

Editorial

Cite this article: Cutmore SC (2025).

Trematodes 2024 – An international meeting for trematodology. *Journal of Helminthology*, **99**, e3, 1–2

<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022149X2400083X>.

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For any scientist, conferences and symposia present an exciting glimpse into the current research being conducted by others in their field. From a personal perspective, I, and the vast majority of researchers to whom I have spoken over the years, arrive at every conference excited by the opportunities that lie ahead and leave inspired by the ideas and techniques being explored by our colleagues. I think it is rare that a conference attendee will depart a meeting without at least some renewed ambition to improve or develop parts of their own research program. The level of motivation with which one leaves a meeting is, however, always affected by the nature of the conference itself. Compared with broadly themed conferences that encompass many facets of a field, smaller and more focused meetings tend to result in greater research overlap between attendees, leading to perceptible outcomes and well-defined collaborations.

Inspired by the highly productive and influential taxon-focused conference series held for researchers working on the Cestoda (the *International Workshop on Cestode Systematics and Phylogeny*), Copepoda (the *International Conference on Copepoda*), and Monogenea (the *International Symposium on Monogenea*), it was decided that it was time for the Trematoda to have a corresponding meeting for which it was the sole focus. Trematodes are, after all, the most diverse lineage of the Platyhelminthes and the focus of an immense amount of research across all the inhabited continents. Although researchers focused on the few trematodes of medical importance already have their own standalone conference series (such as the *International Symposium on Schistosomiasis*), those working on trematodes that infect wildlife (i.e., the vast majority of trematode species), have not yet had a dedicated series. The genesis for such a conference series occurred in 2015 at the 9th *International Symposium on Fish Parasites* in Valencia, Spain. At this meeting, a trematode workshop, *The Biodiversity of Trematodes of Fishes*, was organised by Dr Tom Cribb (Cribb 2016). Despite this workshop being influential for those who attended, it primarily involved researchers focusing on trematodes of fishes and explored just a single aspect of their biology (i.e., biodiversity). In that workshop, the idea of a standalone meeting for the Trematoda was considered and positively received, but it took eight years for the idea to be realised. In 2023, after the 10th *International Symposium on Fish Parasites* in Copenhagen, Denmark, Dr Isabel-Blasco Costa, Dr Tom Cribb and I began creating the foundation of a trematode focused meeting. Through the dedicated work of a truly international organising committee, in 2024 the conference series *Trematodes* was created.

The inaugural international meeting for trematodology, *Trematodes 2024*, was held at the Queensland Museum in Brisbane, Australia. The five-day meeting, held 8–13 September 2024, was focused on many aspects of research on the group, including taxonomy and systematics, evolution, life cycles, ecology, pathology and disease, and biogeography. The meeting was an unequivocal success, bringing together 85 world-leading trematode scientists to identify, discuss and develop global collaborative strategies for the most important challenges and opportunities facing research on this important group of parasites. *Trematodes 2024* was attended by delegates from 22 countries, from across Africa, Asia, Oceania, Europe and North and South America. Across the five days of the meeting, there were eight plenary presentations that covered topics such as the relevance of museum collections in trematodology, the structure of future large-scale genome projects in our field, and how to unify the discipline to build a robust framework for trematode research in a changing world. There were 83 submitted abstracts, comprising 58 oral presentations and 25 poster presentations. The presentations covered an enormous range of topics and highlighted the innovative research being conducted. In addition to the plenary and submitted presentations, five workshops were held, with a focus on developing a series of best practices regarding specimen processing, species recognition, and biogeographical study, and proposing globally collaborative phylogenomic projects. A detailed summary of the meeting has been published by Martin et al. (2024), providing an account of the symposium from the viewpoint of a group of attending early career researchers; it is well worth a read.

To mark the success of *Trematodes 2024*, a selection of attendees were invited to contribute papers to the *Journal of Helminthology*. Although it is impossible to cover the full scope of topics covered at *Trematodes 2024*, these papers are symbolic of the breadth and significance of the research presented at the meeting. The papers encompass subjects from broad plenary





Figure 1. The attendees of *Trematodes 2024*.

topics to reviews of biogeography and species recognition, to novel and unique findings in the field. The papers will appear in the coming months as part of the *Trematodes 2024 Meeting* collection.

Based on the success of the meeting in Brisbane, it is clear there is a strong desire for an ongoing meeting series that is solely focused on trematodes. The feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, and the *Trematodes* series has now been locked in as a triennial fixture. The next iteration of the meeting, *Trematodes 2027*, will be held at the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle in Geneva, Switzerland, guided by co-chairs Dr Isabel Blasco-Costa and Dr Storm Martin. With Isabel and Storm at the helm, *Trematodes 2027* will undoubtedly be a great success and I highly anticipate the

research to be showcased, the workshop topics to be discussed and debated, and the long-term and productive collaborations that will be developed.

References

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