

International Association of Geomorphologists

Association Internationale des
Géomorphologues

IAG/AIG Newsletter No. 24 (2/2008)

7TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GEOMORPHOLOGY (ANZIAG) - 6 - 11 JULY 2009

Invitation

Dear friends and colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to invite all of you to attend the Seventh International Conference on Geomorphology in Melbourne next year.

This will be the first time our international conference has been held in the Southern Hemisphere, and we are working hard to make sure that all delegates have the chance to learn about, and experience first-hand, some of our fascinating antipodean landscapes.

The conference will be held in a brand-new, environmentally-certified Convention Centre, located on the banks of the Yarra River, in the popular Southbank precinct of the city of Melbourne. Fine accommodation, dining, shopping, and entertainment are all available close to the conference venue.

The Organising Committee has been working hard to develop a wide-ranging scientific program, and we are very grateful to those of you who have proposed scientific sessions or who have agreed to be session convenors. Our conference theme - *Ancient landscapes – modern perspectives* – reflects our location, but the program will be very wide ranging. Not least this is because our colleagues in New Zealand are very much involved in conference organization, and are offering delegates the opportunity to join fieldtrips to their own very different and tectonically-active landscapes.

I think that this will be a very exciting conference, and an important chance for all of us to meet, discuss research issues in geomorphology, and maintain or initiate international collaborations. The host organization, the Australian and New Zealand Geomorphology Group, and the members of the Organising Committee, very much look forward to welcoming you all to Melbourne next year.

Best wishes,

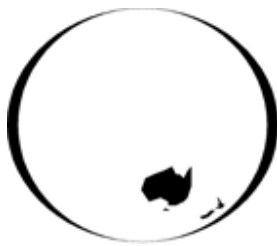
Brian Finlayson,
Chair, Local Organising Committee

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS NOW OPEN

The International Association of Geomorphologists and the Australian and New Zealand Geomorphology Group invite all geomorphologists and others interested in geomorphology to participate in the 7th International Conference on Geomorphology. The Conference will provide an opportunity to discuss the latest research across all branches of geomorphology and to experience some of our fascinating antipodean landscapes.

PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

The 7th International Conference on Geomorphology (ANZIAG) will be held in Melbourne in July 2009 with the theme 'Ancient Landscapes - Modern perspectives.' For the first time in history, this Conference will be held in the Southern Hemisphere, on an ancient piece of Gondwanaland. The conference provides a venue for geomorphologists working in all branches of discipline to present their work, to hear the work of others and to interact with colleagues from around the globe. For more information on the exciting and dynamic program, please visit the conference website at <http://www.geomorphology2009.com/>.



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NEWS

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Professor John Thornes on July 17th 2008. Professor Thornes, known internationally for his research on river quality, soil erosion and desertification processes, was described by *The Times* obituarist as 'one of the most eminent and influential physical geographers of his generation, a highly original researcher and a passionate exponent and exemplar of geographical field work.' We also report with regret the death on August 19th 2008 of Dr Torao Yoshikawa, emeritus Professor of the University of Tokyo and Senior Fellow of the IAG.

We note with great pleasure that Professor H.J.Walker, one of the founders of the IAG, received the Royal Geographical Society's Patron's Medal on June 2nd 2008. The Awards recognise outstanding geographical research, fieldwork and teaching, and are among the highest honours in the world for the development and promotion of geography. Her Majesty the Queen approves the award of the Patron's Medal, which

originated in 1831 as an annual gift of fifty guineas to the Society from King William IV. An international authority on coastal geomorphology, Prof. Jesse Walker, Boyd Professor Emeritus at Louisiana State University, is the author of more than 150 books, monographs, research reports and articles. He has been enormously influential in establishing the University's geography department as one of the US's leading centres for physical geography, and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association of American Geographers in 2006.

CONFERENCE REPORTS

International Workshop on Sustainable Development and Environmental Change in Arid and Semi-Arid areas, Alashan Left Banner, Inner Mongolia, September 2007.

Professor Yang Xiaoping from the Chinese Academy of Sciences convened an excellent workshop in the Inner Mongolian city of Alashan, involving over 80 participants from 18 different countries. Scientists from as geographically diverse countries as Iceland, Kuwait, Korea and South Africa spent a rewarding few days listening to each other's papers, viewing posters and seeing the sights of Inner Mongolia. The meeting was co-sponsored by IAG and COMLAND, resulting in a rich mix of papers on geomorphological, Quaternary and land degradation topics. Especially notable was the high quality of papers given by young Chinese scientists, based on advanced analytical techniques and focused on clearly defined and important research questions. Some long-standing debates and questions were also revisited at the meeting, such as what desertification actually is, whether monitoring and understanding land degradation now needs to be replaced by action to confront the problems, and how scientists can improve their understanding of complex, multi-scale, interrelated environmental changes. Such debates continued during the wonderful evening banquets and meals provided by the Longxin Hotel and regional government. A mid-conference field trip took us into the Helen Shan mountains and on to the eastern margins of the Tengger desert – resulting in yet more discussion about the dynamics of arid and semi-arid environments and societies.

Heather Viles
University of Oxford, UK

Pre- and post-conference fields trips

The Pre-Conference Field Trip visited the Hindshadake Sandy Land of Inner Mongolia, located a day's journey north of Beijing. The Sandy Land occupies about 21,400 km² situated in a tectonic depression in the upland plateau of extensive grasslands and experiences a continental semi-arid climate. The main themes of the visit were the chronology and phases of Holocene aeolian activity and the desertification and reactivation of dunes, particularly the extent to which this is due to grazing or climatic fluctuations. Most of the area now comprises stabilized dunes. Sections in the dunes with palaeosols dating from the mid-Holocene were examined. Examples of stabilised dunes where grazing is controlled were observed but also some areas of active aeolian processes. An insight into rural life was gained by visits to two families, both of whom

keep cattle and sheep. Other aspects of Chinese development were also evident in the newly constructed town where we stayed with its vast roads, squares and apartment blocks: and in the far-reaching influence of Beijing where large numbers of lorries trying to enter the city meant a 3-hour traffic jam, 150 km from the city. The excursion was very ably organised and led by Xiaoping Yang.

Janet Hooke
University of Liverpool, UK

Notes from the Inner Mongolia post conference field trip.

Ten jeeps set off at breakneck speed up the dry river bed taking the most direct route into the heart of the desert. Emerging from the river bed dunes rise ahead as far as the eye can see. Moving off in a formation that is shortly broken as they climb, the jeeps slither and slide up and down dunes, sometimes moving sideways. From the rear vehicle it looks like some graceful, well orchestrated ballet as the jeeps seem to weave their way together into the distant dunes.

The camp site overlooks an inter-dune lake; a small oasis in the midst of the rising red dunes, some more than three hundred metres high. How have they formed - Over a basement of former ranges? It seems likely, but is yet to be proved.

Climbing the highest dune under a blazing sun and blue sky, the dune crests appear impossibly sharp, honed by the wind to a razors edge. Resting atop a smaller dune the dunes stretch to the horizon in all directions. Clouds gather, virga hangs enticingly over head - It must be 35°C below.

A wind springs up from nowhere, sweeping sand before it. Sand streams over dune crests, small vortices form on the leeward side and sand is whirled back upward - The formation of those impossibly sharp crests is explained. Sand is blown both up and down the dune face as wind blasts hit the dune.

Back to the wind, eyes shut fast (except for those moments when sneaking a look at the fascinating aeolian processes in action), mouth and nose covered we wait the passing of the wind storm.

Back in camp tents have been flung up dunes and hurled back down with the force of the wind. Sand has penetrated everywhere, inside closed tents sleeping bags, cases and clothes are covered in a thick coating of sand. How did that happen when the tent was sealed?

A still, clear, starry night sky is the following morning replaced with a grey alto-cumulus / alto-stratus assemblage and a sharp wind. Ominous distant rumbling forewarns a coming storm. The field trip goes on regardless, as all the best field trips do.

The vista is one of lakes nestling between towering dunes, a chain of small green jewels enclosed by a harsh dry landscape, all that remains of a more extensive lake system of earlier times. Shards of pottery and flint stones provide evidence of prehistoric habitation

of this land at a former time. Even now rude farms nestle near the inter dune oases, some inhabited, but most abandoned as the Government attempts to protect the landscape.

Rain comes, the temperature drops, raincoats and warm jackets are the order of the day. Yet, even though all is dampened down, the persistent wind still finds enough dry sand to continue blowing it over the dune tops. There is less of it than yesterday, but this landscape is clearly constantly in motion.

Another day, a blue sky and a sad farewell to our desert camp - The relaxed long stare so recently developed is reluctantly replaced with a more immediate view. "We should have been here for a month."

Desiree Lammerts
Australia

33IGC – Oslo, Norway

Geomorphology and landscape response to global change - a tribute to Olav Slaymaker

Conveners

Xiaoping Yang, Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Andrew Goudie, Oxford University, UK.

Monique Fort, Université Paris 7, France.

In all climate zones the landscapes and landforms have been proven to be sensitive to climate changes. This session addressed two interconnected issues: 1) How have the landforms and landscapes responded to the Late Quaternary climate changes in various parts of the world? 2) How will the world's landscapes respond to the future climate change (both temperature and moisture as well as changes of magnitude and frequency of extreme events)? The session started with a keynote lecture titled "Why geomorphology matters in global environmental change" by Professor Olav Slaymaker. Topics of other 13 presentations included: a) the processes and trends of retreat and degradation of glaciers and permafrost in the future based on the understanding of past changes; b) the potential changes of local and regional fluvial, aeolian, lacustrine and coastal systems in relation to climate fluctuations and c) frequency and intensity of geomorphic disasters such as desertification, sandstorms, landslides and debris flows in the past and their potential trends in the future. Through intensive discussions the participants agreed with Slaymaker's warning that the issues of land use change, sea level change and effects of climate change transmitted through hydrology, aridity, vegetation and sediment and solute transport, should be given greater attention in the global change studies in the years to come.

There will be an opportunity to further develop the themes of this session at the 7th International Conference on Geomorphology in Melbourne, Australia. We sincerely hope that many experts will attend this congress.

The 12th Belgium-France-Italy-Romania Geomorphological Meeting, “Climatic change and related landscapes”, Savona (Italy), 26-29 September 2007.

The 12th Meeting was held in Savona, Italy, under the auspices of International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG), Asociația Geomorfologilor Din România, Associazione Italiana di Geografia Fisica e Geomorfologia (AIGeo), Belgian Association of Geomorphologists, Groupe Français de Géomorphologie. It was organised by Paolo Roberto Federici, University of Pisa and his collaborators.

The Meeting focused on relationships between climatic change and geomorphological environments. Particular emphasis was given to morphological transformations induced by climatic change. Three sessions and plenary lectures considered this theme in relation to coastal, gravitational and glacial landforms and processes.

The Meeting was held between the 26th and the 29th September 2007. On the first two days, there were invited speeches together with selected oral communications and poster presentations at the Fortezza del Priamar in Savona. There were 81 participants from nine countries with three plenary lectures, 26 oral communications and 33 posters presented.

. During the first day of the field-trip participants moved along the Ligurian coast and visited the famous archaeological site of Balzi Rossi, where significant Quaternary coastal landforms are preserved and onto the Albenga Plain, formed by a huge delta developing since the Holocene. In the afternoon the participants crossed the Ligurian Alps stopping at specific locations where large landslides are currently affecting human settlement areas. The next day the group travelled north to the mountains of the Valle Stura di Demonte in the Maritime Alps. On top of general morphotectonic and climatic outlines, stops were taken at moraine complexes, erosive glacial landforms, paraglacial and alluvial fans.

A selection of the presented oral communication will be published, after the revision of the scientific committee, in a dedicated volume.

Paolo Roberto Federici
University of Pisa, Italy

IAG Regional Conference, Brasov, Romania, September 2008

The IAG Regional Conference on Geomorphology was held at the Transilvania University in Brasov, in Romania, from September 15-26, 2008. The theme was “Landslides, Floods and Global Environmental Change in Mountain Regions”. Over 150

people from 30 countries attended and Professor Dan Balteanu and his Romanian colleagues are to be congratulated on providing a very full and successful programme of lectures, workshops, field trips and social activities

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

The IAG is sponsoring a meeting on 'Land Degradation in Dry Environments' to be held at the University of Kuwait from March 8-14, 2009. Details are available from <http://cldde.kuniv.edu>.

The IAG is also sponsoring a conference on Landslides (a tribute to Theo van Asch) to be held in Strasbourg on 6-7th February 2009. Details can be found on <http://eost.u-strasbg.fr/landslidestrasbourg2009/>

Editor's Note

The success of the IAG/AIG Newsletter depends upon the contributions that we receive. Please assist by sending commentaries, reviews of regional or national meetings and field trips, summaries of issues pertinent to geomorphology, and announcements of future meetings and workshops. Your contributions should be forwarded to the IAG/AIG Publications Officer:

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