

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

**12 July 2017**

**Renaissance Austin Hotel, Pecos Room, Austin, Texas, USA**

HL President David Green called the meeting to order at 14:05.

## **A. Welcome and Introductions**

Board members in attendance: David Green, Laurie Mauger, Renata Platenberg, David Sever, Steve Mullin, Stan Trauth, Michael Harvey, Ann Paterson, Chris Petersen

Committee members and guests: Marty Crump, Carol Spencer, Mary White, Chelsea Clyde-Brockway, Erin Muths, Al Savitzky, Taylor Fulton (Allen Press), Peter Burns (Allen Press)

## **B. Minutes of Previous Meetings**

### **1 & 2) 2016 BoT and Business meeting minutes**

Stan Trauth moved to approve minutes of previous meetings, Steve Mullin seconded; no discussion; motion unanimously approved.

## **C. Officers' Reports**

### **3) Presidents report—David Green**

John Herman, HL Secretary, submitted resignation due to health (stage 4 terminal cancer). Ann Paterson served as interim as Erin Muths, Nominations Chair, sought a new candidate; Renata Platenberg was appointed until fall elections. No update on John's situation, some improvement in prognosis but no new information.

Change in HL membership management: new contract with Christy Classi (Wild Apricots) since October, for new website for membership services that is linked to new HL website (built by Laurie Gibbons of Salamander).

Due to increase in electronic communication methods, there has been a need to update HL's methods, and a decision was made to allow the office of Publications Secretary to discontinue once Ken Cabarle's tenure is up, and create new office of Communications Secretary. This was approved by the HL BoT in January, and Wendy Palin was appointed.

**ACTION:** This change in the constitution to eliminate Publications Secretary and create Communications Secretary needs to be ratified by the membership at the HL Business Meeting.

ASIH has unilaterally developed a Code of Conduct, as revealed by Brian Crother; David Green objects that it should be a joint effort between societies as enforcement is an issue, particularly if the code only applies to one of the memberships. A Code of Conduct committee has been established (David Sever is member).

There is also a committee on child care at JMIH.

Green appointed Pat Gregory as chair of new Herp League Award for Service to the Profession and Jim Spotila appointed as Perpetual Purveyor of Plaques.

In order to distance HL from serious allegations, Michael Dorcas' membership on the Executive Council board is suspended until the situation is resolved, he resigns, or the term runs out (Dec 2019). Under suspension, the position cannot be filled.

- Erin Muths: can position be filled to allow for a quorum? –Not until position is vacant.
- Steve Mullin: is it appropriate to address this issue in a public document (President Report) —The information is public and there is a need to create distance from allegations, but no confirmation of guilt or otherwise.
- Laurie Mauger: is there a possibility of amending bylaws to allow removal from executive council? –No need, as the bylaws allow removal for “just cause” (but there’s no just cause in this case)

President Report accepted.

#### **4) Vice-President's Report—David Sever**

The 75<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the HL meeting: made some plans with Chris Peterson to celebrate, but Roy McDiarmid confirmed that it isn't actually the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which will be 2021, as best as can be determined. It was confusing to determine as there were years with multiple meetings, or no meetings.

Update on John Herman: tumors shrunk, life expectancy increased from months to years.

In January, communicated with Brian Crother that ASIH had developed a Code of Ethics that other societies should consider adopting; Joint committee established to develop a joint meeting policy for next year, chaired by Ann Paterson, and Sever as HL representative. Meeting tomorrow (13 July) at noon.

- Stan Trauth: will their code be accepted or modified? –AES and SSAR have also attempted to develop code, but ASIH's one is the most developed, and can be accepted with some modification.

VP report accepted.

#### **5) Treasurer's report—Laurie Mauger**

HL is doing financially well, up from last year. Established the Semlitch Award fund: \$8000 donated by other HL members and other scientists, and Jim added in the remaining needed to reach the \$100,000 level.

Membership switched to Christy Classi's business, for which she receives a monthly payment.

Royalty payment from Allen Press is slightly higher than last year but there's a downward trend in royalties; still getting royalties from Lizards of the American Southwest, but these are declining, expect to still be able to fund the Jones-Lovich Award for a couple of years.

Working with accountants on taxes for next year.

No changes in projected budget from last year.

- Savidge: is the Allen Press royalty the same as BioOne? –Fulton responded that the BioOne royalty does flow through Allen Press, and HL receives royalty based on total revenue. Allen Press pays all journal expenses, in return, they collect on journal revenue.
- Mauger: Society pays membership fees quarterly to Allen Press.

Treasurer report accepted.

## **6) Secretary's report—Renata Platenberg**

Nothing to report. BoT reports are archived in the PBWorks online. No hard copies.

- Carol Spencer is not getting emails, neither is Erin Muths. –RP to check/update mailing list.

## **7) *Herpetologica* Editor's Report—Steve Mullin**

Full report has been submitted. Journal is on schedule, June issue is out. Sept issue is a compilation of papers from special conference plethodontid biology from last year; making progress on Dec issue. Journal is stable.

Changes in associate editorial staff: Rulon Clark and Adam Leaché have stepped down and have been replaced by Chris Gienger and Matt Fujita.

Use of color. Discussion on page allotments that are not being met, and whether the cost for the allotments can be shifted towards supporting more color plates. Page allotments weren't adjusted when journal went to larger trim size. T. Fulton from Allen Press confirmed that an allotment has been budgeted and could be negotiated; *Herpetologica* had 378 pages in 2016, and Herpetological Monographs had 156, while budget is 600 and 200, respectively. Also the clarification that Allen Press pays for production, but unneeded margin could influence potential use of color.

Mullin proposed four options for the use of color:

1. Publish everything that has some color element and that requires color, average 152 color plates per year, at a cost of \$61,000
2. Restrict color plates to systematics, amounting to 70 color plates, \$28,000 cost.
3. Habitat, image, map, any image where color rendition helps. 100 color plates, \$40,000 cost
4. Editor's discretion: Encourage grey scale and allow color where needed, cost is unpredictable.

HL charges authors \$450 per plate, but that varies; some authors are able to pay and others request waivers for costs (typically international students who are not members of society but want to publish with HL). Editor always encourages grey-scale tweaking.

Harvey added to the discussion that there is a concern for competition, that authors may go to Zootaxa or Journal of Herpetology because color printing is not an additional cost. After counting up new species reports (that require color plates), Harvey calculated an average cost of \$530 per year to allow authors to publish in color in *Monographs*. He further supports the editorial discretion with guidance on how to adjust color figures to grey-scale, as authors tend to use default images/figures rather than redrawing them.

The discussion then focused on why the page allotments aren't being met and if it is because fewer papers are being accepted for publication. Mullin stated that the number of papers being published in each issue of *Herpetologica* isn't changing, and submissions are slightly up; other factors are the unchanged rejection rate (~50%) and time available to compile papers to make up single issue of publishable material—not going to try to rush material into publication in order to bulk up issue. While *J Herp* is getting thicker, the average number of articles published in each issue of *Herpetologica* has remained the same.

**Motion** proposed by Steve Mullin to approve expenses for the journal that are consistent with the editors' discretion option for the use of color in both *Herpetologica* and *Herp Monographs*. Seconded by Michael Harvey.

Discussion on motion.

- Harvey—does this affect the amount of money available? --Green: there is sufficient money in budget if use of discretion, and grey scale, etc. Taylor: reminder that all online figures in color are free.

Discussion on types of images: full color, photographs (e.g., of animals); systematic papers have these complex graphs/cladograms with color intensities, many images/figures require color to interpret. Some color images are more compelling for use beyond scientific journal (media, textbooks).

Clarification on meeting protocol: Muths questioned whether committee chairs can vote —Green stated that yes, they are members of the board.

**Motion approved by unanimous vote.**

#### **8) *Herpetological Monographs* Editor's Report—Mike Harvey**

One of my goals is to move papers as quick as possible from submission to publication, and this is a big selling point; if a paper is submitted by June it will be published in same year, without loss of quality. We have moved to a rolling publication format, such that as soon as an article is ready it is published online.

A recent amendment to the Code of Zoological Nomenclature states that if you have online publication that introduces a new name, it needs to have ZooBank registration and an LSID (life science identification number). This requirement is being incorporated into the instructions to authors, which are constantly being updated to not hold papers up.

Addressing concerns about length: last year was shorter, at around 88 pp, and the number of titles fluctuates. This year is longer with 7 papers already approved.

Editor reports accepted.

### **9) Communication Secretary's Report –Wendy Palin (in absentia)**

Wendy Palin couldn't be here, has recruited grad students Rylee Murray, Dan Greenberg, and postdoc Amanda Kissel to help.

Discussion about visibility of posts: Business pages are getting harder for public to access, can these posts be sponsored to boost the post. Only 1% of followers can see the posts, unless they are “boosted” for a cost. Even with “tags” fewer people are able to see posts in feed due to business model. Instagram might be an alternative?

## **D. Committee Reports**

### **10) Symposium Committee Report—Mary White**

Nothing to report because there are few symposium proposals. Last year we had one that was jointly sponsored by all three societies; this year we had no symposium proposals. Multiple solicitations were sent out and new section on website, so it's not that people don't know.

Discussion on symposia—there are two trains of thought, one that meetings need them and that there could be a symposium on a specific topic each year, and the other that the meetings are already full enough without the need to add and organize additional content. Maybe symposia are a casualty of the compression of meeting to 4 days. Symposia with invited speakers bring in seasoned researchers, while those that allow wider participation bring in early career and students. This may present opportunity to collaborate across societies. Perhaps can be addressed at meeting management level: can create symposia by grouping allied papers and calling it a symposium.

- Green challenges all of us to propose a symposium.

### **11) Graduate Research Award Committee--Marty Crump**

Tim Mitchell is chair this year. Last year there were 20-21 participants, which was way too many, it was decided that each student write a one page summary rather than abstract which is reviewed by the committee. This year we only got 4 participants. There were 3 or 4 students that didn't read the update and submitted abstracts, so they couldn't compete. The reason for the change in process is that the award is meant to encourage students who are into the work, not those just starting out.

- Trauth: would it help if the amount of award were increased?—This is already really good (\$750 for top, runners up get \$250). Keeps our award at the top of the heap.
- Mauger: Anything over \$600 has to have a 1099 and be declared on taxes.
- Mullin: haven't left our place at top of heap in terms of awards that we give out. We don't give out travel awards.
- Patterson: Students don't have to declare the award if it pays directly for expenses. Travel awards are reimbursement. Is there an alternative way to give the award, through reimbursement? Students sometimes get multiple awards and that bumps them over the amount, and it might be hard to track for tax purposes.

## **12) Williams Award Committee—Ann Paterson**

Based on feedback from the morphology/systematics judges, we have changed the categories for 2018. Physiology is now “physiology/functional morphology” and morphology/systematics is now “diversity/evolution”. We hope that this will better reflect the applications within each category.

Two points of concern:

1. More and more graduate students are volunteering to judge. Their participation and engagement is valued, but --
  - a) they might not have enough experience to do good review. Have tried to balance this by putting one grad student in each judging group with two experienced judges
  - b) it's increasingly challenging to keep track of interrelationships between applicants, students, and judges to avoid conflict of interest
2. There are too many judges that are not providing enough feedback. Need to develop additional measures to push judges to provide feedback.
  - Harvey: are judges given a form? —Paterson: They are given spreadsheet/excel file; maybe try a form that requires score and comment; might also keep track of judges who do provide good feedback and assign at least one to each proposal. Torn between making things fair and transparent, want to avoid concerns about non-random assignment of judges.
  - Muths: students should not be involved in judging. --There might be other ways to include them, maybe senior-most students and evaluate their expertise.
  - Paterson: Get a lot of student's wanting to judge, especially those who have won the previous year. Don't want them judging in a category that they might then submit a proposal for. It might be a good idea to exclude the grad students from judging. Used to be very few and it wasn't an issue, now the majority of people who volunteer to judge are students, need more senior experienced judges. Also don't know the qualification of the volunteers, only that they are HL members, and can check against membership list for students.
  - Mauger: questionnaire to find out who the judges are? --Paterson: maybe work with Christi (Classi) to develop email blast to get volunteers with a form that asks for HL member, student, etc to build picture of volunteer, but don't want to set up barriers to the process of judging.

- Spencer: how many judges? Patterson: 3 scores per proposal. Could have 3 judges per category, the problem is the need for feedback, if there are 81 proposals, it's burden to provide detailed feedback. Muths: can there be 3 senior judges and 3 students who anonymously provide feedback?
- Paterson: Need more judges per category. In conservation category: 13 judges this year; could do 2 senior judges, and 3rd one could be senior student (without conflict of interest). The big benefit of applying is getting the feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- Muths: good problem for HL to have: getting a lot of submissions!
- Green: please provide suggestions to Ann

### **13) Jones-Lovich Award Committee Report—Carol Spencer**

Process: Five judges (same five judges every year since it started); Rob Lovitch is lead judge. Comments, google doc, scoring, and discussion between judges, and Rob has final decision based on the summaries.

\$1000 for someone working in the Southwest US on anything. This year 12 applicants, average is 12 (4-25 proposals) every judge reads every proposal.

Winner was: Clay Noss of UC Berkely on trophic cascades in exclosure experiments

### **14) Raymond D. Semlitsch Research Award—Michelle Boone (absent)**

Green: No report from Michelle (Boone), hope she will be there tomorrow to give the award. Have winner and plaque. There were 4 or 5 applicants. Last year there was no award, so I did what I do for Xmas and I made a coupon. New tradition--coupons?

### **15) Graduate Student Committee Report—Chelsea Clyde-Brockway**

Used to do FB page, now linked to twitter page, and these are posted on website, and it's all integrated. Interactions are up and can be monitored.

Calendar: 24 photos submitted last year. Calendars cost \$3.52 each to make, sell for \$10. Are also sold on website.

Student workshops: this year will be on peer review process organized by graduate committee.

Field trip: did a field trip in the swamps with state herpetologist. No field trip this year, it's not a meeting sponsored event so it has to be advertised as an external event.

### **16) Long Range Planning and Membership Committee—Dave Sever**

Only 3 members: Dave, Laurie & Renata, first meeting today at noon.

Last year's priorities were use of social media, color in publications, and increase in membership (esp getting professors to get students to join) (referred to table in report on membership and mode of publication).

Membership has dropped from 923 in 2002 to 594 in 2017. Student membership is 184, up from last year; students are a third of membership. Is it sustainable? Need to keep students as members as they become professional; 77% of students get online journal only. All societies are decreasing membership, but ours has dropped by nearly half.

We would like to increase membership. Some ideas: Research awards: should we have one large research award (\$5000); an undergraduate award; lowering student membership rates even lower.

Discussion on membership:

- Mullin: 2017 student membership total approaches where we were in 2002. Maybe able to anticipate that regular membership may rebound as well. Uptick may be due to various initiatives (awards) since 2010. Early career awards are critical (e.g., Semlitsch) as students transition. Rather than another student award, have a second type of early career?
- Green: a number of societies that have research excellence awards for graduating students (post docs). Part of reason for having such a prizes: students have to join, if it has enough cache students will want to join to have chance to win. We can promote “what we do”: We’re the deductive research society so promote that aspect with this big prize (5K), maybe based on caliber of PhD thesis? or other criteria. Maybe also offer 1 year membership on Board (Science Officer? Outreach committee?)—looks good on grants and CVs. So it’s worth joining in order to compete.
  - Mullin: how does that improve regular membership? Student membership is stable, but Regular membership continues decline. My suggestion --Rather than duplicate Semlitsch award, come up with another award that encourages post-student membership.
  - Green: this is “graduating” award, after graduation, pulls in good graduating students & post docs and keeps them. Over long run will increase cadre of recipients.
  - Trauth: how about \$2500? Two awards?
  - Sever: Rather than approve the award, have a motion to have a committee to study these ideas; challenges include comparing work from people working in different disciplines
  - White: HL graduate student award is either registered student or within 14 months, so there is overlap, maybe have a longer time frame, like within 2 years of graduation.

**ACTION:** Green appointed Chris Peterson to chair the committee on this new student award (by executive fiat)

- Sever: used to think that all herpetologists are members of all 3 societies. But not everyone is member of all 3. Why?—Financial; join one get the benefits of meetings; merge with other societies; discounts for multiple memberships forged across societies; journal access

- Savitsky: how many members persist? Study tracked all members from year 1 to present, initial members are life time, but recent new members don't persist, they join to compete for awards. Question as to how many unique members? Are we recruiting new members that don't persist long term?
- Green: Total number of people including fish people is ~6000 bodies at JMIH, but 7200 memberships. HL has the most multiple members, hardly any HL members are not members of another society. Could wipe out HL and wouldn't lose much.
  - Actual numbers: AES 373, SSAR 2761, HL 602, ASIH 1721, Total 5457 memberships; 1210 (22%) duplicate memberships.
- Savitsky: Signature aspects of HL—high quality journal and awards—how do we continue to deliver those products to herp community if we are not our own unique membership society? What other deal can be struck that allow those products to continue beyond the organization?
- Green: economy of scale shared by all societies: Can we eliminate the extra 1200 to reduce the membership costs? We pay Christy Classi per person, we could lower the cost per person and to societies by having an integrated membership format. Only about 1/6<sup>th</sup> of members come to the meeting: JMIH meeting itself is not the main draw of membership.
- So what is the primary draw? –meeting, journal, choice of meetings to spend funds on?
  - Mauger: Not everyone can come to all the meetings. Lack of support, etc.
- White: What about offering a 5-year rate for graduating students to lock them in.
  - Mullin: used to have a lock rate, you buy a 3-year membership and don't have to pay again. Rather than compete with graduate award, big award could be doled out to several graduating students and the award is a 10-year membership (or some duration of time).
  - Muths: just because they're members, does that make them want to be involved?
  - Savitzky: regular memberships are subsidizing student rates. Assumes reason people are leaving is economic one. Delayed departure but doesn't keep them in the fold, and we need to keep them in the fold.
- Green: If graduating students want to stay in science, they are looking for advancement, so what gets people “points” towards tenure, promotion: papers, talks, awards, network, grants (e.g., Semlitsch Award). What we sell is the ability to meet with peers and collectively create more papers than individually. Can we promote that: join club, get more papers!
- HL is competing against more big prestigious societies, ESA, etc., and those societies have their own awards, maybe fewer. People aren't joining them to get the awards, much harder to get those awards because bigger pool. Don't think the awards is a solution to long term demographic problem.
- Muths: have box to tick for all levels of membership to go 3 years out. If we are going to lose these people anyway (students, young professionals), we get the money anyway. Also convenience factor.
- Part of reason that SSAR is doing so well, Kraig (Adler) is beating the bush out there, SSAR was the only international sponsor at the WCH, a lot of it is Kraig. HL doesn't

have one person that's out there. What they are good at is the revolving door, i.e., continually recruiting new members, even though they won't be persistent; even long term demographics is not sustainable.

- Ideas for involvement of students: students want to judge (but can't?), so we need a list of specific activities that can engage students. Have HL grad students mentor undergraduates (grant pre-submission review?); promote professional service by sending out solicitation to membership for roles in committees.
- Societies offer different products: *J Herp* and *Herp Review* come bundled, *Herp Review* is much more entertaining with diversity of articles. What makes HL stand out?
- Spencer: How to promote collaborations for big grants, multiple institutions, filling gaps in expertise, not just for students but everyone. Lightning talks, project marketplace, other ideas?

**ACTION:** Mary White and Carol Spencer will work on developing this idea of building collaborative opportunities.

#### **17) Nominations committee—Erin Muths**

Full slate of nominations, plus people coming on by acclamation. Election happens in fall. Nominations can be accepted at Business Meeting as well.

#### **18) Distinguished Service to Herpetology Award Committee**

Pat Gregory submitted report with all the rules, and announcement and call for nominations. Consistent with everything discussed last year.

**MOTION** by Mary White to approve the Distinguished Service to Herpetology Award, seconded.

Discussion:

- Mullin: amendment needed to identify the individual and email contact of the chair.

**Motion approved by unanimous vote.**

**ACTION:** This motion needs to be ratified by membership at the HL Business Meeting

#### **E. Joint and External Committee Reports**

##### **19) Meeting Management and Planning Committee—David Green**

Mistake in report: AES is here in Austin, but will not be participating in Rochester, but the Canadian Herpetological Society will be participating in Rochester.

Sacramento 2019. One of the two planned hotels is raising the rate from \$142 to \$165, also preferred set up and take down team is not available; the budget for Sacramento is now not as expected. Choice: could approve to go, or alternative is Snowbird, Utah, which is offering more opportunities. Vote on Sacramento will be deferred. Convention Center in Sacramento is being renovated and won't be ready until 2020, so we could meet in Sacramento in 2020.

- Mullin: Need to know within 2 weeks for placeholder in Sept 2017 journal. Can be dropped from Sept. and placed in Dec. –Planning committee will meet this week.

2020: no site figured out for 2020, SSAR was going to meet at Ann Arbor separately, but they are now going to meet in Ann Arbor separately in 2021. Can decide whether to meet with SSAR or JMIH in 2020, that next year.

- Crump: World Congress is Jan 2020 in Jan, so if SSAR is in 2020 then that's 3 meetings, so SSAR shifted meeting to 2021.

Other items are daycare and code of conduct at JMIH, these are society-level issues and this committee doesn't make the policies.

#### **Ad hoc Committee Report on Child Care—Lisa hazard (absent)**

Report tabled, but Green identified the problem with day care is the liability. For HL to be involved we have to be absolutely sure about liability issues. K-state does not want to do it. ASIH is going alone this year, but HL wants to do it right. There's a desire to have it, but it has to be done right.

#### **20) Herpetology Education Committee—Theodora Pinou (absent)**

Report tabled.

#### **21) BioOne/AIBS—Al Savitzky (left to attend ASIH)**

Report tabled.

#### **22) Liaison—Al Savitzky**

Report tabled. Move last year from the Board of Governors of ASIH to implement economies of scale for memberships. They voted yes, HL also approved at business meeting, but since then no action. There will be meeting of Presidents of the Societies this week, Dave Sever will attend.

#### **23) Conservation Committee Report—Kim Lovich (absent)**

Report tabled.

#### **24) Allen Press Report—Taylor Fulton**

Several initiatives in 2016 on behalf of HL:

1. Signed new licensing agreement with Gale, an arm of Cengage that provides scholarly and academic content to libraries worldwide, increases content dissemination by 5000 institutions (colleges, universities, high schools, US military). As individual subscriptions continue to decline, license agreements increase dissemination and also revenue; expect to collect \$3000-5000 revenue per year from this agreement.
2. Large subscription marketing campaign. Research showed that market for domestic subscriptions in colleges & libraries is saturated in US and Canada, so partnered with Thompson-Reuters and purchased list of 15,000 herpetology professionals in Latin America and Asia,

offered free 90-day online trial with goal of increasing subscription & membership, result is at least 3 new institutional subscriptions.

3. Journal website audit, went through each page and cleaned it up, easy to navigate.

Accomplishments:

- Impact factor increased for both journals: *Herpetologica* is at 1.333, while *Herp Monographs* is still No. 1 among herp journals at 2.500.
- No major delays in production schedules except for “bottleneck” delay in 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, working on improving that.
- Journal finances revenue is up slightly; revenue has been decreasing as subscriptions decline. Net return of HL is up 8%, which is highest in 5 years. Net is royalty and guaranteed payment deducted from membership fees issued each quarter.

Publishing contract is up soon so we are working on that, hopefully to be negotiated and finalized at next meeting.

Brief description of publishing agreement (see packet in BOT Report for more detail):

Allen Press has journal management arrangement with HL (alone among the JMIH societies); HL gets dedicated publisher (Peter Burns), staff accountant, publishing specialist, marketing specialist, managing editor, and support team (these roles are outlined in report).

- Allen Press pays expenses of journal, collects revenues, pays society a guaranteed payment and 20% royalty based on revenue performance. Oversees services, financial management, rights & licensing, sales & marketing, publication administration.
- HL’s responsibility is editorial content, editorial decision-making, and membership (marketing, administration).
- Joint concerns: memberships and things that affect journal performance, crisis management, financial risk

Allen Press raises subscription prices 3-5% each year, but does competitive analysis to see where the other journals are, but society has input to major decisions.

Peter Burns will be our new editor at Allen Press: Likes setting goals and working on strategies for journals with societies, so do get in touch.

**F. New business.**

Spencer: who do we contact if we want to post something to website –Wendy Palin.

**Meeting adjourned by Green at 17:39.**

Minutes prepared by RPlatenberg