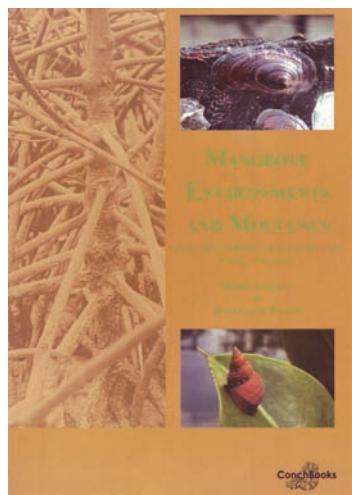


BOOK REVIEW



**M a n g r o v e
Environments and
Molluscs: Abatan
River, Bohol and
Panglao Islands,
Central Philippines.**

Pierre Lozouet & Jean-Claude Plaziat. 2008. 160 pp. Conchbooks, Hackenheim, Germany. ISBN 978-3-939767-16-9.

The Indo-West Pacific region is by far the richest in terms of mollusc species diversity, but despite more

than 200 years of malacology, the identification of mangal molluscs, and knowledge of their habits in the mangrove ecosystem, remains poor. Containing a small part of the results of the Panglao Marine Biodiversity Project, a large scale comprehensive survey undertaken by a team of research scientists from many ASEAN countries, Europe and the United States, this book covers the mangrove environments in relation to the molluscs. Molluscs inhabiting the mangroves have received considerably less attention compared to their counterparts inhabiting the coral reefs, and the present book fills an important niche that is seldom visited in detail by other authors. Thumbing through the plates, it becomes apparent that the main focus of the book is on showcasing the mangal malacofauna diversity. Although the contents of the present book are based on material and studies of only a small area in the Central Philippines, the information within is nevertheless relevant from a regional perspective as similarities in biotope, and species composition are often shared throughout the region. The present book satisfies the most basic need of species identification, which is often a frustrating affair faced by students with an interest in the mangrove ecosystem, as well as containing useful information on the mangrove ecosystem.

The book is organised into several parts, starting with an introduction of the characteristics of the Indo-West Pacific biogeographical region, followed by a mention of the methods employed for the survey. Part I – The Mangal Ecosystem, contains interesting general information on the mangrove ecosystem. There is cursory mention of the state of the mangroves in the Philippines, but the situation of

the mangroves on Bohol is covered with more detail. Next, information of the Arbatan River, where the main basis of this study is formed, is well presented to the reader with neat illustrations and photographs of various vegetation types. Definitions of the mangrove environment and the zonation of vegetation are also clearly explained.

Part II – Molluscs in the Mangal, is possibly the main part of the text that will interest most potential readers of this book. The general occurrence of mollusc distribution is discussed in detail, and includes useful information of molluscs in the mangal environment. The occurrence of different species relative to the mangrove ecosystem is discussed in detail, and includes definitions as to what constitutes real mangal malacofauna in the strict sense, something often misinterpreted by various authors. Aided with the information gleaned from Part I, the reader can easily relate to most of the discussions such as, for example, the zonation of molluscs. Examples of mollusc species are also given under all subsections allowing the reader to easily form an idea of the kind of species to expect and their respective distribution in the mangrove habitat. Accompanying photographs serve well to break the monotony of the text for the casual reader with an attention deficit, and those of molluscs in situ and their living environs are particularly of interest, allowing a closer look at the fascinating animals for the armchair naturalist. This section is concluded with some notes on the importance of the mangrove ecosystem in the economic sense, and includes, besides the molluscs, the exploitation of other material, and other generally interesting information for ecologists and the like.

A list of the included mollusc species arranged in systematic order is provided for in Part III – Taxonomic Inventory of Mangal Molluscs and other Mangrove-Associated Environments, and is clearly meant complement the colour plates in Part V, and for the serious student, references are provided in Part IV. All species photographed are represented by beautiful colour photographs, and short notes such as the locations and habitat where each species were collected are supplied as accompanying text. However, diagnostic descriptions for the photographed species are not provided and the means of species identification provided for by this book lies solely in the plates. Depending on how keen the individual reader's eyes are, differences between similar looking species may not be easily discerned. This is possibly the only blemish in an otherwise flawless book. Nevertheless, as most malacological students are accustomed to studying

plates, this does not in any way detract from the usefulness of this book, and the importance of the role that it fulfils to showcase the mangal malacofauna.

In recent years, there is an increasing shift in attitudes towards the mangrove ecosystem. The importance of the role of mangrove ecosystem in the scheme of things is increasingly being appreciated beyond the ugly reputation as dirty muddy mosquito infested swamps. The authors are commended for having the foresight to demonstrate the actual diversity of the malacofauna in a specialised but often ill-defined ecosystem, and students of the mangrove ecosystem will appreciate this book as a useful reference and a means of identifying their finds. The impressive array of species illustrated, apart from pleasantly stimulating the eye and mind, will no doubt change many a reader's mind

that molluscs are not well represented in the mangroves. My attention is also unwittingly drawn to the fact that a number of species rarely or never before depicted in popular books are included. These inclusions make the book even more attractive for the professional and amateur malacologist alike, and this beautifully illustrated book is a definite must-have for the library of any self respecting malacologist.

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