

MINUTES OF THE BUSINESS MEETING
OF THE HERPETOLOGISTS' LEAGUE

HOTEL TROPICAL, MANAUS, BRAZIL
30 June 2003

Vice-President Mushinsky called the meeting to order at 1807 h. President Dodd and former President Mitchell were stranded on the other side of the Rio Negro River having spent all day in the direct tropical sun at a *Podocnemis* ranch.

Mushinsky introduced a series of four resolutions related to national and international issues that were passed unanimously:

**RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STATE OF AMAZONAS
ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION PLAN**

WHEREAS the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (ASIH), Herpetologists' League (HL), Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR), American Elasmobranch Society (AES), Sociedade Brasileira de Ictiologia (SBI), Neotropical Ichthyological Association (NIA), Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos de Elasmobranchios (SBEEL), and the Sociedade Brasileira de Herpetologia (SBH) held a joint meeting in Manaus, and

WHEREAS Professor Virgilio Mauricio Viana, of the Secretaria de Estado do Meio Ambiente e Desenvolvimento Sustentável, as a representative for the governor of the state of Amazonas, addressed the plenary session of the joint meeting of ichthyologists and herpetologists at the Hotel Tropical in Manaus, and

WHEREAS his recognition and plan for the protection of biodiversity of the great state of Amazonas by his department is foresighted and essential

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Herpetologists' League supports his efforts to protect and conserve this magnificent ecosystem.

RESOLUTION REGARDING COLLECTING PERMITS IN BRAZIL

WHEREAS the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (ASIH), Herpetologists' League (HL), the American Elasmobranch Society (AES), Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR), Neotropical Ichthyological Association (NIA), Sociedade Brasileira de Ictiologia (SBI), Sociedade Brasileira de Estudos de Elasmobranchios (SBEEL) and Sociedade Brasileira de Herpetologia (SBH), held a joint meeting in Manaus at the center of the marvelous diversity of Amazonia, and

WHEREAS these societies are professional organizations dedicated to the study, advancement of knowledge and preservation of fishes, amphibians and reptiles, and

WHEREAS it is vital to know the diversity of the species of fishes, amphibians, and reptiles before conservation management can be developed, and

WHEREAS it is necessary to compare recently collected material from Brazilian territory with types specimens and historic collections in other South American countries and in North America or Europe, and

WHEREAS this scientific progress is being hindered by current policy implementation of recent legislation governing access to Brazilian natural genetic resources;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that scientists studying Brazilian and other neotropical fishes, amphibians and reptiles urge the government of Brazil to reassess its policy in order to streamline the analysis and issuance of licenses for activities involving academic non-commercial access and transportation of biological specimens and genetic resources; and to change from a restraining to a proactive position, providing active incentive for this vital research on the biodiversity of the neotropics which is crucial to the conservation of the species and habitat on which they depend.

RESOLUTION ON THE DISSOLUTION OF THE HERPETOLOGY DEPARTMENT AT THE LACM

WHEREAS the Herpetologists' League (HL) is an international professional scientific society devoted to the study and conservation of the world's amphibians and reptiles, and

WHEREAS much of the research conducted by herpetologists depends upon well-curated collections accessible to the scientific community, and

WHEREAS the herpetological collection of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County consists of over 200,000 specimens of amphibians and reptiles representing species found throughout the world, and

WHEREAS the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County has recently dissolved the department of herpetology and released two competent, dedicated and talented staff, leaving this collection without professionals to oversee the growth, development, maintenance of the holdings, and continued research in systematic herpetology,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the HL condemns the dissolution of the department of herpetology as an abdication of the mission and responsibility of a natural history museum, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the HL urges the administration of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County to reverse this decision so that the priceless collection of amphibians and reptiles remains a valuable asset available to the scientific community.

RESOLUTION REGARDING BIOLOGICAL SPECIMENS FROM NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

WHEREAS the Herpetologists' League held its 61st society meeting in Manaus at the center of the marvelous diversity of Amazonia, and

WHEREAS the HL is dedicated to the scientific study of amphibians and reptiles, to increase the knowledge about these organisms to interpret, understand, and conserve the Earth's natural diversity and to contribute to the wise use of natural resources for the long term benefit of humankind and

WHEREAS the collection, identification, and curation of biological specimens are essential to the study of biodiversity and the evolutionary origins and patterns of life and

WHEREAS significant expertise and resources are needed to collect, identify and maintain scientific collections of biological specimens in a manner that will assure their continued existence and convenient availability to qualified researchers and

WHEREAS high standards of maintenance, and often reference to other comparative collections, are necessary to provide the scientific information and documentation that should be the fundamental purpose of such collections and

WHEREAS biological specimens may be collected on National Park Service property and

WHEREAS the National Park Service policy mandates that biologists who collect and identify these specimens and the institutions that curate and store them do so only on a long-term loan basis, subject to recall at any time and

WHEREAS museums cannot commit to the expense of indefinitely housing and maintaining specimens that are not legally their property; and

WHEREAS few National Parks have the expertise and facilities to properly identify and curate biological specimens and

WHEREAS the current National Park Service policy concerns biologists and institutions because it jeopardizes the long-term integrity of research collections and potentially makes access to specimens collected on NPS property more difficult for qualified researchers,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the HL calls upon the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to develop a policy that allows accredited institutions with a history of curatorial responsibility in maintaining scientific collections the unrestricted transfer and permanent retention of biological specimens collected on National Park Service property.

Vice-President Mushinsky also introduced a series of resolutions related to HL business and the joint meeting in Manaus. All were passed unanimously.

1. Appreciation to Walter Hodl for his presentation, despite many obstacles, of the SSAR President's Travelogue.
2. Approval of the slate of nominees for election to positions of Vice-President, Treasurer, and Councilors (3) (refer to Board of Trustees minutes for names).
3. Appreciation of the service of Thomas Jenssen as Editor of *Herpetologica*.
4. Appreciation of the service of Carl Anthony, Edmund Brodie, David Green, and Linda Zimmerman as Associate Editors of *Herpetologica*.

The new HL mission statement that was approved at the Board of Trustees meeting (see minutes) was presented. Alicia Mathis was announced as the next Editor of *Herpetologica*. In addition, Michael Angilletta, Troy Baird, Peter Niewiarowski, Kevin de Queiroz, Christopher Sheil, and Susan Walls were announced as new Associate Editors of *Herpetologica*. The reason for having no 2003 Jaeger Award for Graduate Research was discussed. Carl Gans was

announced as the new US/Canada, and Donald Broadley, Harold Cogger, Ilya Darevsky, Paulo Vanzolini, and Ermi Zhao as the new foreign Honorary Members of the HL. Other business from the Board of Trustees Meeting was briefly discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 1840 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mac F. Given, Secretary