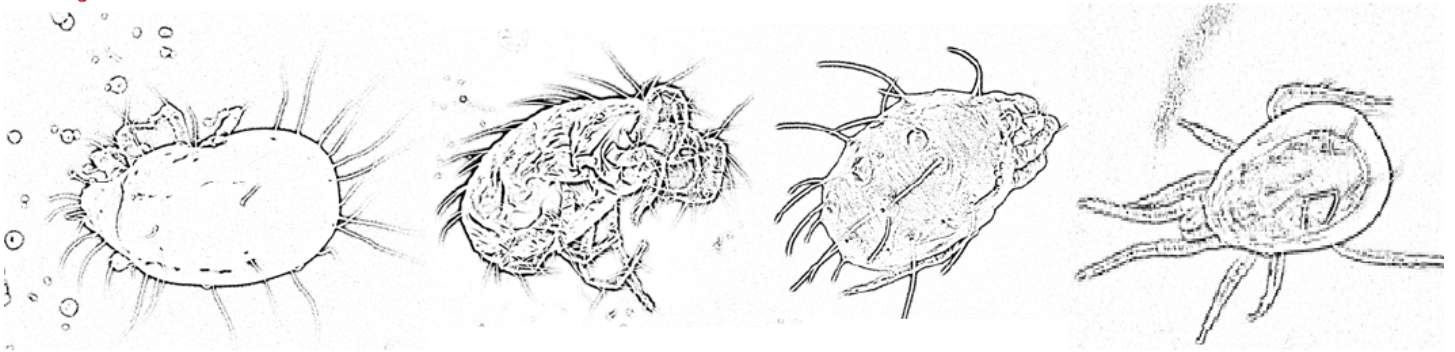




ICA2014 Special Program

THURSDAY JULY 17
EVENING @TERRSA Hall



My Favorite Acari

Share Your Passion

Fired up by various motivations such as the wish to clarify biological phenomena, to discover new species, to develop agriculture, and to protect human health, acarologists work day and night on research using mites and ticks as their common materials. The International Congress of Acarology (ICA) is a forum where acarologists from all over the world gather once every four years. So you could say it's a sort of "Acarolympics"—an Olympics for people who study mites and ticks. Hold on a minute. Why mites and ticks?! Of course, the above-mentioned motivations can all be listed as reasons. But wait a bit more. Let's think deeper. Again, why mites and ticks? Actually, the real reason is simply that acarologists love these creatures. That just about sums it up. Yes, an "Acarolympics" is an assembly of acari-lovers.

The experiments proceed under elaborate research plans, the presentations that introduce their results logically are very attractive, and the audience is happy to have gained an understanding of the subject. But such understanding can be fleeting, and often we forget the details by the time we leave the venue. Particularly because this year's ICA is being held in Kyoto, when we step outside the hall we find ourselves in an extraordinarily different world forged over a thousand years of history. When we visit Kyoto, even we Japanese make unforgettable discoveries that cause us to say "Fantastic," "Cool," or "What's this?" But it is extremely difficult to verbalize such impressions and explain them logically. In other words, it's the non-verbal impressions that are seared into our memories. And the better those impressions are, the more our feelings will move in the direction of "love." At this point, as a trial, I searched for the term "Kyoto-lover" using Google, and got about 1800 hits; so, even just on the web, we can see that quite a lot of people love Kyoto.

Let's get back to mites and ticks. I searched for "acari-lover" in the same way. Only 3 hits, which is lonely... Incidentally, "insect-lover" turned up approx. 16,200 hits! Like acari, insects are arthropods, but they seem to have more lovers than Kyoto. It's hard to judge by the number of hits alone, but there's a high possibility that in terms of numbers of lovers, it's "acari" < "Kyoto" < "insect." We acari-lovers should feel this fact deeply, and make greater efforts to convey the attractiveness of mites and ticks to the wider world. In so doing, to express the passion we feel toward these creatures in terms such as "fantastic," "cool," "what's this," etc., which we usually omit from our presentations because they obstruct the logical development, may be our most effective tool for increasing the number of acari-lovers.

So in this program, as a pilot experiment, I want to provide a setting where we acari-lovers can pour out our passion towards the objects of our research by making full use of "non-verbal methods" (e.g. music, painting, crafts) to rouse our audience's feelings. In this way, if empathy first develops among acari-lovers, and then when each of us dispatches that empathy around the world, I'm sure the number of acari-lovers will increase as explosively as mites and ticks breed. And perhaps this will be a strategic move in accelerating the development of acarology in future.

I hope to see the numbers of both acari-lovers and Kyoto-lovers increase through this program and this conference. If you'd like to have a presentation or exhibition in this program, please let me know (tsuzuki2@uwo.ca).

Takeshi Suzuki