

# **Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of the Herpetologists' League**

**06 July 2011**

**Hilton Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA**

## **Board of Trustees members in attendance:**

David Cundall, Linda Ford, Hal Heatwole, Fred Kraus, Meredith Mahoney, Brad Moon, Steve Mullin, Henry Mushinsky, Erin Muths, Patrick Owen, Melissa Pilgrim, Brian Smith, Stan Trauth

## **Committee members and other guests:**

Cathy Bevier, Karen Ridgeway (Allen Press), Al Savitzky, Carol Spencer

## **Regrets:**

Michelle Boone, Jim McGuire, Tod Reeder

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Heatwole called the meeting to order at 14:00.

The 2010 Board of Trustees Meeting and Business Meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

All of the following reports were approved unanimously:

## **Meetings Management and Planning Committee Representative's Report (Mahoney)**

The major concern is the expense of the Joint Meetings, and Heidi Burke of Kansas State is working with the committee on this issue. HL renewed the JMIH Memorandum of Understanding. The committee is currently planning for the 2014 meeting which will be located in the southeastern U.S. Mushinsky noted that the SSAR Long Range Planning Committee is currently considering a plan to meet separately from the JMIH in 2014.

## **President's Report (Heatwole)**

Heatwole noted that Ernest Liner who passed away this past year will be missed. Mahoney noted that item 7 in the President's Report referring to a two-year renewal of the publishing contract with AP is effective until 2013.

## **Vice President's Report (Membership and Long Range Planning) (Trauth)**

Trauth stimulated discussion about declining membership. Main items of discussion included the following:

Reducing the costs of membership:

Potential HL members must choose between three societies, and they join societies according to what they get from membership. Trauth suggested offering a discount to join multiple societies at the same time. Heatwole noted that this could be part of greater coordination between the societies. Mahoney indicated that most of HL's costs are associated with its journals. She expressed concern about the possibility of joint memberships since membership money pays for the society's journals. Trauth suggested one possibility is to reduce costs by eliminating at least some of the hard copy. He also suggested that an alternative is online, open-access publishing. A model is *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* which has zero publishing costs. For online-only publishing, there is no cost for color photos and manuscript length, and there are no page charges. Mahoney pointed out that volunteer hours do have a cost. She wondered whether Trauth was suggesting that HL self-publish *Herpetologica* and abandon Allen Press as its publisher. Savitzky noted that HL would lose its royalty income if *Herpetologica* was published online. Mahoney noted that the royalty income is mostly used to publish the journal, but much of the remainder is spent on student grants. Trauth indicated that online publishing would eliminate the need for society officers except for editors and an editorial board. Mushinsky added that if *Herpetologica* went online-only, there would be no need for the HL society. Smith noted that in contrast to HL, *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* is just a journal, not a society, and that it does not help organize meetings like HL. Meetings are a primary advantage of a society like HL.

Increasing the value of membership:

Mahoney noted that the Graduate Studies Committee did a survey a couple of years ago that found that students join based on grant opportunities. The development of the Williams Award was a direct result. Students also join based on opportunities for travel awards.

Increasing the appeal of HL journals:

Trauth noted that conservation is a major part of *Herpetologica's* mission statement but that the proportion of conservation articles in the journal is actually only about 5%. Cundall wondered how conservation was being defined (i.e., does primary taxonomy count as conservation?). Trauth indicated that primary taxonomy was not included in these numbers. Trauth wondered if HL could add *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* to its portfolio while leaving *Herpetologica* more taxonomic in its focus. Ford suggested that HL could start thinking about more modern publishing by making new publications available online much more quickly (such as the same day).

Establishing a promotional committee:

Moon suggested that an HL promotional committee should be established. The cost and availability of *Herpetologica* is only part of the problem. New members are brought in by other

services provided by the society, and a promotional committee could address these kinds of issues. Muths suggested that this should include the society's web presence.

#### Encouraging more input from younger members:

Muths suggested that there should be more input from younger members. Cundall noted that the Graduate Studies Committee currently has two graduate student members, and it probably would not work well with more than three members. Lori Neumann-Lee has done most of the recent work. Heatwole suggested getting younger members involved with the Long Range Planning Committee. The consensus is that the Long Range Planning committee needs to appoint younger members or students on a membership/retention task force. Muths indicated that the SSAR/HL Graduate Student Social has worked well in getting students involved in the societies. Pilgrim suggested encouraging more undergraduate membership, since many students are first lured into membership at this stage in their careers. Moon recommended that student members of the Graduate Studies Committee should serve out specific terms even after graduating rather than resigning from the committee after they are no longer students.

#### Increasing sustaining memberships:

Savitzky pointed out that the big increase in new memberships in other societies has not translated into sustaining memberships, so the societies are not maintaining a professional community with these new memberships. Mushinsky noted that an AP webinar he participated in indicated that membership retention is the biggest long-term problem for professional societies. Follow-up encouragement to renew memberships is very important for retention.

#### **Report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Increasing JMIH Society Interactions (Mushinsky)**

The committee's suggestions include the formation of a Joint Conservation Committee, greater co-sponsorship of more-broadly focused symposia, a joint society website, joint negotiations with publishers, and the formation of an umbrella society. Each society is requested to appoint two elected members who would then meet together. Heatwole indicated that he will pursue setting up the joint committee, and he nominated Mushinsky and Trauth as the HL representatives. Mushinsky noted that with an umbrella society, members could pay dues according to the journals that they were subscribed to. The ornithologists have largely pursued this path, although unlike the herpetologists and ichthyologists, they do not have a joint meeting. Savitzky added that under the umbrella organization, each journal remains independent and keeps its historical legacy of publication. Trauth stated that his vision is that there should be an American Herpetological Union similar to the one that unites ornithologists. This would function as an umbrella organization for the herpetological societies. Savitzky pointed out that there is great overlap in membership between ASIH and HL and less membership overlap between SSAR and HL. Trauth wondered whether the herpetologists could then break away from ASIH. Mushinsky noted that this was discussed in great detail in the 1980s, and that the difficulty with this is financing since ASIH has more money than the other societies.

SSAR desires to meet separately at least occasionally, with the thinking that costs could be reduced by meeting at college campuses. Savitzky noted that the 2001 SSAR/HL meeting at IUPUI in Indianapolis was more expensive than the 2001 ASIH meeting at the Penn State conference center. Heatwole suggested that the desire for separate meetings seems to be counterproductive given the current pursuit of greater society cooperation. Mahoney noted that HL meeting with SSAR (as has been the recent trend) is not necessarily the better financial option. Mushinsky added that a future non-joint meeting would force herpetologists into a decision about which meeting to attend, given that most people cannot afford to attend multiple meetings. The costs of holding a meeting at college campuses have greatly increased and are now generally higher than the costs of meeting at conference centers. Bevier noted that this year's meeting of ABS at Indiana University was very expensive, and Mullin added that this year's meeting was an exception since ABS normally meets in conference centers. Savitzky pointed out that live animal exhibitions are one thing that potentially could be resumed at a college campus meeting, but new IACUC regulations complicate this. Mushinsky noted that attendees do not get the same quality of service at college campuses as at conference centers. Savitzky pointed out that at college campuses there was a lot more of running back and forth between buildings, resulting in missed talks. Mushinsky indicated that SSAR had not made a decision yet. Heatwole proposed that the HL BoT vote on whether or not to meet with SSAR or ASIH after SSAR makes their decision.

### **Treasurer's Report (Mahoney)**

Mahoney noted that she is concerned about this year's and next year's (World Congress of Herpetology) meeting costs and the decrease in royalties this year. Action Item 1 in the report involves this year's SSAR/HL auction of Ernest Liner's donated items. Money will return back to the societies. Breck Bartholomew wondered whether HL could donate one free membership per year to the auction, as SSAR and ASIH are doing.

*Mullin moved that HL will donate one membership at the regular or student level to the SSAR/HL Live Auction. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Action Item 2 concerned the elimination of a grace period for renewals. This would save HL money. Mushinsky noted that a recent Allen Press webinar suggested mailing out dues notices earlier, and mailing more notices. Many professionals just forget to renew. Mahoney indicated that she could have Bartholomew mail dues notices out earlier. Kraus suggested that the reminders include information about what the society has accomplished in the past year.

*Mahoney moved to eliminate the grace period for HL renewals. The motion was approved unanimously.*

### **Secretary's Report (Owen)**

Owen thanked Breck Bartholomew for facilitating the recent election of Honorary HL members.

### **Publications Secretary's/Webmaster's Report (Mullin)**

Mullin noted that HerpList could experience more use. He is the only person posting to forum, and he encouraged more distribution of information to the forum. Mullin noted that in the past year there have been a few minor redesigns to the HL website.

### ***Herpetologica* Editor's report (Moon)**

*Herpetologica* is still on schedule. Now the journal is only using PeerTrak for manuscript submission. Submission numbers have been declining since 2004, although the number of papers published is relatively stable, and submissions appear to be rising this year. Moon and the co-editors of the Journal of Herpetology are discussing standardizing the reference formats across journals. Standardization could add an extra page or two to issue length, but currently there are plenty of extra pages that can be used. The index has not been published in quite a while, and there does not seem to be a need for it since it is available through the publishers. Allen Press is planning promotional pages in *Herpetologica* that could help to increase membership. One article per issue is given a press release and open access.

Moon has examined the editorial board and has come to the conclusion that there are too many people on it, most of whom have served for much longer than the typical term. He would like to update it, choosing the number of people per subject area based on the bylaws and the percentage of manuscript submissions to those areas. In contrast to associate editors, the editorial board gives advice on ethical issues, last minute reviews that are needed, replacements for retiring editors, and breaking ties when reviewers give conflicting recommendations.

*Moon moved to appoint eight people listed in the Herpetologica Editor's report as editorial board members. The motion was approved unanimously.*

Increasing *Herpetologica's* page size to that of *Herpetological Review* or *Copeia* could save money, and Allen Press offered to put together an estimate. Moon thought that this was a good idea. Kraus noted that the color in SSAR publications may create more future competition for submissions to *Herpetologica*. Moon allowed that *Journal of Herpetology* has more discretion about color charges than *Herpetologica*, but *Herpetologica* authors pay for color.

Some other journals have been making authors of multi-author papers explicitly state their contributions to their papers. For *Herpetologica*, Moon thought that this would be difficult to enforce, but he was open to the idea of having it on an honor-system basis in the instructions to authors. Muths was uncomfortable with this given the importance of data and specimen

collection and that these activities are often worthy of more than an acknowledgement. Heatwole suggested that it should be left up to the authors to decide who is author, co-author, etc.

### ***Herpetological Monographs* Editor's report (Moon)**

Reeder was absent, so Moon gave the report. Moon noted that one author complained about delays. Heatwole questioned whether or not this is a continuing issue or a one-time incident. The *Monographs* have been late for about two years, but the quality is outstanding. Reeder had indicated that the recent delays with one manuscript relate to a combination of the difficulty of getting adequate reviewers, his current teaching load, and his increasing administrative duties. Heatwole noted that the editorial assistant provided data from PeerTrack showing that some manuscripts have not been sent out for review for several months. He will send Reeder a diplomatic letter encouraging him to keep the journal on schedule. Mullin suggested sending an apologetic letter to the person who complained.

### **Allen Press report (Karen Ridgeway)**

The new contract went into effect 01 Jan 2011. The new contract agreement is now a revenue share rather than a profit share. The society is paid on revenue, and the society is no longer at risk of expenses such as future write-offs, paper costs, printing costs, or other similar costs which would only be the responsibility of AP. Most AP customers have moved to a revenue sharing model, and this is a more effective model for reducing AP's costs.

This year's royalty was lower due to a large author billing write-off due to managing editing transition. Aggregation income increased and somewhat offset this. Royalty income is expected to increase back to the recent level or above. The Impact Factor for *Herpetologica* went up slightly, and for *Herpetological Monographs* it went down slightly. Color charges were reduced. The 1<sup>st</sup> page of color is \$600 with \$300 for subsequent pages. If authors were required to pay page charges, HL could make more money. A requirement for non-members to pay page charges makes some money and may increase memberships.

AP would like to purge and recycle a lot of the inventory, and the cost would go to AP. There has not been a lot of demand for the older issues since they are all digitized and maintained online. Mahoney suggested that the older issues are purged first since more recent issues are used for student awards.

Ridgeway indicated that preprints are available for posting immediately online, and they should be advertised more among prospective authors. In response to a question from Moon, Kraus and Ford thought that for new species description priority, the pre-print date does not count. To avoid priority problems, perhaps species descriptions could be opted out of pre-printing. The DOI is attached to the pre-print and the formally published paper.

### **Williams Award report (Muths)**

There was a very small response this year, maybe due to lack of advertising. The quality was not great, and awards were only given in 3 categories. Muths will be stepping down, and Ann Patterson will serve as new chair. Mahoney suggested that HL have a Facebook page for HL for advertising its student award competitions.

*Muths moved that HL join Facebook. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **Jones–Lovich Grant report (Spencer)**

There was not great response this year. There were four excellent applicants, and the judges had difficult time choosing. The award went to Dan Leavitt for his project on dune sagebrush lizards. The committee would like to continue the award. Spencer noted that the award competition includes research in northwestern Mexico in addition to US Southwest. Mahoney noted that there should be enough monetary support from HL royalties for the next few years.

### **Conservation Committee report (Smith)**

The major issue is that when votes are scheduled on a conservation issue, there is often very little notice. HL needs to figure out how to address fast-track issues. The committee is uncomfortable giving an HL endorsement without BoT support. Mahoney wondered whether the President could be an ex officio member of the Conservation Committee and make the decision. Heatwole thought that this could put the President on the spot. If BoT opinions are needed, the President should make personal phone calls.

### **Education Committee report (Bevier)**

- 1) Societies should be more inclusive in inviting undergraduate students to compete for awards.
- 2) Support for talented high school (pre-baccalaureate) students (up to 2) to attend the JMIH meetings. These would be students local to the meeting.

*Kraus moved to support 1 student and 1 accompanying parent/guardian per year. The motion was approved unanimously.*

*Mahoney moved that the meritorious teaching award allotment be made part of the annual HL budget. The motion was approved unanimously.*

### **Nomination Committee report (Cundall)**

Cundall presented the current list of nominees for President, Treasurer, and Councilor. Mullin noted that nominations may be received up to 3 weeks after Business Meeting.

## **New Business:**

### **Auction proceeds (Cundall)**

Cundall noted that SSAR had just voted that they will give their portion of the auction proceeds to the World Congress. Does HL want to do this too? This would be a gesture of good will. Mullin noted that this is a good thing if we are assured of the financial accountability of the World Congress.

*Cundall made the following motion, amended by Mullin and Ford: HL will donate its fraction of the proceeds from the joint SSAR/HL auction to the World Congress of Herpetology (WCH), so long as the costs of running the auction are covered first from any proceeds of the auction. If the auction is billed as SSAR/HL and not WCH, then ensure that there is mention that the proceeds will be donated to the WCH. The motion was approved unanimously.*

It was also noted that the Australian Herpetological Society was interested in auctioning a membership at their meeting. Mahoney indicated that HL was in favor of this.

### **Dryad (Heatwole)**

The instructions to authors currently encourage authors to submit data to an online archive. To facilitate this, Dryad has offered to have a direct link to them that authors can use. One of Dryad's objectives is to make data available so that anyone can mine it and combine it with other datasets. The drawback is that if an author wants to use his/her own data at a later time, there could be conflicts if others have used that data. Moon noted that the most flexibility would be if the link was through the instructions to authors pages. Then links to competitors could easily be added. AP also provides the opportunity for data to be stored on their servers. Moon offered to put a link up for Dryad soon.

### **PARC Technical Publications Series (Heatwole)**

Heatwole noted that PARC would like to use HL's logo, and they are not requesting money. This was supported by the BoT.

### **Young Herpetologists' League**



Mahoney indicated that the individual interested in starting a Young Herpetologists' League should be directed to the Education Committee or to the Graduate Studies Committee.

### ***Snakes of the World* (Mullin)**

Mullin noted that Roy McDiarmid has continued to receive requests for *Snakes of the World*. HL was put on as publisher. There are many requests for volumes, and they are still available from a third party. Mullin thought that HL could potentially assume more responsibility for distributing one or more volumes. HL could also possibly negotiate with AP to handle the distribution similar to the arrangement for HL journals. The advantage of taking this on would be that HL would still be named in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> volumes. Heatwole thought that more information was still needed about copyright and storage/ mailing costs.

### **AIBS report (Heatwole)**

HL has been invited to participate in the State of the Science Reports in *BioScience*.

Heatwole adjourned the meeting at 18:00.