

MASTS small grant (SG327)

6th International Symposium Deep-Sea Corals.

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On the 16th of June 2016 I attended the "*6th International Symposium of Deep Sea Corals*" where I gave an oral presentation on my research. This Symposium was held from the 11th-16th of September 2016 in Boston, Massachusetts.

Over the last decade, the global knowledge of deep-sea cold-water coral ecosystems has greatly expanded. The 6th International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals brings together new developments and knowledge through a range of themes and topics including biodiversity, predictive mapping, genetics, new technologies, climate change and conservation. These topics are all relevant to my PhD research, which is related to the biodiversity associated with cold-water corals and the development of new methods to map, predict and monitor cold-water coral reefs.

The conference started Sunday evening the 11th of September with a welcome reception at the New England Aquarium. On Monday, the conference commenced with a survey of the multitude of deep-sea coral habitats around the world and cutting edge techniques for finding and studying them. On the second day as focussed on deep-sea coral taxonomy and systematics. Followed this with a series of sessions on the latest genetic techniques in systematics, aspects of coral life history, and the relationship between corals and other close associates. Tuesday evening concluded with the conference dinner, which was included in the registration fee. Wednesday was a free day, where we had the opportunity to explore Boston. On Thursday we looked at anthropogenic threats to corals: oil spills, fishing, mining, and climate change. Friday was the last day examining how cold-water corals get their food and how they build large reef and mound structures, with a look into the future.

Friday was the day I presented the results of one of my PhD papers which is under review. My presentation introduced the cold-water coral science community with novel acoustic and visual mapping tools that I developed to predict the small-scale spatial distribution of live biogenic reef framework in cold-water coral habitats. My presentation fitted well in this session and I received a lot of feedback and interest. This symposium overall has been very interesting. It not only gave me excellent overview of the on-going and future research in my

field, but also provided me with a lot of new contacts and feedback on my current work. During the conference I was tweeting from @eu_atlas to ensure a wider outreach of the science presented at the conference.



The MASTS small grant helped me to cover the costs of accommodation, travel and attendance at the symposium. This symposium was definitely a unique opportunity for me and I would therefore like to express many thanks to MASTS for financially supporting my attendance.

All the best,

Laurence