

## California to Canada, and Home Again.

By Sheryl Miller and Lisa Russell

Late last year, three Otago University Botany students decided they would attend a phycological (seaweed) conference in the USA. They got together and started to scheme and plan about how they could afford it. 'Lets apply for funding' said one. 'How about the Regional Council or the Natural History Unit' added another. 'I know' said the third, 'lets bake muffins and sell them for morning and afternoon tea.' And so they did. Lisa, Julia and Sheryl would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made themselves buy and eat our home-made muffins, biscuits and slices of cake.

On July 12<sup>th</sup> 2000, the three of us left Dunedin bound for San Diego, California. We caught our first flight but missed all connections after Christchurch. Many standby flights and airplane meals later we finally stood on American soil. The 54<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the *Phycological Society of America (PSA)* was held 15 to 19<sup>th</sup> July, 2000 at the Town & Country Resort & Convention Center in San Diego, California, USA. *PSA* met 'side-by-side' with the *American Society of Plant Physiologists (ASPP)*.

The conference began with the student session, which to our delight was dominated by female students. The variety of presentations was amazing as was the way in which they were presented – overheads, power point, slides or a mix of all three. Talks ranged from phylogeny and taxonomy, for example 'Systematics and Phylogeography of the invasive Red Alga, *Polysiphonia harveyi*', to ecological studies including 'Life on the Edge: Stress Survival Adaptations in Southern Limit *Macrocystis pyrifera* Populations' with the question asked – 'Is stress stressful?' In another student talk, 'The Secret Life of Kelps: Planktonic Processes and Population Dynamics', we heard that 25% of *Macrocystis pyrifera* spores travelled further than 5000

meters! This was attributed to triglyceride, a high-energy lipid which kelps contain in large amounts.

There were several plenary lectures ranging from the role of light harvesting antennae systems and kelp ecology to evolution, biogeography and systematics of marine algae. We had the opportunity to speak with several well-known phycologists including Max Hommers and Paul Dayton, while Lisa had the chance to collect several alga specimens to boost her phylogenetic results.

A take home message is that one must be prepared and begin applying for funding at least six months beforehand. The conference provided insight into other research being undertaken and methodology used, and also provided the opportunity to make contacts at other research institutes.

After the conference, we travelled to Vancouver, Canada, where we met with and presented our research to Dr. Paul Harrison and his students at the University of British Columbia. We spent two days touring around UBC, and swapping research ideas with students and lecturers alike. A week was then spent at the Bamfield Marine Station on Vancouver Island, courtesy of Dr. Rob DeWreede. During this time we were field assistants for several UBC students working there which allowed us the opportunity to learn and identify some of the British Columbian algae we often read about. A great opportunity to make contacts, look for post-doc positions, pick brains of eminent researchers and generally enjoy a new environment (summer during our winter – superb).

## **My favourite seaweed: the bull kelp *Durvillaea*** by Catriona Hurd

To most phycologists, *Durvillaea* species typify the Australasian and Chilean marine flora. For those of us trained in the Northern Hemisphere, the first sight of *Durvillaea* is a mystical experience -