

The Newsletter of the

Herpetologist's League

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1996 HL ANNUAL MEETING: 13-19 JUNE IN NEW ORLEANS

Can't you already smell the boiled crawfish, the shrimp gumbo, the etouffé. Those HL members with discriminating palates are delighted with this year's choice of venue for HL's Annual Meeting (our 44th!). In addition to the superb cuisine, you can anticipate warm (= hot) temperatures, warm (= friendly) conversation, and, occasionally warm (= heated) discussions of the latest data concerning your favorite herpetological subject. Don't be left out in the cold! In case you've somehow missed all previous attempts to notify you, you can get more information from the ASIH, AES, HL Local Committee [yes, we're meeting with the ichthyo-types again], UNO Conference Services, Metropolitan College, University of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana 70148.

ELECTION RESULTS

Thanks to all who voted in the last HL elections (ballots were included in the last issue of **Communications**). The results were:

Vice President (1996-1997): Joe Mitchell
(automatically becoming President for 1998-1999)

Members of the Executive Council, Class of 1999:

GRAD SCHOOL NEWS...

Evolutionary Biology at the University of Texas at Austin: Featuring the Laboratory of David M. Hillis.

The University of Texas at Austin has a long history of excellence in herpetology, starting with the pioneering work of the late W. Frank Blair. Although Frank Blair was a noted herpetologist, he started his biological career working with mammals before he saw the light, and he always had a broad focus in organismal biology. In this same spirit, the University of Texas has always attracted individuals with broad interests in evolutionary biology. For one reason or another, many of these individuals have had or continue to have at least a partial research focus on amphibians and reptiles. Current faculty in the Department of Zoology with expertise in herpetology include DAVID BEGUN (empirical population genetics), JIM BULL (sex determination), DAVID CANNATELLA (functional and comparative morphology), DAVID CREWS (reproductive physiology), ROBERT DUDLEY (functional morphology), DAVID HILLIS (molecular evolution and systematics), MARK KIRKPATRICK (theoretical herpetology), ERIC PIANKA (community ecology), and MIKE RYAN (behavioral ecology). This report focuses only on the lab of David Hillis, however, because he has the highest batting average among faculty on the University of Texas Department of Zoology softball team (as well as holding the all-time record for broken bones per

Miriam Benabib
Barbara A. Savitzky
Raymond D. Semlitsch

The Herpetologists' League extends its gratitude to all of the candidates for their willingness to serve!

HL WEB SITE

HL, under the guidance of John Iverson, has created a World Wide Web site. The Society recently gained Jerod Clabaugh, a student at UCLA, to serve as the site's new Webmaster. John and Jerod have given the site a new face-lift.

Please access the HL home page on the web at:

<http://www.inhs.uiuc.edu/cbd/HL/HL.html>.

Please let us know what you think by filling out the web survey during your visit

Committee for the National Institute for the Environment - Report from the HL Liaison Legislation to establish a National Institute for the Environment (NIE) was introduced on 21 December 1995 by Rep. Jim Saxton (R-NJ), Chair of the House Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Wildlife, and Oceans. The primary purpose of the proposed NIE is to improve the scientific basis for environmental decision-making. HL signed on as a supporting professional society three years ago. Twenty members of both sides of the House have signed on to the bill (H.R. 2827) as co-sponsors. The NIE would be a neutral, non-regulatory governmental institute. Programs would include a competitive, peer-reviewed grants program, environmental assessment, communication of scientific information, and education/training. A National Library for the Environment would be a part of the NIE.

You may wish to contact your representative to Congress regarding cosponsorship of H.R. 2827 (The Sound Science for the Environment Act).

game played).

At present, Hillis' group includes three post-docs and seven graduate students (several of whom are coadvised by Jim Bull or David Cannatella), which by complete coincidence is just about enough to field a decent softball team. Three additional graduate students finished their Ph.D.'s in the lab in the past year: PAUL CHIPPINDALE (currently on the faculty at the University of Texas at Arlington) studied the systematics and biogeography of the perrenibranchiate salamanders of the Edwards Plateau in central Texas using a variety of molecular systematic techniques (and described a new species of salamander endemic to an Austin swimming pool); JOHN HUELSENBECK (currently a Miller Post-doc at the University of California at Berkeley) worked on molecular models of DNA substitution and evaluated alternative methods of phylogenetic analysis; and JOHN WIENS (currently a curator of herpetology at the Carnegie Museum) investigated the phylogeny of *Sceloporus* and evaluated and developed methods for analyzing polymorphic morphological characters.

The three current post-docs in the lab include two who are working with amphibians. JOSEPH BERNARDO is studying the genetic population structure and systematics of *Desmognathus* and other plethodontids in the southern Appalachian Mountains. He claims they look beautiful and diverse to him, but to everyone else in the lab they just look like plain-old dusky salamanders (although the patterns of genetic variation are quite attractive). Joe has accepted a position on the faculty of Drexel University beginning in Fall 1996, and his departure will leave a huge void in the lab. ANNA GRAYBEAL is continuing her molecular studies of *Bufo* and is developing a study involving modeling of evolutionary history in her spare time, she is working out the phylogeny of *Anura* and continuing her training for the U.S. swim team. Anna has accepted a position at the Field Museum

For more information, contact
Committee for the NIE, 1725 K Street
NW, Suite 212, Washington, DC
20006-1401. Voice mail: 202-628-4303,
FAX: 202-628-4311, e-mail:
cnie@cnie.org, WWW:
http://www.cnie.org

--Joseph C. Mitchell, Liaison to the
CIE

Herpeto-trivia:

An article in a recent issue of
Herpetologica reports that tadpoles of the
coronated treefrog apparently solicit
feedings from their mother (see Jungfer,
K-H, **Herpetologica** 52:25-32, 1996).

NEW ADDRESS FOR HL SECRETARY

Maureen Donnelly has officially taken
over the position of HL secretary.
Correspondance concerning membership,
society activities, and related matters
should be addressed to her at: College of
Arts and Sciences, Florida International
University, North Miami, FL 33181;
e-mail donnelly@servms.fiu.edu.

Note: checks for dues and subscriptions,
inquiries about missing issues of the
society's journals and changes of address
should be sent to the Treasurer (Rebecca
Pyles: Dept. of Biological Sciences, Box
70726, East Tennessee State University,
Johnson City, TN 37614-0726; e-mail:
pylesR@etsuserv.east-tenn-st.edu).

More Herpeto-trivia: A study in a recent
issue of **Herpetologica** reported an
estimated density of brown water snakes to
be 43 snakes per linear km of river habitat
for a South Carolina population; that's
about one individual for every 50-m stretch
of river habitat. (see MS Mills, CJ Hudson
and HJ Berna, **Herpetologica** 51:412-423,
1995).

of Natural History in Chicago beginning
in 1997. The third postdoc, KEITH
CRANDALL, has not yet received the
calling to work on herps (he studies
crayfishes), but he has developed some
new methods for evaluating reticulation
events and has started applying these
methods to a variety of systems for the
analysis of hybridization events. He also
studies the molecular evolution of visual
pigments in blind cave organisms. Keith
will begin his new job on the faculty of
Brigham Young University in Mid-1996,
where he will reap the benefits of his
recent Young Investigator Award in
Studies of Molecular Evolution from the
Alfred Sloan Foundation.

Of the seven graduate students in the
lab, four work on herpetologically-related
topics. The other three (MATT BRAUER,
WAYNE CRILL, and SHARON
MESSENGER) are working on molecular
evolutionary problems with other
organisms (although we have hope for
them yet --- especially Wayne, who is a
closet herper). Among the
herpetologically-enabled students, JIM
MCGUIRE (also known as "Ringleader")
is studying the systematics and functional
morphology of the "flying dragons," genus
Draco. Specifically, he is evaluating the
phylogeny of this group and studying the
comparative morphology of gliding. He
also doesn't seem to mind traveling around
southeast Asia or the South Pacific
collecting and observing *Draco* and other
reptiles and amphibians. BARBARA
MABLE's dissertation work focuses on
the evolution of polyploidy in frogs,
especially in the Australian myobatrachids
and in the *Hyla versicolor* complex. Barb
plans to finish her Ph.D. this spring and
will then start a post-doc in the lab of
Sally Otto at the University of British
Columbia (she's Canadian, so she is
actually looking forward to going back to
winters). STEVE POE is working to build
a better anole phylogeny, so that the world
will beat a path to his door. He hopes to
deal with the issue of analyzing a huge
group where all the species look virtually

**- CONFERENCES, CONVENTIONS,
CONCLAVES -**

**All Day Turtle Seminar Scheduled for
May!**

On Saturday, June 8, 9AM-5PM, The New York Turtle & Tortoise Society is pleased to announce its "6th Annual All-Day Scientific Seminar". There will be four speakers on turtle conservation and biology. The location is the HMDC Environmental Center, Lyndhurst, NJ, 20 minutes from NYC in the Hackensack Meadowlands near Giant Stadium. Breakfast and lunch will be included in the entry fee. Call 212-459-4803 for further details and to make reservations.

**4th Latin American Congress of
Herpetology**

The fourth Latin American Congress of Herpetology (4th CLAH) will be held at the University of Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile, 14-20 October 1996. The official languages of the 4th CLAH will be Portuguese and Spanish. However, English and other languages will be accepted in workshops and poster presentations, but they need to have an abstract in one of the official languages. Deadline for Abstracts is 30 May 1996. For registrations and additional information please contact Dr. Alberto Veloso, Depto. de Ciencias Ecologicas, Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de Chile. Casilla 653, Santiago, Chile, e-mail: veloso@abello.dic.uchile.cl. For registration within the US and Canada please contact: Rafael de Si, Dept. Biology, University of Richmond, Richmond, VA 23173, e-mail: desa@urvax.urich.edu.

the same. MARK HOLDER is the most recent addition to the lab and is currently working on the phylogeny of the genus *Physalaemus*. However, we expect that he will develop another project for his dissertation; after all, who besides Mike Ryan could study *Physalaemus* throughout an entire graduate career ?

No one is really sure about the focus of David Hillis' own research program these days. He seems to spend a lot of his time working on the computer, where he claims to be developing and evaluating methods of phylogenetic analysis. His recent empirical work has focused on creating new life forms (why does he think the world needs some new species of viruses ?), studying the phylogeny of groups that no one has ever heard of, examining arcane processes of molecular evolution (what, if anything, is concerted evolution ?), and regressing into a childhood passion for crayfishes. He continues to seek out strange new salamanders and go boldly where no one who has broken most of the ones in his body has ever gone before. His latest idea is to try to extract DNA from rocks. Confidentially, we think he's gone off the deep end.

The editor notes that Anna Graybeal has apparently been choosing the career path that maximizes her number of appearances in feature articles in **Communications**.

- ANNOUNCEMENTS -

**Carnegie Museum of Natural History
Collection Study Grants in Herpetology**

The Carnegie Museum of Natural History is pleased to announce a new grant to support herpetological research by graduate students and foreign scientists. The grant is intended to defray costs of transportation and lodging associated with visiting and using the collection. The Carnegie's herpetological collection contains more than 194,000 preserved specimens, including one of the largest collections of turtles and extensive

Animal Behavior Society Annual Meeting

The Animal Behavior Society's annual meeting will be 3-8 August 1996 at the University of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff. For information, please contact: Dr. Con Slobodchikoff, Department of Biology, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ 86011, USA; e-mail: con.slobodchikoff@nau.edu.

Symposium: Global Genetic Resources

"Global genetic resources: Access, ownership and intellectual property rights" will be the topic of the 1996 Beltsville Symposium, which will be held 19-22 May at the Beltsville, MD Agricultural Research Center. About 400 scientists worldwide will explore issues related to ownership of and access to genetic resources and biological specimens around the world. Access to genetic resources affects the ability of scientists to do their job of providing knowledge to benefit the people of the world. While scientists desire free international distribution of germplasm specimens and scientific information, current forces and trends are leading away from this position. A mutually beneficial compromise is needed. This meeting will explore these possibilities. USDA's Agriculture Research Service and the Association of Systematics Collections will jointly sponsor the 1996 Symposium and a 2-day, presymposium-workshop on public affairs advocacy. Contact Virginia Hupfner, Symposium Secretary, Phone: 301-504-6108, FAX: 301-504-6357, e-mail: mbohning@ars-grin.gov.

holdings from the West Indies, Mexico, South America, Spain, Africa, India, and the Philippines. Applicants should send the following, in duplicate: (1) a description of the proposed research (including its significance and the justification for visiting the Carnegie), not to exceed two pages, (2) literature cited, (3) budget, and (4) CV. Students should also arrange for two letters of recommendation to be sent. Awards will be made twice a year. Deadlines for application materials are 15 April and 15 November. Send applications to Collection Study Grants in Herpetology, Section of Amphibians and Reptiles, Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-4080, and for more information contact John Wiens (e-mail: weinsj@clpgh.org; phone: 412-622-5520; Fax: 412-622-8837).

Assoc. Systematics Collections - New Address

ASC has recently moved. Please note the following new address: The Association of Systematics Collections, 1725 K Street NW, Suite 601, Washington, D.C. 20006-1401; phone: 202-835-9050; FAX 202-835-7334; e-mail: asc@asc.org; www: <http://www.ascoll.org/>. ASC is an association of North American institutions that house systematics collections. ASC exists to promote systematics collections, the institutions responsible for them, and the biosystematics community for which they are an essential resource. ASC works toward these goals by providing representation to governmental agencies and...

HL MEMBERS - HELP SPREAD THE WORD!

SPECIAL OFFER TO ALL NEW MEMBERS OF THE HERPETOLOGISTS' LEAGUE

Any NEW MEMBER of The Herpetologists' League for the single year 1996 (\$20 for students, \$50 for non-students, etc.) will also receive their choice of:

- 1) all four 1995 issues of **Herpetologica** (Vol. 51), **or**
- 2) the 1988-1990 and 1995 **Herpetological Monographs** (vols. 2, 3, 4, & 9)

- OR BETTER YET -

Any NEW MEMBER joining The Herpetologists' League for the two years 1996 and 1997 (\$40 for students, \$100 for nonstudents, etc) will also receive **BOTH** of the above bonuses!

APPLICATION: SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW MEMBERS ONLY

* Application must be submitted from Oct. 1 1995 - June 1 1996

See the [Membership](#) application for details

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