

## **Howard Choat, Recipient of the First Bleeker Award in Ecology**

By Kendall Clements

We are honouring Professor Howard Choat as one of the recipients of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bleeker Award for his contributions to Indo-Pacific ichthyology. In fact his scientific contributions extend beyond the field of fish biology to include kelp dynamics, cephalopod demography, and marine ecology in general. It is probably fair to say that Howard is the finest Australasian marine ecologist, in the sense that he has made an enormous contribution to marine ecology on both sides of the Tasman Sea. This broad contribution has been acknowledged by a number of previous awards, including an Australian Research Council Special Investigator Award in 1993 and the Jubilee Award for Outstanding Marine Scientist by the Australian Marine Sciences Society in 1998. It is, however, extremely fitting that Howard should now be honoured for his major research contribution, which has been his work on the biology of reef fishes.

Howard's scientific career started in the 1960s in New Zealand with a BSc and MSc at Victoria University of Wellington, and he went on to complete his PhD at the University of Queensland in 1969. After postdoctoral experience in California, Howard took up a position at the University of Auckland, where he was extremely active in developing subtidal research at the Leigh Marine Laboratory. In 1986 Howard took up the post of head of the Department of Marine Biology at James Cook University, and retired from administrative duties in 2001 to take up the research position of adjunct professor.

Howard has operated largely by developing broadly-based research programs in association with graduate students. Howard's particular contributions to the ichthyological literature have been in the fields of herbivory and coral reef fish ecology, with a recent focus on age-based dynamics. However, his contribution to ichthyology cannot be measured simply by his impressive publication output. He has been instrumental in the development of reef fish research both as an inspiring supervisor of many graduate students from different parts of the world and through his service on numerous science management committees. Howard's unselfish and diligent efforts over many years towards developing reef fish biology and biologists make him an extremely worthy recipient of the 1<sup>st</sup> Bleeker Award.

### Publications of Howard Choat

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