

## News and Updates from ICE 2008 in Durban, South Africa

*The following was written by Richard Levine, ESA Communications Program Manager and ESA Newsletter editor.*

### **Sunday, July 6, 2008 (Day One) – 11:00 p.m. (South African time)**

We finally made it to [ICE 2008](#), after a 17 hour flight to Johannesburg, plus another short flight to Durban – that is, for the luckiest of us who began our travels from the east coast of the USA. Others who came from the west coast, and a few from Hawaii – practically the farthest point on earth from SA – had a much longer and more grueling trip.

But here we are. Although we've only been here for about 24 hours as of this writing, I can say that the downtown area of Durban is very modern-looking and very clean. The buildings look like they were built not very long ago, the streets are swept, and the airport, convention center and the Hilton Hotel (where many but not all ESA members are staying) are as fine as one could see in Europe or the U.S.

The weather is very pleasant for a Washington, D.C. native such as myself, who is used to July being hot and muggy in a way that makes most people want to cling to the air-conditioned indoors. It's winter here, so the temperature has been in the high-60s, low-70s Fahrenheit – much warmer than the other major cities to the south, Johannesburg and Capetown. One native told me that, if he were to make comparisons to the U.S., Durban is similar to Miami because it has the nicest weather and beaches; Capetown is similar to San Francisco with its easy-going lifestyle, beautiful scenery and vineyards; and that Johannesburg is similar to New York City, with its hustle and bustle. So here we are in the (cold) Miami of South Africa.

While most Americans probably think of South Africa as a country that was racially divided during the Apartheid era between blacks and whites, it is actually more complex than that when one considers the influence of the people who settled here from India. In fact, it is easy to see this influence on the cuisine and the popular culture. Durban boasts of its own variety of Indian food, with curry dishes alongside traditional African and European ones. The breakfast buffet at the Hilton, for example, carries curried dishes with basmati rice along with the bacon and scrambled eggs, and lamb sausage. A southern boy like me can close his eyes and imagine the rice is grits!

The popular culture – as much as I could see of it in 24 hours – also has Indian and African roots. Music TV channels show Indian music videos, and the opening ceremony of ICE 2008 featured Indian dancers along with their African counterparts.



*Indian dancers at the opening ceremony. (Photo: Ken Sorensen)*



*African dancers at the welcome reception. (Photo: Ken Sorensen)*

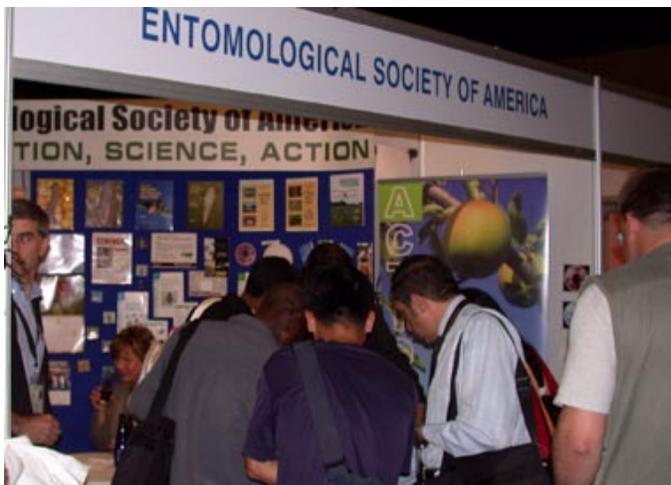
Besides music, if one turns on the TV in South Africa it is possible to see sporting events at any given time – rugby, soccer, golf, tennis (Wimbledon) and the Tour de France seem to be broadcast constantly.

But enough about Durban. What about the conference itself? Well, as I wrote before, we just left the opening session a few hours ago. František Sehnal, president of ICE and a recent inductee as a Fellow of the ESA, said the fact that such an international event could take place in South Africa shows that the era of Apartheid is truly over, and that it is wonderful that international entomological communication will be taking place here. In fact, this is the first ICE to ever be held in Africa.

Dr. Sehnal also presented the 2008 awardees, including ESA member Ashok Raina, who won the Distinguished Achievement Award. He also announced the new members to the ICE Council, including ESA members May Berenbaum and David Denlinger.

After the opening session, attendees who went to the Exhibition Hall for the welcome reception were greeted by drummers and dancers dressed in native garb. The reception featured Indian food and free drinks, and open booths, such as ESA's, where I stood and spoke to people from all over the world.

Tomorrow the symposia will begin, as well as excursions to outside areas, meetings, and exhibitions. Be sure to check this page on a daily basis to read about such things from other ESA members, who will be contributing reports and photos soon.



*The ESA booth. (Photo: Mike Gray)*

## Tuesday, July 8, 2008 (Day Three)

The good weather continued today, and the scientific part of the conference kicked off as symposia began. Many ESA members gave presentations, and others spent some time at the ESA booth at the Exhibit Hall, which has become a kind of social hub where members can kick back, relax and share experiences.



*Ashok Raina, winner of the Distinguished Achievement Award, with President Mike Gray, Mustapha Debboun and Charles Vincent.*



*Mike and Charles at the ESA booth, with Vicki Yokoyama with her daughter Hana.*

Some have taken guided bus tours of the city, and others have visited PheZulu to learn about Zulu traditions and cultures, while taking in traditional songs and dances. Others who came to Africa before the conference arrived told of their experiences in Lesotho, a small country in the heartland of South Africa (and completely surround by it), Capetown to the south, where it is currently rainy and cold, and other places.

All of the ESA members who came by the booth were given ESA ribbons to attach to their badges so members could easily recognize each other. A good number of ESA student members are here, thanks to

the hard work of Jack Petersen (Florida A&M University) and other members who strived to secure NSF funding so that student members could receive travel grants to cover their airfares.

Next to the Exhibit Hall is an insect art exhibition, featuring paintings, statues and ceramics. A few examples are below.



*A ceramic bowl with beetles on top.*

Unfortunately, Internet speeds are very slow and I'm having trouble posting more photos, and with communications. Will try again tomorrow.

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### **Wednesday, July 9, 2008 (Day Four)**

The numbers are in, according to Robin Crewe from the University of Pretoria, an ICE 2008 organizer and a 30-year member of ESA. Over 2,000 delegates attended the conference, and they came from 103 different countries, 29 of which were African. Pretty good numbers.

The conference is also getting some press locally. For example, [here's one on Dita Nurtjahya](#), at 16 years old the youngest presenter at the conference, who gave a presentation on leaf cutter bees.

[Another article](#) discusses the effects climate change could have on insects which carry diseases such as malaria. It also mentions a "new" order, the Mantophasmids.

[An older article](#) discusses Mantospasmodea, commonly known as "heelwalkers," more in depth.

### **Big Strike**

Today, Wednesday, only featured symposia for half the day, and the Exhibition Hall closed at 2:00 p.m. This was done to give people time to relax, shop, etc. However, today was also the day when a big strike was planned by unions and workers in the transportation sector who were protesting high fuel and food prices. There were no buses today, nor taxis as all of the drivers were on strike.

For more on the strike see these articles from [Reuters](#) and the [BBC](#).

On the good side, this meant fewer cars on the street and less traffic. Even better, at least for me, I was lucky enough to meet friends from Cambridge University Press (frequent exhibitors at ESA Annual Meetings), one of whom is a Durban local who drove us around the city and outskirts for three hours. Pops Haripershad is a 48-year-old Durban native who experienced the Apartheid era, which he explained as he drove his colleague Marius and me around the city. We saw the black townships -- where many of the hotel staff probably live, the Indian townships, and the "informal settlements," otherwise known as shanty towns where the poorest of the poor build huts out of practically anything they can find. We also visited very new and modern areas near the ocean, which resembled the nicest parts of Miami, with beautiful beaches, manicured lawns and gardens, and chic shopping malls. Thanks, Pops!

### **Beach Party**

Last night the organizers of the conference loaded conferees on buses and brought them to the beach downtown for dinner, drinks and dancing. The versatile band played everything from Jerry Lee Lewis to African songs to country-western music. Judging by the trash cans full of empty beer bottles and wine glasses, and the packed dance floors, most people seemed to have a pretty good time. Here are a couple of photos, courtesy of Alvin Simmons:



*Vicki and Hana Yokoyama, Richard Levine, and Edith Simmons.*



*North American and South American delegates.*

## **ICE 2012**

I can hear your thoughts right now: "Yeah, right, whatever. Enough of these dancing fools, what about the ESA bid to host ICE 2012 in San Diego?" For that you will have to be patient, but not too much. They are supposed to announce it sometime tomorrow, which, regardless of the result, will probably be a big relief to John Trumble, Tim Paine and Mike Gray who have worked so hard on this. So check this page again in 24 hours or so to hear the news about ICE 2012, which will either be in San Diego or South Korea.

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## **Thursday, July 10, 2008 (Day Five)**

Today was somewhat uneventful compared to the last couple of days. The traffic in the Exhibit Hall seems to be slowing as most people have seen the booths. The ESA booth, however, is still being used as a meeting place where members can chat, show off their photos, and check their email and avoid the long lines at the cybercafe.

One of the most interesting members I have met since I've been here, and maybe since I've been at ESA, was a fellow named Pierre Jolivat. Pierre came to the booth and greeted us, and I could see his 40-year ESA member pin. When I asked about it, he told me in a strong French accent that he has actually been a member for 63 years! He joined when he was only 18 years old, just after the end of World War II in 1945. There have also been a couple of other 50+ year members who have introduced themselves whose names unfortunately escape me, some of whom have already decided to go to the ESA Annual Meeting in Reno in November.

## **Mahatma Gandhi**

When I spoke to Pops today, the Durban resident who drove Marius (CORRECT SPELLING!) Muller from Cambridge University Press and me around town yesterday, he pointed out that I forgot to mention that we visited the home of Mahatma Gandhi. What was I thinking? Thanks again, Pops. While most Americans probably associate Gandhi with India, he actually began his civil-rights activism here in South Africa. Reminiscent of our own Rosa Parks, he was asked to sit in a third-class department of a train, even though he had bought a first-class ticket. This and other incidents influenced his desire to fight the inequality and discrimination he and other non-whites experienced. His home has been made into a

musuem, which I got to see with Pops and Maurius, and many ESA members saw on a bus tour.

### **Student Travel Grant Recipients**

As is typical of all conferences, everyone has a different schedule and it is usually hard to get a group of people together at any given time. So, when I asked the 15 recipients of the ESA student travel grants to come and meet us at the ESA booth for a photo, I didn't expect much. I'd have been happy if half of them came, but instead got about two-thirds, plus one straggler who got there a bit late. Not bad. So without further ado, here's a photo of ten of the travel grant recipients along with Megha Parajulee, chair of the International Affairs Committee, Mustapha Debboun, secretary of the committee, and Jack Petersen, a very active committee member who worked incredibly hard to secure funding from the National Science Foundation to secure funding for the travel grants. Here they are:



*First row: Angela Smilanich, Monica Gaylord, Sky Stephens, Christy Jo Geraci, Eric Lind, Second row: Mustapha Debboun, Megha Parajulee, Gavin Svenson, Gregory Wiggins, Eric Lind. Third row: Jack Petersen, Eric Ott, Gaylord Desurmont, Elijah Talamas.*

I think I got all of the names right in the captions above (the photo shoot went so quickly!). If not, I apologize.

At this time, I'd like to thank the ESA members who volunteered their time at the booth. They include Alvin Simmons, Charles Vincent, Rostern Tembo, Carlos Blanco and Vicki Yokoyama -- and some of their family members who helped out as well! It's wonderful to see the camaraderie, and makes me realize how important ESA is to the science of entomology.

Tune in tomorrow for a report on the Congress Banquet.

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## **Friday, July 11, 2008 (Day Five)**

Tonight the Congress Banquet was held, and they announced the home of ICE 2012, which will be held in ... Daegu, South Korea. For more on this, be sure to read President Mike Gray's column in the August edition of the *ESA Newsletter*.

In other banquet news, Shirley Hanrahan, who spoke at the last two ESA Annual Meetings in Indianapolis and San Diego, received an honorary life membership from ICE for her service.

Also, Lynn Riddiford, who was honored at last year's ESA Annual Meeting with a symposium dedicated to her, received recognition for her service to ICE.

Otherwise, things are slowing down and this will probably be the last submission.

Be sure to read the August edition of the *ESA Newsletter*, which will be one of the most international editions yet.

***Richard Levine***

***ESA Communications Program Manager and ESA Newsletter editor.***