

This volume is a revealing account of progress to date in the study of molluscan phylogenetic relationships. It contains 31 contributions by 40 authors who attended the Centenary Symposium of the Malacological Society of London in September 1993. It is the most complete statement on the subject yet published and merits a place in the libraries of institutions and mollusc specialists. In one of the most ambitious (yet still preliminary) cladistic analyses yet attempted for any group of molluscs, Gastropod phylogeny—challenges for the 90s, by W F Ponder and D R Lindberg (Chapter 11), 22 ingroup taxa and three outgroups are analysed for 95 morphological characters.

In methodological contrast, several phylogenetic analyses by such prominent malacologists as G Haszprunar, Lv Salvini-Plawen, G Steiner, A Scheltema, and D L Ivanov propose drastically different scenarios. Those contributors document new and interesting character-state distributions, and yet heavily-handedly assert preconceived notions of ancestral prototypes. A more impartial approach would have used cladistic analysis, including multiple potential outgroups. Those who enjoy active controversies will find plenty of disagreement among these authors, and this debate reflects the vibrancy of ongoing investigations.

Likewise, B Runnegar reviews parallel controversies among paleontologists that involve problematic fossils with debated affinities to Mollusca. Runnegar’s own “scenario” cladogram is provocative because it includes the well-known Cambrian fossils Wiwaxia and Halkieria, along with the extant phylum Sipuncula, as members of the clade that includes extant molluscs. J Healy’s review on molluscan sperm ultrastructure and an ultrastructural demonstration of the coelomic nature of molluscs by M P Morse and P D Reynolds are other highlights. Conspicuously absent are molecular sequence comparisons, except for one study on stylommatophoran gastropods based on partial 28S ribosomal RNA sequences by T Tillier and coauthors. More specialized contributions are limited to Aplacophora, Gastropoda, Scaphopoda, and Bivalvia. The editor is to be commended for assembling an attractive, well-edited volume with generally excellent figures. It is bound to be widely cited and will certainly stimulate further research on molluscan phylogeny.

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Biodiversidad, Taxonomía y Biografía de Artrópodos de México: Hacia una Sinopsis de su Conocimiento.


Travelers to Mexico often hear the lament: “Poor Mexico! So far from God; so close to the United States.” Mexico’s alleged distance from God has certainly not harmed its biodiversity, which is among the world’s highest. Its proximity to the United States has not harmed taxonomic understanding of its biota either, although Mexico has a long and proud history of indigenous work in a great many groups. The lead in bringing together a very scattered, polyglot literature on Mexican biodiversity was taken by the Instituto de Biología at UNAM, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, which