

**Minutes of the Board of Trustees Meeting of the
Herpetologists' League
12 July 2006
Sheraton New Orleans Hotel
New Orleans, Louisiana, USA**

Board members in attendance: Aaron Bauer, C. Kenneth Dodd, Jr., Linda Ford, Neil Ford, Fredric Janzen, Alicia Mathis, Joseph Mitchell, Stephen Mullin, Henry Mushinsky, Patrick Owen, Joseph Pechmann, Lora Smith, Susan Walls

Committee chairs in attendance: Catherine Bevier, Rafael de Sá, Roy McDiarmid, Christopher Sheil

Regrets: Todd Campbell, Karen Lips

President L. Ford called the meeting to order at 1400 h.

Minutes of the 2005 Board of Trustees and Business meetings in Tampa, Florida were approved unanimously with one change: "Ford" should be "N. Ford" under "Board members in attendance".

Reports

The President's report was approved unanimously with the following changes: "Frederic Janzen" to "Fredric Janzen" and "Joseph Peachmann" to "Joseph Pechmann". The following reports were approved unanimously without changes: Past President's, Treasurer's, Secretary's, Publication Secretary's, *Herpetologica* Editor's, Symposium Checklist Committee Chair's, Jaeger Award Committee Chair's, Conservation Committee Chair's, AIBS/BioOne Representative's, Herpetological Education Committee Chair's. The Report from the Graduate Studies Committee Chair was not submitted in time for consideration by the Board of Trustees and is included in the current packet. Additional business related to these reports is presented below.

Meeting Sites

Mushinsky discussed future meeting venues. Future meetings have been planned for 2007 (St. Louis) and 2008 (Montreal). The proposed meeting for 2009 was originally intended for Vancouver, but costs have been found to be prohibitive here as well as at several other alternative locations. Portland is now being considered for 2009, Providence for 2010, and Minneapolis for 2011. All three of these locations have agreed to lock in currently quoted prices. A motion to accept these offers was approved unanimously.

Bauer noted that the next World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) will meet in Manaus, Brazil in September of 2008. The following WCH will meet in North America potentially in 2012, so it would be possible to have a larger joint meeting at that time. A joint meeting with the WCH in 2008 would not be possible since the three societies (ASIH, HL, and SSAR) are committed to Montreal.

Symposia Planning

Mushinsky, de Sá, and L. Ford discussed how HL symposia have been planned in the past. A current issue is that the Joint Meeting Planning Committee and the HL Symposium Committee are not well synchronized in the timing of their meetings. Historically, planning has been done at the HL Board of Trustees meeting during the summer, but the Joint Meeting Planning Committee now needs this information well before this in the early spring. According to the bylaws, no vote was needed on making changes in timing. However, it was recommended that symposia proposals be due by mid February so that the HL Symposium Planning Committee has time to consider them before the Joint Meeting Planning Committee meets. Chair de Sá and Mushinsky will work on the recommended changes.

Treasurer's Report

L. Smith noted that HL ended the fiscal year with a net loss (approximately \$15,000). This is probably mostly attributable to a change in journal subscription procedures and the lower price of institutional subscriptions which are now handled by Allen Press. In addition, HL membership is still declining (student memberships by about 16%), and the society paid for an extra issue of *Herpetologica* this year (Volume 62, Number 1). However, some of these losses are expected to balance out in the long term since Allen Press profits on institutional subscriptions will come back to HL, costs per issue of *Herpetologica* are decreasing, and BioOne income is increasing. Even though paper memberships now cost more, most members still want paper copies of the journals.

Membership

The Board discussed ideas for increasing membership. Mushinsky noted that in comparison to HL, SSAR membership is up, and he suggested sending out renewal queries to former HL members. Over the past few years, this may include a few hundred former members. Bauer noted that this had worked successfully in the past where about 40% of those contacted through physical letters personally signed by the president renewed their membership. Several board members noted that most students currently join SSAR and not HL since SSAR has the lowest student membership price and the greatest perceived value in terms of journals and travel grants. Mitchell pointed out that the HL endowment was originally set up to provide funds as incentives for students, and L. Smith stated that this currently amounts to approximately \$100,000, and as currently invested, it is very accessible. Mullin suggested that HL should set up a list serve to help

communicate and inform its members. The Board agreed with this idea, and Mullin volunteered to run the list serve.

Publications Secretary Report

Mullin requested a motion to transfer excess Publications Secretary funds (approximately \$5000) back to the Treasurer. He noted that this still would leave the Publications Secretary office very fluid. A motion was made to accept this transfer, and it was unanimously approved.

Mullin also discussed the possibility of reducing the amount of back issues from the Publication Secretary's office. These could be sold at the joint meeting in St. Louis in 2007, and information about the sale would be posted on the HL website. While the back issues are not insured through Eastern Illinois University, there have been no costs of storage other than the initial investment in cabinets. Back issues are no longer accumulating since ACG now handles returned and missent issues. The number of extra copies of each back issue in storage now ranges from 0 to over 100 depending on the issue. The possibility of offering back issues with new student memberships and donating back issues to institutions in developing countries was discussed.

HL Journals Website and Electronic Publishing

Allen Press representative Annielaurie Seifert and Alliance Communications Group (ACG, the publishing division of Allen Press) representative Angela Fine met with the Board of Trustees for the first time and gave their report. In February of 2006, the new HL journals website was launched. Initially, it has been left open access to increase visibility for the society's journals and to allow familiarity. Access to the website will soon be restricted to society members. Manuscript submission and peer review is now online. A direct mail promotion that would allow 2006 membership rates for 2007 is planned for the fall of 2006 to entice non-member academics to try out the journal website. This will initially be restricted to the US due to the difficulty of international mailing. The society's journals will be included in the 2006 Buyer's Guide, and several rating indices including impact factor and citations is up for *Herpetologica*. The impact factor for *Herpetological Monographs* is slightly down. Now that both journals are online and indexed in CrossRef, this will help in visibility. Statistics for the full year will be available at the 2007 meeting in St. Louis, and they will be included on the electronic journal site.

HL Society Website Language

The old HL website (www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cbd/HL/HL.html) will soon be offline, so this does not warrant attention. Mullin noted that the phrase, "established in 1861" has been corrected on the Allen Press website (<http://herl.dev.allenpress.com/perlerv/?request=get-archive>). L. Ford noted that there is repetitive language on all of the existing HL webpages maintained by Allen Press. However, L. Ford called for a website oversight committee to monitor and track changes

needed to both the journal and the new society websites. This committee will check links to make sure that they are working and also monitor content to ensure that it is up-to-date. Changes will be approved through Mushinsky who is supervising Patrick Carew, an undergraduate in charge of the new society website.

***Herpetologica* Editor's Report**

Mathis reported that *Herpetologica* has been accepting electronic submissions for the past year via email. Currently the journal is moving to web-based submissions through the Alliance Publishing website (herpetologica.allentrack.net). Web submissions will be open to both members and non-members of the society. Manuscript submission data is not dramatically different from last year. Acceptance rates appear to have increased, although Mathis noted that this is partially an artifact of the change to a different style of bookkeeping. Many submissions continue to be alpha taxonomy, but these are balanced with ecology. *Herpetologica* continues to receive a large number of international submissions, and approximately 1/3 of published manuscripts are international.

Jaeger Award Committee Chair's Report

Sheil stated that the quality of participants was very high this year, although like last year only three students entered the competition. This was discussed, and it was decided that this was not a major issue. Several board members wondered whether winners should be required to publish in *Herpetologica*. It was also discussed whether the Jaeger Award should continue to be a single-author competition. The board decided to include a more detailed rationale in the competition announcement for why only single-author submissions are accepted for the competition but to clarify that the ultimate publication can be multi-authored.

New Business:

Vice President Replacement

L. Ford discussed replacement of the Vice President. The Bylaws are not explicit on the replacement, however, examination of several sections indicates that a special election is needed. Walls will put together a new nomination committee, and the election is expected to be held by the fall of 2006.

New HL Website

A proposed Website Oversight Committee was further discussed. It was decided that each standing ad hoc committee chairperson should be responsible for maintaining the content of its own portion of the website. Proposed changes would then be reviewed by the Website Oversight Committee. Henry Mushinsky was acknowledged for his hard work on the new website as well as for his other work for HL and the other societies, and he received a round of applause. L. Ford noted that the society has purchased the domain

name “herpetologistsleague.com” for the website. Most web bots have probably not picked up the site yet since it does not appear easily in web searches. Mushinsky noted that the purchase of the domain name allows HL officers to have dedicated professional email addresses. L. Ford inquired if the “.com” rather than a more traditional “.org” for a non-profit could cause problems for HL’s nonprofit status, and this potential conflict is being investigated.

HL Newsletter

Christopher Beachy resigned as Newsletter Editor last year, and there is no replacement yet. As it currently stands, no new newsletters have appeared since Beachy’s retirement, but previous newsletters are entirely electronic and have been posted on the society website. However, no email notifications have gone out, so it is unclear what the current readership of the website and/or newsletter is. It was also discussed whether the Secretary should send notifications of new postings and notify members periodically of major changes in website content since he maintains a list of member emails. Alternatively, the new list serve could act as the electronic bulletin board for the society, and the remaining part of the newsletter could be entirely electronic. L. Ford called for recommendations for a new person to take over the role of Newsletter Editor and to work with the new HL website and list serve.

HL Dues Payments

L. Smith noted that current policy is to allow members to pay up to two years in advance. However, some money is lost on memberships in this way, and the accounting process is becoming very difficult. Mushinsky moved that advanced payments be removed as a normal option, and this was approved.

Letter of Concern

Mushinsky noted that a letter of concern was received about the declining quality of published papers and editorial mistakes by authors. Electronic publishing seems to facilitate this. The board expressed universal concern about the quality of writing in submitted herpetological manuscripts. Mathis noted that electronic publishing also causes a decrease in the quality of reviews since it is much more difficult to mark editorial changes in electronic manuscripts than on hard copies. L. Ford suggested that Allen Press should be contacted for advice on their previous experience with tracking editorial changes for web-facilitated publishing, and Mathis offered to follow up with Allen Press.

Cost of Meetings

Dodd noted that the cost of meetings has become prohibitive to the point that many professionals, retired professionals, and students do not attend. However, the solution to this seems to be unclear at this time. L. Ford noted that this may not be a symptom of the

switch of the joint meetings to conference centers since college campus meetings are now comparable in price.

HL Distinguished Herpetologist Lecture

Dodd wondered whether it would be appropriate to publish the Distinguished Herpetologist Lecture in *Herpetologica*. Others suggested that it might be more appropriate as electronic content for the HL website. Bauer noted that the lecture would be more likely to be read and cited in the journal, but it should be peer reviewed in the same way as a “Point of View,” and a page limit should be set. N. Ford, Dodd, and Bauer volunteered to come up with guidelines for how to implement this for *Herpetologica*, working with Mathis.

Collection Permits

L. Ford suggested that collection regulations and permits would be a good issue that could be addressed with the Herpetological Education and Graduate Studies Committees since the logistics for obtaining and/or following these are becoming increasingly difficult. She suggested a collaboration with the ASIH Collections Committee to organize a workshop at a future meeting.

The board meeting was adjourned at 17:30 h.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick C. Owen
Secretary