

MOLLUSCS AND MAN IN THE TROPICS

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ABSTRACT

Molluscs are ecologically important components of tropical marine ecosystems because of their abundance, size, and diversity, and their roles as both predators and prey impact their exploitation by man. This paper documents these aspects of molluscan biology and proposes three lines of basic scientific investigation needed both to understand the ecological roles of marine molluscs and to ensure their sustainable use by man: 1) the nutrient control hypothesis relating quantitative differences in primary productivity to qualitative differences in molluscan faunal composition; 2) embryonic and larval development and cues to settlement and metamorphosis, and their roles in dispersal and distribution; 3) pharmacologically active compounds produced by molluscs as offensive weapons and protective defenses.