the revision prepared by David Cartwright. Alice Wells is now preparing a report of the Kakadu National Park caddis-fly species for the forthcoming Australian Limnology Society meeting in May 1990.

The region under pressure from timber industry is the Tasmanian South West, a part of which is now designated as World Heritage Area. This has been subject of intensive investigations and research expeditions have been conducted by the Tasmanian Department of Lands, Parks and Wildlife. At the beginning of 1988 caddis-flies were investigated and collected by Jean Jackson (at present studying family Conoesucidae for PhD degree at the University of Tasmania, Hobart) and Arturs Neboiss. The results were published in the Occasional Papers No4, Museum of Victoria (1989).

Arturs also reported on completed (and published) chapter on Trichoptera in the Zoological Catalogue of Australia Vol.6 (1989). He has completed the Trichoptera chapter for the Second, revised, edition of INSECTS OF AUSTRALIA by C.S.I.R.O. expected to be published towards the end of this year; he has also completed papers describing new species of Philopotamidae, Goeridae and Lepidostomatidae from Wallace's Expedition material to Sulawesi (1985), and a paper on Oecetis reticulata species group from SW Pacific area.

The Trichoptera of Bougainville Island have been investigated by Cathy Yule as part of her study of freshwater ecology of the Panguna area. Unfortunately her studies are severely restricted because of the political unrest in the Bougainville copper mines. Nevertheless 16 species have been recorded, all appear to be undescribed.

The Australian species of the genus Cheumatopsyche are under review by John Dean. He reported that species separation has been achieved in larvae and that there is sufficient evidence for separating the corresponding adults. We have been assured that instead of a single species there are 15 or more in Australia.

For David Cartwright a big task was the revisional study of the Australian Ecnomus. This project was started several years ago with the aim to match the larvae with adults, but it soon became clear, that the number of species exceeds considerably the six described. The revision raises the number of Australian species to more than 40.

We were glad to have Tim New (Honorary Trichopterologist from the first Australian meeting) participating; particularly welcome were his comments on conservation and problems associated with species extinction.

For Arturs, 1989 brought major change - he retired at the end of November after 36 years with the Department of Entomology, Museum of Victoria, 26 of them as head of the department. However, he has been now appointed Curator Emeritus and will continue to work on caddis-flies.

A couple of years ago Ros StClair decided to leave the climatically unpredictable Melbourne for tropical Townsville. There she has been able to spend some of her time investigating local caddis fauna, particularly the Leptoceridae. Unconfirmed information was received, that she has completed the study of larvae of the subfamily Triplectidinae. Unfortunately she was unable to attend the meeting.

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