

IUSSI Congress 2014 - Report from Richard Bridgett

Attending the 17th global meeting of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects (IUSSI) held in Cairns from the 13-19th July was a terrific experience. Over five hundred delegates from over thirty countries attended to disseminate current research into a plethora of social insect species.

My own presentation on attempts to isolate honey bee feeding stimulants through the bio-guided fractionation of pollen extracts was attended by approximately 40 delegates, and I believe it was well received. Presenting here gave me the opportunity to discuss my work with researchers from a range of institutions, including a government researcher from the U.S. department of Agriculture, whose honey bee research complements aspects of my own. Our conversations were highly insightful, and attendance here allowed us to discuss the potential for a future collaboration. There were plenty of other opportunities to network, and it was also highly beneficial to speak to researchers who focus more heavily on behavioural biology than me. Having approached my own research more from my background in analytical techniques, I was able to gain a better understanding of some important behavioural traits exhibited by honey bees.

There were many interesting and engaging presentations, and from a personal point of view the plenary presentations from Jay Evans on the current threats to honeybees, and Martin Guirfa on honey bee learning and memory, were highlights. I am now around nine months from submitting my thesis, and I am thankful that I was able to experience attending a global conference in my final year. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel to the other side of the world communicate my research to a global audience. Having done this I feel a great sense of personal achievement, and my discussions whilst there have contributed to forming ideas as to the direction I may take my future research. For helping to me to achieve this, I wish to thank the Perry Foundation for the award of an Arnold Hitchcock travel grant, which was used towards the purchase of flights and conference registration.