EDITORIAL

University of Concepcion Marine Station, Dichato, Chile

On 27 February 2010, a magnitude-8.8 earthquake struck the central region of Chile. The worst destruction occurred in the cities of Concepcion, Talca, Talcahuano harbour and Dichato, located near the epicentre. In the coastal area, the massive quake was followed by a highly destructive tsunami. Among the Chilean scientific institutions and laboratories worst affected were the University of Concepcion and the marine station, at Dichato (Kaiser and Regalado, 2010; Regalado, 2010). The tsunami devastated the lab in Dichato, a small fishing town about 50 km from Concepcion and left its research vessel, the *Kay-Kay*, stranded inland. Laboratories were totally destroyed, samples and data records were washed away, and the station's library, microscopes and other analytical equipment were lost.

The University of Concepcion and the Dichato lab have a strong tradition of plankton research in the highly productive upwelling system off the coast. Two *JPR* Editorial Board members, Carmen Morales and Rueben Escribano, work at the Dichato marine station and they and their colleagues have published many papers from this active research programme in *Journal of Plankton Research*. Recent studies have included the use of automated image analysis to investigate mesozooplankton community structure (Manriquez *et al.*, 2009) and biomass spectra and allometric relationships to estimate planktonic community respiration (Blanco *et al.*, 2005). Zooplankton grazing and faecal pellet production have been studied by Gonzalez *et al.* (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2000), Grunewald *et al.* (Grunewald *et al.*, 2002) and Morales (Morales, 1999). A number of studies have investigated the microbial loop system, including microzooplankton, nano-heterotrophs, microplankton and viral effects (Bottier and Morales, 2005; Cuevas and Morales, 2006; Eissler and Quinones, 1999, 2003). The paper by Iriarte *et al.* (Iriarte *et al.*, 2005) describes a field approach to the relationship between biomass and enzymatic activity of a bloom-forming dinoflagellate in the region. Migratory behaviour of zooplankton in relation to the physical oceanography of the upwelling has been studied for the euphausid, *Euphausia mucronata* (Gonzalez and Quinones, 2002), the copepod, *Eucalanus inermis* in relation to the oxygen minimum zone (Hidalgo *et al.*, 2005), the predatory impact of the ctenophore, *Pleurobrachia bachei* (Pavez *et al.*, 2006) and the vertical distribution of decapod larvae (Yannicelli *et al.*, 2006).

To rebuild the facilities in Concepcion and at Dichato to support this level of research activity will take time and the concerted support of the wider scientific community. International initiatives in this regard are already under way. Recognizing the links between *Journal of Plankton Research* and the community in Chile, the publisher of *JPR*, Oxford University Press, will be providing gratis online subscriptions to their marine journals and will also be sending a selection of their recent biology books to help re-build the library.

Next year the 5th International Zooplankton Production Symposium will be held in Pucón, Chile, 14–18 March 2011 (www.pices.int/zooplankton2011.aspx). As well as being a major international scientific meeting, this will also provide the opportunity for zooplankton researchers from all over the world to come to Chile and show their support for their Chilean colleagues in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami.

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