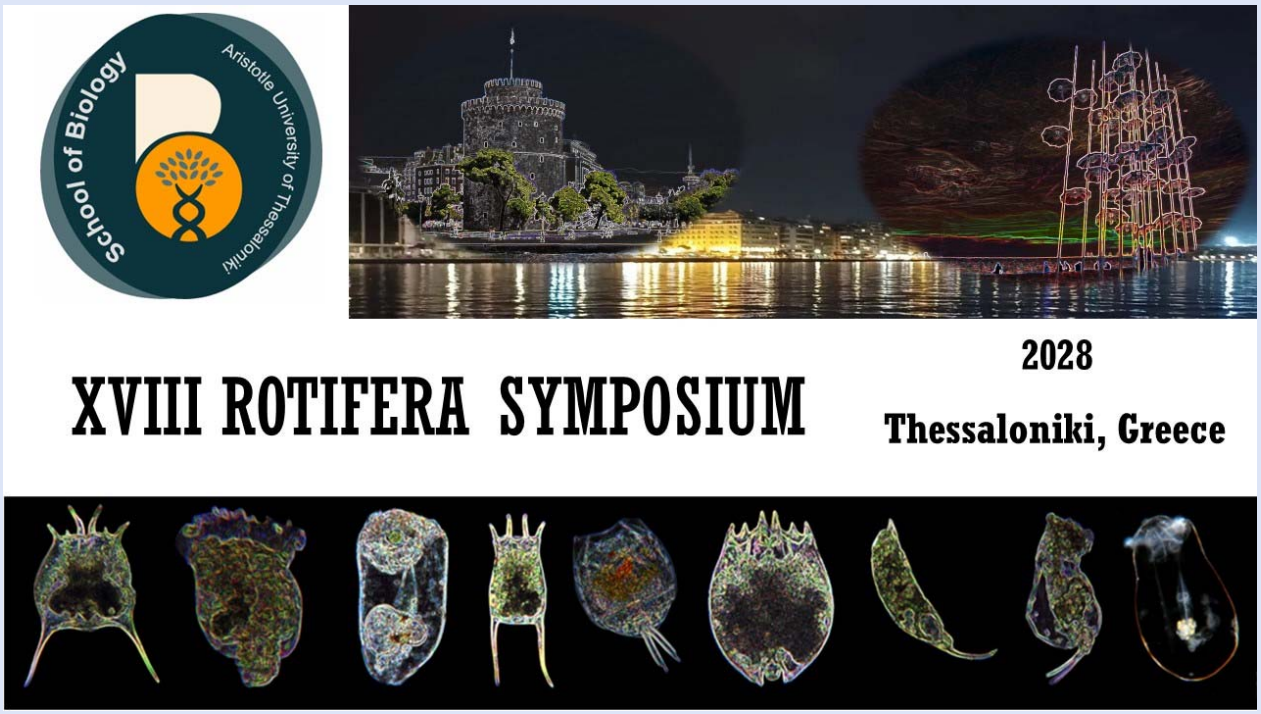
Rotifer News

A newsletter for rotiferologists throughout the world



IRS XVIII 2028 (Thessaloniki, Greece) (see p. 2)

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In this issue:

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Editorial: *In this issue*

This issue carries some important information about the next rotifer meeting (IRS-XVIII 2028) venue, dates and other details (see p. 2). The deadline for manuscript submissions to *Hydrobiologia* (proceedings of IRS XVII, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2025) has been extended till the end of March 2026 (see p.10).

An interesting contribution by Robert Walsh (see p. 4-9) discusses various aspects involved in self-employment using knowledge on Rotifera (and other groups of zooplankton). Most recently-graduated students in *rotiferology* often look for employment in universities and research institutions for placement. The opportunities as teachers in universities or colleges are limited in the field of zooplankton research. There are several good examples of self-entrepreneurship using knowledge on rotifer ecology and taxonomy. For example, Russ Shiel has been very active as a consultant to governmental and private agencies dealing with water quality evaluations in Australia and other countries.

Looking beyond teaching / research positions is essential for success in applying rotifer knowledge in the service of society. There are several opportunities where well-trained rotifer ecologists, taxonomists and molecular biologists are required. Nandini and I offer many specialized courses and workshops on the applications of zooplankton, especially rotifers, to the students of our university and others to prepare them for future needs in different sectors. Along with Linda May, we have made presentations in this regard in IRS in Croatia (2022) and Brazil (2025).

Some photos of the IRS-XVII have been included in this issue so that the rotifer researchers who could not attend the meeting enjoy seeing the digital pictures of fellow workers.

Evangelia Michaloudi has joined as a member of the Editorial Board of Rotifer News, starting from this issue. Evangelia will be the main organizer of the Rotifera XVIII (2028) in Greece.

As indicated in the RN # 45, Nandini organized the meeting of Virtual Rotifer Collaboratorium (VRC) on 24th October 2025 in memory of Patrick Brown. Liz Walsh spoke about the interesting talk on “Is a pond a pond a pond”. The details of the VRC are covered here. The number of participants in the VRC has been steadily increasing; we hope to see many more young people and hear about their research.

Rotifer News invites authors of theses/ dissertations on rotifers to send the details for citation in this newsletter.

Coverage of recent literature on Rotifera is continued in this next issue also.

S.S.S. Sarma
Editor

Announcement: Rotifera XVIII

IRS XVIII Greece (June 26-30, 2028)

The XVIII Rotifera Symposium will take place in **Thessaloniki**, one of Greece's most dynamic and historic cities. The meeting will be hosted at the **Aristotle University of Thessaloniki**, a leading academic institution located in the city center and easily accessible by metro and public transportation.

About the City

Thessaloniki is situated in **northern Greece** and is the country's **second-largest city**. Known for its rich cultural heritage, vibrant waterfront, and lively urban atmosphere, the city offers an excellent environment for scientific exchange and networking. Thessaloniki is well connected internationally via **Thessaloniki**

International Airport, with frequent flights from major European hubs.

Venue

The Aristotle University of Thessaloniki lies within walking distance of many hotels, restaurants, cafés, and cultural landmarks. Its central location ensures convenient access to accommodation, transportation, and social activities throughout the symposium.

Accommodation

Thessaloniki offers a wide range of accommodation options to suit all budgets and preferences, many of which are located close to the symposium venue.

Transportation

The city center is well served by public transportation, including metro and bus networks. Taxis are readily available, and most central hotels are within easy reach of the venue. Thessaloniki International Airport is approximately 30 minutes from the city center.

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Entrepreneurship with rotifers

Experiences from Australia

At the recent Rotifer Conference (XVII) in Rio De Janerio, Brazil (2025), I was invited to write an article on the current state Rotiferology in Australia. Based on my past work plus experience in establishing my own Laboratory here in Australia, I found this to be a pleasant assignment.

I obtained my PhD from the University of Tasmania (Australia) in 1996. This looked at the limnology and microfauna of the coastal dune wetlands found around the island State of Tasmania, plus the smaller islands of the Bass Strait, separating Tasmania from mainland Australia. My supervisors were Professor Peter Tyler – retired (Deakin University; formerly University of Tasmania), Associate Professor Alastair Richrdson – retired (University of Tasmania), and Dr. Russ Sheil – retired (CSIRO). Picture 1. All three are well known nationally and internationally for their work on Australian freshwater systems: Peter for his work on the limnology and algae of Tasmanian sub-alpine lake systems, Alastair on the aquatic macroinvertebrates, and Russ for his work on the taxonomy and ecology of Australian aquatic microfauna. It was Russ who somehow managed to persuade me to look at those tiny unfathomable blobs under the microscope some years later.

Not long after graduating from University, I went to work at the Australian Water Quality Centre (AWQC), South Australia (SA), as an aquatic ecologist. Here we looked at the aquatic ecology of waterways wetlands, water treatment systems, etc. throughout the State of South Australia (SA). (Picture 2). Geographically the State was 16 times larger than my home state of Tasmania. After a couple of years, I became SA's Wetlands Scientist working in the Dept. of Environment, SA. But in that capacity, it was like throwing a drowning person a straw. The Register of Wildlife in the SA stopped at Reptiles, and as for wetlands there was nothing. There existed a hardcopy of a report of approx. 1500 wetlands recognised from the Murray River within SA in the 1970s. Apart from this the rest of the information was scattered across reports from: various institutions,

Picture 1. Russ Shiel's Microfauna Lab. MDFRC - early 1990's.

Picture 2. Sampling a dune lake, South Australia

government departments, universities, consultancies, water authorities, local government entities, etc. The next couple of years, a computer data base containing biological information, water quality, geological information, site information, catchment information etc., was compiled from Municipal and Govt reports, which later grew to cover the remainder of the State. From here I then went on to work with the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre (CSIRO) at Mildura, VIC. The Research Centre was based on the Murray River. A huge river system approx. 2500 km in length. The Murray–Darling Basin is Australia's largest and most complex river system, covering over 1 million square kilometres (approx. 14% of the continent) across four states and one territory. It contains 77,000 km of rivers, including the 2,508 km-long Murray River and the Darling River. The system features 30,000 wetlands and 60,000 km² of floodplains.

Some 20 years ago (approx. 2004) I left the CSIRO, to start my own business under a somewhat grandiose title Australian Waterlife. I was fortunate that at that time I owned several microscopes and possessed a library of taxonomic references I had accumulated over the previous decade (Picture 3).

At that time there were very few people working with the aquatic microfauna within Australia. There would have been no more than 5–6 individuals spread across the country. The original lab was quite spartan and simple. Basically, my garage, with several benches constructed down one side and the rest of the garage with shelving for storage (Picture 3).

Picture 3. My first lab in the garage.

At first, business was modest with several large contracts from a couple of universities, then slowly thing began to pick up. As time progressed this basic facility expanded, becoming what is today.

My current lab is quite modern and up to date (Picture 4). The microscopes are still very capable Zeiss Photomicroscope PM3's with Phase, Nomarski (DIC), Darkfield, brightfield optics. Plus, an Axioskop with fluorescence. Also, there are 2 Stemi SV11 dissecting microscopes with cameras. I was able to obtain these at auctions of surplus scientific equipment from various institutions I studied or worked at.

Picture 4. Current Laboratory facilities.

Originally, working for myself, I started with the identification of the aquatic microcrustaceans. But soon I was asked to identify the Rotifera for a major Water authority on an ongoing basis with numerous samples arriving every 3 months. This continued for approx. 12 years. Not long after I started working for myself, I was given some good advice by a colleague on how to make my business known. I used pictures of the aquatic microfauna, turning these into postcards. Then with a business card, plus a brief letter outlining the role of the aquatic microfauna, I posted these to anyone I could think of who had anything to do with the water industry in Australia. These individuals ranged from individuals, environmental company directors, scientists, universities, government departments, municipalities, water laboratories across the country, and so on.

Over a couple of years, the client base steadily expanded, and I was working almost 8–12 hours per day and sometimes 6–7 days per week during the hectic periods. Thankfully things have eased somewhat today. However, at that time (1–2 years after starting Australian Waterlife, I employed a lab assistant, and this eventually grew to 3 people working in the lab to cope with the workflow. Unfortunately, finding people with any background experience with the aquatic microfauna was a major problem.

For various reasons I had to train my lab assistants in basic microscope techniques, their maintenance, how to recognize the aquatic microfauna, and the correct procedures in mounting the specimens on microscope slides.

In my work I soon became acuity aware that there was a lack of information in Australia regarding aquatic science, and almost nothing was known at all about the role of the microfauna outside of some 5 or 6 individuals across the country. Even amongst the scientific community, there was a lack of knowledge of the role of the aquatic microfauna in aquatic ecology. For example, globally there are approximately 2,200 recognized species of Rotifera, with some 800 species known from Australian inland waters. Plus, roughly half that number in microcrustaceans. Many are endemic to the continent. But this information was largely unknown by many in the limnological field here in Australia.

It has been my experience that very few people know about what lives in the rivers, creeks, and wetlands scattered throughout their local regions, particularly here in VIC. In the often flat, low lying, urban areas this is even more noticeable. Today there are wetlands being constructed in major urban residential planning estates, to receive stormwater from extensive impenetrable surfaces, consisting of houses, roads, footpaths, carparks, light industrial constructions, etc. For example, in the 1960's an urban house in Australia was built on a ¼ acre block. But today is built on approx. 1/3 of that, with almost no backyard. Therefore, the amount of storm water runoff from these new residential areas is huge. Thus, many new housing estates have large wetlands constructed to drain this stormwater from these new urban estates. However, there is little scientific knowledge about these systems. Once constructed and

planted with riparian vegetation to beautify these new “parks” they are left for the Municipal council to administer. These stormwater wetland impoundments are limnologically an unknown entity, as many of these Municipalities lack the resources and scientifically trained staff to managed or assess these wetlands.

In conversations with the supervisors of these municipalities, I soon became aware that they were very focused on engineering in their response to water and storm water; I was told politely to “go away”. So, I became somewhat of a rabble rouser, toddling along to every community event, and joining several not-for-profit organisations (Werribee River Association, Hobsons Bay Wetlands Association), and a Board member of one. At these events I would set up a display with a couple of microscopes, posters, books, and handouts to show the public what lives within the wetlands, creeks and rivers (etc.) apart from visiting birds, fish, and platypus. (Picture 5). The morning of the event I would collect a sample from nearby wetlands to display under the microscope. Children and their parents could then see firsthand what lives in these wetlands. I even presented a workshop to the Education Department on aquatic invertebrates found in the State, plus their ecology and habitats. (Picture 6). This followed an event where the Department established a stand to show case to the public and I noticed that the terms used and taxonomic names were of European taxa. They did not occur in Australia. So, after discussion with the Education Department, I delivered a workshop on the aquatic microfauna.

Picture 5. Showing students there is more to aquatic ecology than just fish and macroinvertebrates.

The number of people attending these events ranged from several dozen up to a couple of thousand people. And in these meetings, I am always asked why this is not taught at school, colleges, or at university. Among those asking these questions are individuals who work at the municipalities I previously mentioned. My reply was I don’t know. I have found if you want to make a difference then you need to write to your local council or government member. (Picture 7). There is no point in going to the water authorities or catchment management agencies. They are staffed by civil engineers in positions of management who lack the ecological knowledge and/or training to make informed decisions based on ecological principles. I am also approached by local high schools and community groups from across the Greater Metropolitan Melbourne for visits to the lab where I explain how samples are collected, what lives in the wetlands around the city, the different types of aquatic microfauna, and how they influence the ecology and system dynamics of wetlands. (Picture 8). I also present webinars to community groups, environmental

Picture 6. Victorian Govt Education Dept Seminar

consultancies, engineering associations along the eastern seaboard of Australia, saying much the same.

Picture 7. Local Government Councilors.

I always note that it is the tiny animals, the Rotifera and Microcrustacea, that link everything in the aquatic system together, comprising detritovores, bacterivores, herbivores, carnivores, predators, and omnivores.

In 2025 I was fortunate to attend the 17 International Rotifer Conference in Rio, Brazil. For me, it was well worth the trip and a good shot in the arm. It certainly rejuvenated me to continue to tell the community at large about what lives in the aquatic environment. I am hopeful that the aquatic ecology here in Australia will move away from concentrating on birdlife, rakali (native

Picture 8. School group both in the field and lab.

Picture 9. Community Education Workshop

water rats), platypus, and fish.

The last 18 months has been quite hectic with work involving looking at rotifers in tributaries of the Murray River system. When larval fish hatch from eggs they feed on rotifers some for 1–2 weeks, before switching to the microcrustacea. Then I might work with a university looking at floating islands of vegetation mats in old mine pit lakes to assess their impact on the aquatic microfauna community / ecology within the submerged root systems. NB: The microfauna use the root systems that dangle from the floating cage supporting the growing plants, as both cover from predation; there they feed on the bacteria, algae, protozoa, and diatoms covering the root structure. Floating islands are used in mine pit lakes to encourage remediation of these disused old mine pits, that are now flooded forming lakes. Many of these mine lakes don't have a true littoral zone as the bathymetry is too steep for one to form. As a result, the aquatic community is nearly all planktonic. It has been suggested by some government reports that there are approximately 10,000 of these disussed mine pits scatted across the country; many are now flooded, forming lakes that need exploring.

Outside of work I am involved as a Board Member with the Werribee River Association an organisation that over the past year has undergone a transition from a volunteer community based to a not-for profit organisation with 5 staff members. The Werribee River is the main river system of Western Melbourne metropolitan region.

As to what the future may bring, I am hopeful that the aquatic ecology here in Australia will move away from concentrating on birdlife, rakali (native water rats), platypus, fish, to include the aquatic microfauna.

So that is my life in a snapshot.

Dr. Robert Walsh

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The microfaunal biomass is effectively the "larder" of any freshwater ecosystem.
+
You cannot manage what you don't measure!

Notes & News

Survey on influential papers in lake science and management

Dear colleagues,

I also would like to draw your attention to this survey on influential papers in lake science and management:

GLEON members are compiling a community-curated list of key peer-reviewed papers and analyzing trends in the field. The survey is anonymous, opens 15 Jan–15 Mar 2026 (23:59 UTC), and welcomes contributions from all freshwater lake subdisciplines worldwide.

Take the survey:
https://waikato.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ehcRe1N4xU5OLjM

More info:
maggie.armstrong@waikato.ac.nz

I hope you will find the time between 15 Jan–15 Mar 2026 to take this survey.

Please share widely across your networks.

all the best,
Ulrike

Ulrike Obertegger
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Notes & News

Manuscript submission:
XVII Internacional Rotifer Symposium

Dear Colleagues,

We would like to announce that the submission deadline for the special issue *Challenges for the Study of Rotifers* in **Hydrobiologia** has been extended.

The new deadline is **March 31**.

We encourage the participants of the XVII International Rotifer Symposium (Brazil, 2025) to submit their papers. More information is available on the website:

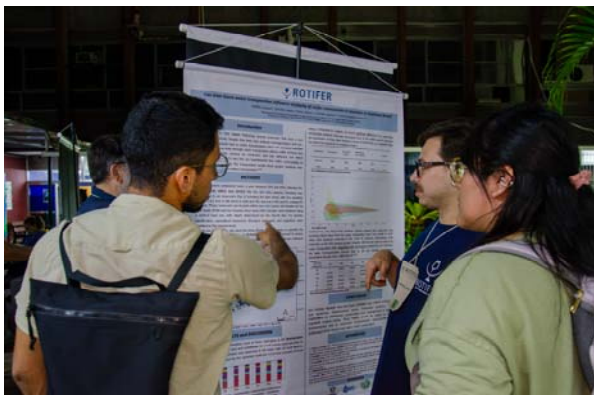
https://link.springer.com/collections/hhieicfjfe

Best regards

XVII International Rotifer Symposium Organizing Committee

Rotifera XVII (Brazil) Meeting: photos







IRS-XVII-2025 Photos (Courtesy XVII IRS)

IRS-XVII-2025 Photos (Source: Sergio González Gutiérrez)

Notes & News

Abstract of VRC meeting (Oct 24, 2025)

Talk title: A pond is a pond is a pond

This presentation explored how our definitions of habitats influence our interpretation of ecology and evolutionary processes. Six questions posed by Hill et al. 2021 (https://doi.org/10.1002/ecs2.3853) were examined in the context of rotifer biology. (1) Are there critical thresholds in physical, biological, and chemical processes, and ecosystem function, which reflect changing water body size? (2) What are the abiotic and biotic drivers of pond environmental and biological patterns at different spatial and temporal scales? (3) How do biological communities within ponds respond to global environmental change along spatial and temporal gradients? (4) How can the development of new statistical analyses in biodiversity assessment contribute to more effective pond conservation planning? (5) What is the role of spatial processes in assemblage structure and does pond context or landscape create regional differences? and (6) What are the potential ecological implications for pond communities associated with different climate change scenarios? The application of random forest models to answer these questions through a collaborative effort among rotiferologists was suggested.

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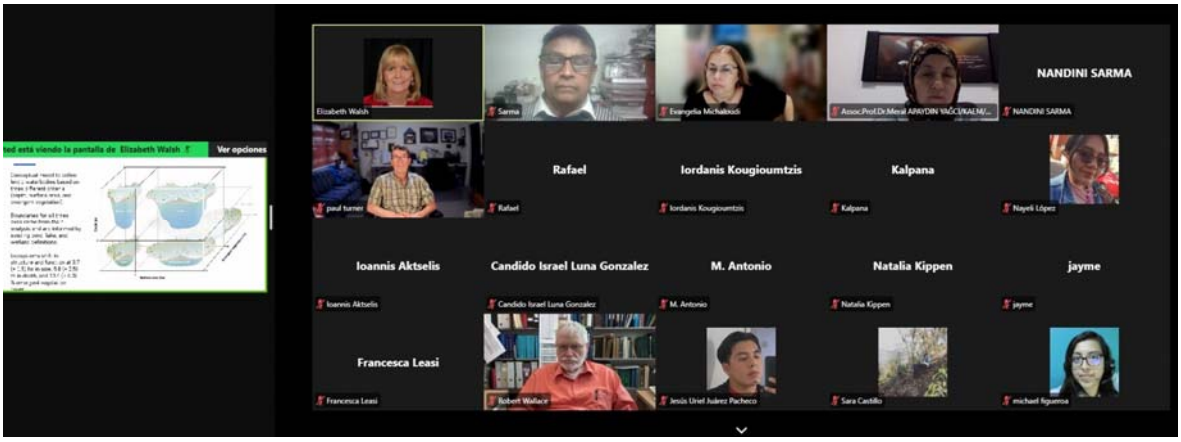
Notes & News

VRC Report

On 24th October, 2025, Liz Walsh gave a talk (Photo 1) on behalf of Patrick Brown, who passed away in September, 2025 just after we all met him in Brazil during the XVII Rotifer Symposium. Liz spoke about one of the great interests of Patrick, pond ecosystems. Rotifers in ponds have been extensively studied and the subject is gaining momentum (Thomas Mehner; *PONDERFUL* Pond Ecosystems for Resilient Future Landscapes in a changing climate). We hope we will be able to form a group committed to the subject and carry Patrick's interest forward.

Dr. Patrick Dowling Brown, age 34, passed away on September 21, 2025. Born on September 29, 1990, in Langhorne, Pennsylvania, Patrick led a life distinguished by intellectual rigor and a deep commitment to scientific inquiry. Patrick earned a Bachelor of Science in Entomology and Biology from Cornell University, graduating Cum Laude. He went on to complete a Ph.D. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Texas at El Paso. He also completed a year of post-doctoral research and served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Texas at El Paso. Patrick joined Eastern New Mexico University's Ruidoso campus in 2024 as a full-time science faculty member, where he continued to share his knowledge and passion for learning. Diagnosed with cancer in 2019,



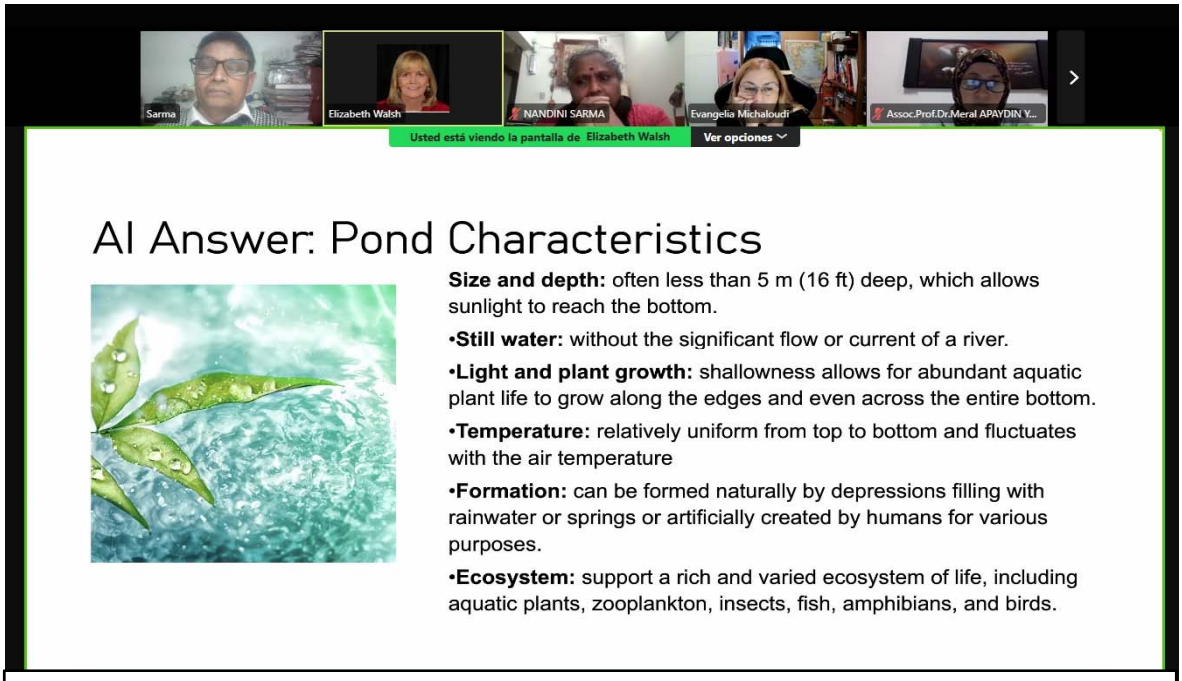


Photo 1. VRC meeting in session

Patrick faced his illness with remarkable resilience. He continued his academic pursuits throughout treatment, demonstrating unwavering determination and strength. Beyond his professional life, Patrick enjoyed art, running, hiking, nature, and board and tabletop gaming-interests that reflected his creativity and curiosity. Pat's favorite quote is by American runner Steve Prefontaine "To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift". Patrick will be remembered for his scientific contributions and steadfast spirit.

Patrick's biography was an excerpt from: *https://rwsnyderfuneral.com/localobits.php?obit=DrPatrickBrown*

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