

## 2. Introduction

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Malacology in general is the study of molluscs *sensu lato*; usually malacology is not considered a science in itself. Many zoologists study molluscs as animals of convenience. Their comparatively simple organisation as compared to vertebrates, their easy availability and the possibility to rear them in quantities, their important host-parasite interactions, added to the fact that the phylum offers a large choice on account of its diversity, make the molluscs ideal experimental animals. In the Netherlands the zoology department of the Free University of Amsterdam has tackled many general scientific problems on the basis of molluscan studies; the university of Utrecht has long worked on the embryology of various molluscs. Occasionally other university zoology departments have done work on molluscs, but usually without sustained continuity. Molluscan studies have also been done by fisheries and marine biological research organisations. However, there is a full-time malacologist in each of the country's two major zoological museums (Leiden, Amsterdam) – these specialists study molluscs because of their own intrinsic interest in the phylum as such and not as coincidentally convenient objects of research. In the taxonomic institutions malacology is rightly considered a science in itself with its own specialized approach, material (collections) and literature.

The Netherlands does not have a diverse or particularly interesting

malacofauna. Nevertheless, a great deal of malacological work, not necessarily on the local fauna, has been done and is in progress, and it is the aim of this publication to inform the participants of the VIth International Congress of the Unitas Malacologica Europaea about malacology in the Netherlands.