

## Minutes of the Business Meeting of the Herpetologists' League

08 July 2011

Hilton Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

Heatwole called the meeting to order at 1800 h.

### President's report (Heatwole):

Three new Honorary Members were elected in 2010: Robert Stebbins, David Wake, and Rick Shine. The Allen Press contract was renewed for three years. Heatwole summarized Henry Mushinsky's report from the Ad Hoc Committee on Increasing JMIH Society Interactions. The members of HL support greater interaction among the societies. Heatwole has helped to set up a joint committee to improve cooperation among the societies. A JMIH Conservation Committee with representatives from all of the societies will be formed, and this will not eliminate the individual society conservation committees. Other suggestions for increased cooperation that are somewhat more controversial among members include symposia with greater co-sponsorship that are more topically oriented (less taxonomically oriented), a joint website, joint negotiations with publishers, and the formation of an umbrella society to supervise membership, finances, website, and publisher negotiations.

Savitzky noted that ASIH is prepared to propose a formal joint conservation committee. Smith noted that there are general concerns about the size of the committee, its autonomy, its goals/mission, and how quickly it could take action on issues. Savitzky suggested that the four societies vote to pursue this and approve it in principle. It would follow the ASIH model in procedures. The initial group would submit a proposal to each society board. The charter of the committee would be approved at the 2012 JMIH. There would be 5 members from each conservation committee (including one student member from each). Lovich noted that PARC is already doing many of the same things that this joint committee is interested in doing, and it has a lot of expertise. So it might be useful to involve PARC in some way. Adding PARC would create a large amount of unity across the entire herpetological community. Savitzky noted that PARC is a different organization with a different constituency. The proposed committee is mainly to serve the JMIH societies, to obtain one voice for the scientific community. PARC is somewhat outside of this jurisdiction. Heatwole suggested that the proposed committee would closely coordinate with PARC.

*Savitzky made the following motion to establish a Joint Conservation Committee of the JMIH Societies:*

Recognizing the multitude of threats facing the global ichthyofauna and herpetofauna, and appreciating that a coordinated response from the community of ichthyologists and herpetologists will have the greatest impact on conservation efforts, the membership of the

Herpetologists' League (HL) supports the establishment of a joint conservation committee representing the four JMIH societies. This committee will have equal representation from all four societies, including student members. Details regarding the composition of the committee and the procedures it will follow in addressing conservation issues will be proposed to the boards of all four societies by a working group drawn from the four societies' existing conservation committees. Upon approval of the structure and procedures for the joint committee by all four boards, through action during the next 12 months, this joint committee will serve as the singular voice of the conservation committee for each of the four JMIH societies.

*All votes were in favor, and the motion was approved unanimously.*

Heatwole raised the possibility of a joint task force with members of all societies that would focus on strategic planning. Heatwole indicated that this task force was supported by the HL BoT. Two representatives from each society would meet together to achieve common goals. The chairman of the planning committee from each society would be one of the members, and the other member from HL would be Henry Mushinsky. This would be different than the Meetings Management and Planning Committee since the committee would look at a broader picture rather than just planning individual meetings. Anything proposed would be advisory, and it would have to go through the boards of the various societies.

*Heatwole moved to establish a strategic joint planning committee. The motion was approved unanimously.*

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

Many issues were discussed at the BoT meeting, especially costs and declining membership. Trauth noted that HL must elevate its appeal to a younger generation, and make membership more attractive. One possibility is through journal format changes along the lines of *Journal of Herpetology* and *Herpetological Review*.

Cost of meetings: Brian Smith noted that the general membership does not understand the cost of meetings, and the current practice is cost effective. Things have changed since the university meetings of past decades. Mahoney noted that future meetings will be shortened by a day which will reduce hotel costs. The picnic has already been eliminated. Gregory indicated that the dorm accommodations offered at the 2012 JMIH with the World Congress of Herpetology in Vancouver is a special case. The University of British Columbia is unusual among Canadian universities since it has a well developed conference office. Other universities are not as good at providing these services.

Reducing journal costs: In terms of reducing journal costs, Mahoney noted that there is already an online-only subscription option, and Heatwole indicated that elimination of print journals

will probably happen eventually. Trauth noted that the issue is how to do this and maintain financial security for HL.

Reducing membership rates: Mullin noted that HL still has a sizeable account, and most years the society generates a profit. The current professional memberships could be left at the current level, while student membership rates could be slashed. Mahoney noted that if this was done, the professional membership rates would have to be raised. Pechmann suggested that HL needs a non-journal membership since most students can access journals online and do not see this as a perk of membership. Savitzky noted that the risk is that this is becoming popular. So much income could be lost that the society could no longer afford to publish the journal.

Focus on HL identity and value: Trauth noted that historically, the most important thing for a professional to do was to join the herpetological societies, and that membership in HL was a tradition. Members invested their money where they thought it was the most important. Other members in attendance suggested that there should be more of a focus on attracting younger members and more emphasis on the value of the membership cost. Younger students and professionals do not seem to understand the distinctions between the societies. Muths noted that HL is starting to address this through offering the E.E. Williams Grant, which makes a concerted effort to provide written feedback to applicants. Trauth added that the Jones-Lovich Grant has also been established. Trauth wondered whether paid advertisements could be pursued in *Herpetological Review*. In the advertisement, founding members could be profiled to try to show HL heritage. Lovich wondered whether HL could have a Facebook page, and Mahoney noted that it has already been started.

Focus on JMIH society integration and community: Savitzky noted that the society is a group of like-minded scholars, and organismal societies are losing members across the board. All societies face the problem that the professional community is no longer focused around the individual societies. Instead, it is focused around the JMIH. Members at large do not really care which society gets them to the JMIH. It is foolish to pay three different memberships to belong to the same community. In a JMIH organization, there could be a single membership, plus additional money for subscriptions to individual journals. Electronic publishing cannot be sustained without dues, and an economy of scale is reached if one organization negotiates on behalf of all of the individual society journals. Heatwole noted that there are many models for this such as the ornithological societies and the ESA. Savitzky noted that SSAR and ASIH are both interested in the JMIH umbrella society to a certain extent.

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

HL came into the end of the last fiscal year in the negative due to the timing of the end of the fiscal year and journal billing. There is a good base of money in HL accounts. With the current MOU, HL benefitted last year, but it will probably have costs this year. Costs are paid relative to the proportion of members compared to the other societies. Next year in 2012 the WCH will be a cost. In the past couple of years, two new student awards have been initiated. Of these,

more money is currently being allocated to the Williams Award. The Jones–Lovich Award is currently being funded through royalties from their book. Mahoney noted that at the Minneapolis JMIH, the Hilton has potentially been unfairly counting JMIH registrants as not part of the room block. KState is aggressively pursuing this issue. Heatwole suggested that HL could blackball the Hilton chain for future meetings if this is not effectively resolved.

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

Owen noted that a new electronic election for the President-elect, the Treasurer, and Councilors will be coming up this fall. This will be run through the ZenScientist website, courtesy of Breck Bartholomew.

### **Publication Secretary's/Webmaster's report (Mullin)**

A back issues set was donated to Egypt, and this has helped to reduce some journal storage costs. Mullin noted that AP has requested permission to purge some back issues. If members are interested in back issues, now is time to get them. Mullin will reserve entire reserve set.

Mullin encourages announcements posted to HerpList on the ZenScientist site. Trauth suggested that a page on the HL website for debunking myths such as the most venomous snake in the world would draw attention and visitors to the website. Mullin noted that the Herpetology Hotline already fields questions from the public. However, a FAQ page could be added.

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

Moon noted that *Herpetologica* is currently on schedule. Submissions are up this year. Via the contract with AP, additional page space is available, and *Herpetologica* can take more submissions. Moon has updated the editorial board. He has also been meeting with the editors of *Journal of Herpetology* and *Copeia* about standardizing reference formats.

### **Conservation Committee report (Heatwole)**

The HL Conservation Committee has joined with SSAR on a petition to list all amphibians for import as injurious unless declared free of chytridiomycosis. The committee is actively pursuing conservation issues with the other JMIH societies and PARC.

*The committee made a motion for HL to endorse the following resolution from the Amphibian Survival Alliance:*

### **HL Resolution to Endorse the Amphibian Survival Alliance to support amphibian conservation**

WHEREAS it is well recognized that amphibians are important as nature's indicators of environmental perturbation; are vital links in most food webs; are important predators on invertebrates, thereby

minimizing disease transmission and destruction of agricultural crops; and play an important role in medical research. from research on spinal cord injuries, through HIV treatment and painkillers, to the development of novel antibiotics for treating MRSA, and

WHEREAS since 1970 scientists have observed precipitous declines and extinctions of amphibian species, significantly including many in protected areas, and

WHEREAS the extent of these declines and extinctions is without precedent in any class of animals over the last several thousand years and has been the focus of much scientific research, and

WHEREAS in 2004 a comprehensive amphibian Red List assessment conducted under the aegis of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) revealed that nearly one-third (32%) of the world's amphibian species are threatened with extinction; that over 40% of all species are declining in population size; that up to 168 species of amphibians may have gone extinct since 1980 and additional species may become extinct in our lifetime unless we intervene, and

WHEREAS, 23% of amphibian species were considered insufficiently known to assess their status accurately, and many of these are also likely to be threatened, and

WHEREAS in 2005 an international working conference of herpetologists and conservationists produced the Amphibian Conservation Action Plan (ACAP) for the IUCN, which outlined the steps necessary to prevent the decline and further loss of amphibian species, and

WHEREAS the ACAP concluded that a large, multifaceted, and coordinated global response to this extinction crisis is needed, and

WHEREAS only the emergency salvage actions for species called for in the ACAP have been undertaken on a globally coordinated basis, through the Amphibian Ark initiative, and

WHEREAS the causes of amphibian losses are complex and multifactorial, and therefore other aspects of the ACAP greatly need attention and action if further extinctions of amphibian species are to be prevented, and

WHEREAS the IUCN has established the Amphibian Survival Alliance (ASA) as a coalition of organizations to promote, coordinate, and augment the implementation of the necessary tasks outlined in the ACAP, thereby preventing further extinctions by facilitating and coordinating appropriate actions of individuals, organizations and government agencies, and

WHEREAS the Herpetologists' League (HL) is concerned that the diversity of amphibian species be maintained globally to the greatest degree possible,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the HL endorses the mission of the ASA and encourages support of the ASA by individuals, organizations, foundations and governmental agencies at all levels.

*The motion was approved unanimously.*

## **Nominations Committee report (Cundall)**

Cundall thanked Savitzky and Doan who helped to put together the slate of candidates for councilors and president-elect. Jim Spotila and Jim McGuire are standing for election as President-elect. Marty Crump, Tiffany Doan, Fran Irish, Tom LeDuc, Edgar Lehr, and Carol Spencer are running for Councilor. Mahoney is running unopposed for a second term as Treasurer. No additional nominations were received from the floor.

## **New Business**

### **JMIH in 2014 (Heatwole)**

Heatwole noted that SSAR is considering meeting separately from the JMIH in 2014, probably at a university or college. SSAR will probably ask HL to join them, as past tradition, if they go forward with this. The perception is that a smaller meeting would have greater warmth and quality that cannot be had at a big hotel conference center. Savitzky noted that the proportional attendance of students has been better since meeting at conference centers. There are no hard data to back up the assertion that meetings at universities were better. Additionally, events like live-animal demonstrations are no longer feasible due to IACUC regulations. Moon noted that university costs have greatly increased over the last decade or so. Muths noted that the recent Conservation Biology and PARC meetings at university campuses each had negative aspects and were expensive. Trauth noted that the HL BoT had already agreed unanimously to support the MOU to meet with the JMIH for the next 5 years. Doane added that the MOU allows the societies to meet separately provided that they give enough advance.

*Savitzky moved that if there are two meetings in 2014, then HL declares that it will meet with ASIH and not SSAR.*

Savitzky noted that the motion was consistent with movement toward a JMIH umbrella organization. A separate SSAR meeting in 2014 is not consistent with more cooperation.

*Eighteen votes were in favor of the motion, with one abstention. The issue was passed to a vote of the HL BoT.*

Heatwole passed the President's gavel to Trauth.

Trauth adjourned the meeting at 19:40.