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Oceanographic Institute of Nhatrang, Viet Nam

TOO few American scientists are aware of the existence of the *Institut Océanographique de Nhatrang* (formerly *d'Indochine*), a research establishment of major size, potentially the most productive marine station in southeast Asia [see also article by Dr. Talbot Waterman in the *American Scientist*, 41, 292 (1953)]. Although Indo-China has long been a place of remote interest to Americans, the recent political revolutions and current military activities are bringing it more and more sharply to our attention. It was the interest of the Pacific Science Board of the National Academy of Science—National Research Council in helping to sustain this institution through these unsettled and trying times that provided my opportunity for ten weeks of marine botanical work there early this year.

The Institute is magnificently situated on a promontory of Nhatrang Bay opposite a splendid harbor sheltered from the open South China Sea by several islands. The laboratories are housed in four concrete buildings, two of which have three floors. An aquarium occupies the ground floor of one building. Spacious, excellently conceived laboratories, well lighted and ventilated by constant cool breezes, provide exceptionally comfortable working conditions for a locality only twelve degrees from the equator. Housing for two or three visiting scientists is currently available in one of five large houses overlooking the Institute. Two of these are utilized by Emperor Bao Dai.

Biologists may find a great diversity of littoral marine environments within a radius of three miles of the Institute. These include mangrove swamps, mud

flats, sand flats, coral reefs, coral and cobble beaches, rhyolite islets, sand beaches, sea walls, and brackish estuaries. Boats of various sorts, light dredging equipment, and native divers make accessible to the investigator the organisms of the exceptionally rich infratidal region. Sea temperatures range from 24° in January to 29° in June.

Following a period of temporary abandonment during the Japanese occupation, the Institute has undergone rehabilitation, despite many difficulties, under the able and experienced direction of M. Raoul Serene. Fortunately, the library and the fine reference collections of local animals suffered relatively few losses during the occupation and have been restored and reorganized so as to provide a good basis for special studies of the multitudes of invertebrates and fishes of the region. Inasmuch as the revived Institute has not yet regained a resident staff of trained research workers, the facilities available for visiting scientists are particularly good at this time. M. Serene and his assistants are in every way cordial, helpful, and attentive in expediting the research of the visiting investigator.

To the date of writing, Nhatrang has remained a peaceful community reached in less than two hours by air from Saigon. The fine airfield is but two miles from the Institute. Manila is about four hours by air directly east.

The best opportunities at the present time are for biologists interested in special faunistic and floristic studies, although marine scientists of any specialty are welcomed. It is hoped that there may be several who will take advantage of the unusual facilities in this fascinating region.

E. YALE DAWSON

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