

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

23 July 2008

Le Centre Sheraton, Montréal, Québec, Canada

## Board members in attendance:

David Cundall, Linda Ford, Harold Heatwole, Karen Lips, Meredith Mahoney, Stephen Mullin, Erin Muths, Patrick Owen, Joseph Pechmann, Melissa Pilgrim, Tod Reeder

## Committee chairs and other guests:

Aaron Bauer, Cathy Bevier, Raphael de Sá, Neil Ford, Alan Savitzky, Dawn Wilson, Allen Press representatives (Mary Reilly, Derek Gates, AnnieLaurie Seifert)

## Regrets:

Michelle Boone, Todd Campbell, Ken Dodd, Fredric Janzen, Michael Lannoo, Alicia Mathis, Henry Mushinsky

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## President Cundall called the meeting to order at 1415 h.

### 2007 Minutes

*The 2007 Board of Trustees Meeting minutes and 2007 Business Meeting minutes were approved unanimously.*

### ***Herpetological Monographs* editor's report**

Reeder indicated that while he has inherited a few manuscripts from the former editor, Lee Fitzgerald, there have only been two submissions this year, which seems to be low. To encourage submissions, N. Ford and Mullin promoted the possibility of a *Herpetological Monographs* symposium. These have been done in the past with a range of article lengths, and the whole issue would not have to be completely devoted to the symposium.

### **Meetings Management Committee report**

Cundall summarized a few points for Mushinsky who was not able to attend. HL has little input on meeting locations as long as it is constrained to meet with the other Joint Meeting societies and only gets one vote out of five total on the Meetings Management Committee. HL is committed to joint meetings with the other societies for the next four years through Vancouver in 2012.

## Past President's report

*The Past President's report was approved unanimously.*

## President's report

Mahoney inquired how any auction-associated costs would be covered and how much HL would be liable for. Cundall indicated that this depends on how individual room rentals are handled at each meeting, and this has been free at past Joint Meetings.

*The Board voted on two motions put forward by the President:*

Motion 1: *I recommend to the Board of Trustees that this JSTOR policy should be posted on the HL website since all past HL journal publications are available through JSTOR.*

[JSTOR policy: "JSTOR will not give scholars the permission to display articles – they have to get permission from the publisher of the articles. If the scholar gets permission from the publisher, the scholar can download articles and post them online, providing they remove the JSTOR coverpage. If the scholar wants JSTOR to provide the articles to them, we will only do so if we have written documentation signed by all parties involved."]

L. Ford suggested the following amended Motion 1:

*I recommend to the Board of Trustees that this JSTOR policy should be posted at an **appropriate place** on the HL website since all past HL journal publications are available through JSTOR.*

*This motion was passed unanimously.*

Motion 2 – *I recommend that the Board of Trustees approve transfer of HL's share of the live auction proceeds to the general meeting fund for the Montreal JMIH.*

Cundall indicated that this was requested by Mushinsky. ASIH could lose money on the Montreal meeting, so the live auction may help to make up these lost costs. For the past few years, the proceeds of the live auction have only been split between HL and SSAR. The assumption is that if the cost sharing agreement is approved, then all societies should get the financial reports since Mushinsky has been pushing for more integration of society finances for the Joint Meeting. Mahoney noted that last year's live auction profits were \$1351. L. Ford noted that ASIH absorbed the entire profit of the 2007 meeting, and since the live auction proceeds are HL income, then HL needs to have the JMIH financial report for the treasurer to protect against financial contingencies such as an audit. L. Ford recommended that the motion be amended to include access to the JMIH financial report which HL does not normally receive:

Motion 2 amended – *I recommend that the Board of Trustees approve transfer of HL's share of the live auction proceeds to the general meeting fund for the Montreal JMIH **with the understanding that the JMIH financial report for 2008 be shared with HL when it is available.***

*The amended motion was unanimously approved.*

### ***Herpetologica* Editor's report**

Reeder inquired about the status of the search for a new editor to replace Alicia Mathis, who is retiring from her editorship. Cundall indicated that some individuals have been approached, but given the workload and the dependency of HL on host institutions providing release time for the editor, there were no definite candidates yet. Mahoney suggested that the money allocated for the editorial assistant could be used as incentive to get a new editor.

### **Vice President's report and Membership Committee report**

Heatwole noted that HL has lost over 200 members since 2002, and membership will have declined to 0 by 2024 if the current rate of loss continues unabated. The Membership Committee (including Joseph Mitchell and Neil Ford in addition to Heatwole), developed six ways in which HL could actively increase membership:

- 1) advertise HL in Joseph Collins' newsletter
- 2) send personal letters to lapsed members encouraging them to rejoin
- 3) encourage herpetology course instructors to invite students to join the herpetology societies (although Heatwole tried this one of his classes with no success)
- 4) offer a special introductory rate below the normal student rate (although this would cut into HL revenue)
- 5) offer a life membership rate for students
- 6) improve the priority of the HL website for internet search engines

Lips noted that this issue was discussed in detail at the 2007 meeting, and a new approach is needed given that current students are looking for things that the older generation was not. Bauer suggested that the major issue is identity: HL is mainly linked to *Herpetologica*, while SSAR has a number of other types of publications (although *Herpetological Monographs* is one unique aspect of HL). N. Ford noted that SSAR receives priority over HL in web searches, so increasing HL's search priority may help. Savitzky noted that this phenomenon of declining student membership is not just restricted to HL, but is occurring in many organismal societies, and the problem seems to be a failure to recruit younger members. Lips noted that belonging to a society is about more than just receiving a journal, and attending meetings is an important component of membership. Current meeting costs seem to be selecting out students as well as professionals. Additionally, having three separate North American herpetological societies seems redundant. Cundall noted that there has been discussion of merging the societies, but it needs to be done so that more senior members are not alienated. Reeder wondered how the loss in membership income would be compensated for with a unified herpetological society, but Cundall indicated that there are ways around this such as giving options as to which journals members subscribed to. Savitzky pointed out that the journals would retain some of the identity of the original societies, and that it did not make much sense for three societies to separately pay Allen Press to manage their business. The advent of electronic publishing has dramatically reduced the costs of producing journals, so even if a number of members were lost, society finances would probably remain solvent. L. Ford noted that the merging process has tentatively begun given the shared cost arrangements with SSAR, but more definitive goals are needed. Lips suggested that a joint committee from the three societies is needed to open discussion on this issue. Cundall pointed out that one difficulty at this point is the frequent alternation of ASIH presidents between ichthyologists and herpetologists. Heatwole wondered if it would be appropriate at this point to propose to the other

societies that a joint committee be formed. N. Ford requested that any other ideas on increasing membership be submitted to the Membership Committee.

### **Treasurer's report**

*The report was approved unanimously.*

### **World Congress of Herpetology announcement**

Bauer noted that the seventh World Congress is set for August 8-12 in 2012 on the campus of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. There will be on-campus housing consisting of dorm rooms as well as hotel rooms. This will give a range of accommodation prices that should make the meeting more attractive to student participants. Price of registration and attendance will hopefully be comparable to that of the JMIH. Pre- and post-conference field trips to adjoining regions of North America will be planned. The meeting should be very accessible to international travelers given that many US and foreign cities have non-stop or one-stop service to Vancouver. Formal invitations will be sent out to all major herpetological societies around the world. HL and SSAR have agreed to jointly participate, and ASIH is being invited as well. Most of the traditional activities of the JMIH will occur at the World Congress as well.

### **Allen Press report**

Reilly noted that the new full color covers for the journals have appeared in the current volumes. Allen Press is bundling the herpetological society journals when marketing them to libraries. The ISI declined slightly for both HL journals for 2007 compared to 2006. Cundall noted that this is approximately the same as *Copeia* and ahead of *Journal of Herpetology*. Reilly noted that the total number of subscriptions has declined, and a few have gone through BioOne access rather than Allen Press access. Subscription revenue, however, has continued to increase, and back issue sales have added to the revenue. BioOne site usage is currently greater than the silo site usage, but this is mainly due to the fact that BioOne is older. Many older "legacy" articles are on the most frequently accessed list.

Gates noted that membership is currently around 675, and this is 30 less than 2007. A few more individuals will probably add membership, so this drop is probably more realistically around 20. There are 17-18 members each from Canada, Mexico, Germany, and Australia, and a number of other countries have a couple of members. There is an increase in foreign members renewing online, and this reduces renewal costs.

Cundall noted that the International Herpetological Symposium is another herpetological society consisting mostly of zoo personnel, and an Allen Press representative could market HL journals to them as well. Mullin wondered if Allen Press was sending a representative to the meeting of the World Congress of Herpetology in Manaus. Reilly indicated that they were not, but that they needed to market more library subscriptions to South America. Cundall requested that Allen Press give the Membership Committee a list of non-renewals so that the committee could encourage these individuals to renew. L. Ford noted that the personalized letter strategy picked up a few renewals last year.

## **Secretary's report**

*The Secretary's report was approved unanimously.*

## **Publications Secretary's report**

*Mullin moved that it would be worthwhile to transfer some of the Publications Secretary's account to the Treasurer's account given that last year \$2000 was made from back issues sales. This motion passed unanimously.*

## **Herpetologica Editor's report revisited**

Lips gave the report for Mathis who was not able to attend. Thanks go to the associate editors. Mathis requested that the Board of Trustees should give the new editor the flexibility to appoint associate editors without direct consultation of the Board. Additionally, associate editors should not need to be HL members, but they would become members upon appointment. Cundall noted that most current associate editors have not been formally approved by the Board (even though this is required by the Bylaws), and some are not members. Many associate editors do not view herpetology as their primary research interest. Heatwole suggested that associate editors who are not members could be targeted for membership, and Bevier suggested that a reduced membership rate could be offered as an incentive. Bauer asserted that if none of the HL officers are getting free membership, then associate editors should not get free membership. Bauer wondered if it was good to have associate editors who have no personal investment in the society. Savitzky thought that given the amount of work associated with associate editorships, incentives for membership seem acceptable. De Sá asserted that associate editors should come from the membership. Savitzky countered that there are only a limited number of professionals who are willing to serve as associate editors. Savitzky noted that HL cannot really offer any compensation for associate editors, while commercially published journals pay their editors. Pilgrim added that the issue has a lot to do with the job market since academics have to market themselves as question-focused rather than taxon-focused, and this relates to the membership issue as well. Reeder suggested that the Bylaws should be changed to require membership for associate editors. L. Ford suggested that an associate editor candidate needs to be a member to be considered, but then a discount membership could be given as a benefit once hired. Muths suggested that there was not really a problem with membership of associate editors as long as they are qualified. Reeder suggested that it was a good time to get back to following the Bylaws on this issue.

## **Herpetologists' League website**

Mullin noted that announcements can be posted on the discussion board on the website, and messages can also be sent directly to the whole membership. De Sá indicated that he would begin work on the Spanish language mirror website, and there would also be the possibility of doing a Portuguese language site. Mullin noted that there is plenty of space with the Tanglewood agreement for mirror sites.

## **Symposium report**

De Sá reviewed the symposium proposal approved previously in 2008 by the Board of Trustees.

### **Graduate Student Award report**

Wilson was introduced as the incoming chair of the resuscitated Graduate Student Award. The extended abstract requirement has been changed, but a grand prize (with an invitation to publish in *Herpetologica*) with four other \$200 awards will still be given out. There are 13 student participants this year.

### **AIBS/BioOne report**

Savitzky noted that BioOne will be shifting to a new platform. Improvements include self-administrable society web pages, the ability to handle multipart sections of journals, and the ability to create individual profiles to receive electronic alerts. BioOne is working on a model publication agreement in which articles are copyrighted with authors and the authors license journals to publish. There is an increased push for print-on-demand, and many journals will soon be converting to online only. This is not necessarily a disaster since much of a society's budget is tied up in publishing, but other things will be needed to entice membership.

*Lips moved that HL begin the discussion on herpetological society integration, and this was unanimously approved.*

### **Herpetological Education Committee report**

Bevier noted that she will create a web page for the Herpetology Education Committee that will be linked to the SSAR and HL web pages. From a meeting she attended, she came away with several ideas including the posting of herpetology lessons or modules, the development of a core curriculum on how to become a herpetologist, how to help students find their way in herpetology, and how to make teaching a more important part of academic tenure review (such as including teaching publications). There is declining membership on the committee, but Michael Dorcas and Carlos Navas have recently been added as new members. She suggested that it would be useful to have additional joint membership on the committee from ASIH.

*The Education Committee report was unanimously approved.*

### **Graduate Studies Committee report**

Lannoo was not able to attend. Cundall noted that a persistent problem is getting graduate students to participate. Mahoney noted that the Business Meeting could be used as an opportunity to increase this participation (if any graduate students attend). Cundall suggested that the Bylaws could be changed to add an elected position of a graduate student on the Board of Trustees. However, Bauer noted that it might be difficult to find a student who felt comfortable serving on the Board.

*The Graduate Studies Committee report was approved unanimously.*

### **Conservation Committee report**

Campbell was not able to attend. Cundall suggested that the committee should be expanded, and that it should interact jointly with ASIH. The committee should be larger with regional representation so that

it could act upon regional concerns. The committee should also be encouraged to be more active than it has been in the past. Reeder suggested that the committee come up with a mission statement and determine what its future objectives are.

*A motion to approve the Conservation Committee report and to suggest that it clarifies its goals and how they will be implemented was approved unanimously.*

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## **New Business**

### **Investment strategy**

Heatwole indicated that SICB has been doing very well under Matt Tederick, a financial advisor who works with groups and institutions. Mahoney noted that his firm works as an asset management team running on a fee rather than sales commission basis, and the fee would be a percentage of the assets they manage. Quarterly updates would be provided to HL, and Tederick would be employed on a quarterly basis. The endowment would be invested in mutual funds, not stocks, since these are less volatile. The endowment is currently in savings in an S&P Vanguard index fund. Part is earning interest, and the other part tracks the market via the index. The Tederick-proposed portfolio is very diversified with one fund hedging against “bear” markets, and it is structured to beat the S&P index by approximately 2%. It is less volatile or risky than the S&P. Cundall noted that ASIH currently has a financial advisor. Muths wondered whether there was a downside of having a money manager. Mahoney indicated that the only potential downside is that it is not free. The current endowment purpose is undefined, and it is a backup fund around \$116-117,000. She indicated that an investment policy statement could be created for HL, detailing the short and long term goals for the money, with potentially a threshold that would be reached before action would be taken. Reeder suggested that HL should consider “environmentally friendly” investments, although Mahoney noted that since many are mutual funds, it may be difficult to weed out “undesirable” companies. L. Ford wondered what the contract would be. Mahoney replied that HL could terminate Tederick’s management of the funds at any time: the account is HL’s, and HL could always hire a new manager. Muths suggested that there should be a long-term commitment to an investment strategy to prevent future HL personnel from arbitrarily altering the strategy. Mahoney noted that the agreement could be customized to reflect this.

*Cundall indicated that there were action issues that needed to be addressed from Mahoney’s report:*

1a) should an outside firm be hired?

*This action item was approved unanimously in the affirmative.*

2) Should Matt Tederick be hired to manage?

*This action item was approved unanimously in the affirmative.*

*Mullin made a motion that the commitment to the firm would be for an initial contract of two years with an annual review available to the Board of Trustees.*

*This motion was unanimously approved.*

*Cundall moved that management be considered ongoing (action item 1b).*

*This motion was unanimously approved.*

Heatwole suggested that management of operating funds be postponed until it is determined how well Tederick does in managing the endowment. Mahoney indicated that she would talk with Tederick about what information he needs to develop the investment policy statement, and that most of this should be guided by the Board of Trustees. Mullin noted that HL should be upfront about having a level of social consciousness to avoid any conflict between the investment strategy and the goals of the Conservation Committee.

### **Gale Group Content Agreement**

Cundall noted that Gale would distribute journal content to its subscribers who are a different group of readers (mostly corporate), and HL would get a 30% return on this. It would have to be licensed, and Allen Press would have to be in agreement, and it does not seem to conflict with other current agreements. Gale has received requests from some of their subscribers for content from HL journals. L. Ford noted that the positives are that HL would get a return and more exposure for its journals. Cundall noted that a potential negative would be if the agreement conflicted with current agreements. Mullin indicated that the profits would probably go into the Allen Press account, and L. Ford noted that AP would probably take a percentage from this. Cundall noted that AP does not yet have an agreement with the Gale Group. Cundall suggested that HL should go forward and send the Gale contract to AP for review. Pechmann wondered if anyone else had an agreement with Gale. Mullin noted that this could add an additional layer of complexity to the current agreement. Pechmann added that a potential issue in the contract was the clause of HL defending Gale against lawsuits, etc., into perpetuity. The contract seems to give all advantages to Gale, none to HL. Heatwole wondered if this clause could be struck out and suggested that AP probably has lawyers who can sort this issue out.

*L. Ford made a motion to send the Gale agreement to AP for review and this was approved unanimously.*

### **JMIH Joint Financial Responsibility Agreement**

L. Ford and De Sá wondered if HL should give proceeds from auction to ASIH. Pechmann suggested that the Joint Meeting should share profits and losses. *He moved that HL should further explore the option of cost sharing in the spirit of increasing cooperation between the societies.*

*The motion was approved unanimously.*

### **Henderson and Powell book**

Cundall wondered whether HL should support the book (The Natural History of West Indian Amphibians and Reptiles by Robert W. Henderson and Robert Powell) and if so, at what level. Mullin noted that there had been a lack of success in selling *Biology of the Reptilia* volumes, and he would prefer to see University of Florida Press handle everything. Muths wondered if SSAR would be willing to co-sponsor. Cundall noted that it was unclear at this point if anyone else was committed to sponsor. *Heatwole*

*made a motion that HL would explore this issue further with the view of HL helping out financially at a minimum commitment of \$2000.*

*The motion was approved unanimously.*

**The meeting was adjourned at 18:45.**