

THE 28TH POLISH BENTHOLOGICAL WORKSHOP

CONFERENCE REPORT

The Polish Benthological Workshop is an annual conference dedicated to the study of benthic organisms in various types of water bodies. The event provides a platform to present current research findings, exchange ideas, share experiences, and acquire practical skills to enhance the qualifications and scientific competencies of the participants. This year's meeting– the 28th edition – took place in Sycowa Huta in the Kashubian region from 26–28 September 2024.

The picturesque village on the shores of Lake Sudoń captivates visitors immediately upon entering, as its charm extends well beyond the boundary marked by the village name board. Known locally as *Sęcowa Hęta* in the Kashubian language, the region takes pride in preserving and cultivating this

unique linguistic heritage. And what about the lake? Sudoń. It is home to numerous species, including freshwater mussels. On the first day, a brief reconnaissance allowed me to observe the filter-feeding painter's mussel (*Unio pictorum*) from the shore.

This year's workshop was made possible through the joint efforts of national experts. It was organised by the Department of Invertebrate Zoology and Parasitology and the Department of Ecology and Biogeography, both of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń; the Department of Fisheries Oceanography and Marine Ecology of the National Marine Fisheries Research Institute in Gdynia; the Academy of Biology and Environmental Protection Foundation in Toruń; and the Faculty of Biology



Fig. 1. The participants of the 28th Polish Benthological Workshop. Photo: GRZEGORZ TOŃCZYK



Fig. 2. Freshwater snails collected in Lake Sudomie and prepared for dissection. Photo: ANNA MARIA ŁABĘCKA

of Jagiellonian University. Forty participants from Polish universities and research centres attended (Fig. 1), with 13 oral presentations and 11 posters showcased. Of the oral presentations, four specifically focused on bivalves. We eagerly await their publication in scientific journals:

1. KORNIJÓW R., DUKOWSKA M., PAWLIKOWSKI K., CAŁKIEWICZ J., LESZCZYŃSKA J. Is climate warming favouring the colonisation of a subtropical bivalve in cold Baltic waters?
2. POZNAŃSKA-KAKAREKO M., LICHOCKA K., SZARMACH D., BOMBA A., TEREBIŃSKI S., KOBAK J. Native (*Sphaerium rivicola*) and invasive (*Corbicula leana*) bivalves in the face of climate warming: effects of substrate drought on survival and behaviour.
3. SZARMACH D., TEREBIŃSKI S., KOBAK J., LICHOCKA K., WIŚNIEWSKI K., POZNAŃSKA-KAKAREKO M. Invasive vs. invasive, means of the influence of the zebra mussel on the behaviour of the Asian clam *Corbicula leana*.
4. URBAŃSKA M., KAŹMIERCZAK S., ĆMIEL A., RICCARDI N., DZIADOWIEC R., DOŁĘGA J., HALABOWSKI D., OŹGO M., RADOCAJ T., SHARMA V., TASKINEN J., ŁABĘCKA A. M. Practice makes perfect – workshops are the right place to test new methods.



Fig. 3. Exploration for molluscs in Lake Sudomie. Photo: GRZEGORZ TOŃCZYK



Fig. 4. *Plagiorchis* sp. – a parasitic trematode. Photo: GRZEGORZ TOŃCZYK

The awards committee, comprising Dr TADEUSZ FLEITUCH, Dr ANNA M. ŁABĘCKA, and Prof. RYSZARD KORNIJÓW, evaluated the presentations and posters by young scientists. This year, prizes were exclusively awarded for oral presentations. The winners were PRZEMYSŁAW PIEKARCZYK, a student at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, for his presentation Eggs or parasites? The mystery of the ‘mysterious’ structures in freshwater Gastrotricha; and KAMIL WIŚNIEWSKI, a doctoral student at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, for his talk on Clonal invasion: habitat preferences of juvenile, parthenogenetic marbled crayfish (*Procambarus virginialis*). PIEKARCZYK’s presentation stood out for its passion, dedication, and the investigative flair displayed by this promising young scientist.

In the workshop sessions, molluscs took centre stage. Participants engaged in laboratory-based parasitological studies of benthic fauna, with a particular focus on freshwater bivalves and gastropods (Fig. 2). Samples collected from Lake Sodomie were analysed, and participants were guided by experts – including Prof. ELŻBIETA ŻBIKOWSKA, Dr ANNA M. ŁABĘCKA, and Dr MARIA URBAŃSKA – in mollusc dissection

techniques (Fig. 3) and parasite identification. Prof. ŻBIKOWSKA’s lecture on parasites in molluscs and their ecological significance enriched the programme. OPTA-TECH supported the practical sessions, providing microscopes and other equipment for visualising microscopic structures (Fig. 4).

The conference concluded with a bonfire gathering, where participants shared stories and discussions about benthos, occasionally interrupted by the rain. On the final day, some attendees visited the Kashubian Ethnographic Park in Wdzydze Kiszewskie.

The next workshop will be hosted by the Centre for Environmental Education and Lakes Revitalisation in Szczecinek (Western Pomerania). See you next year!

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