

# Division of Vertebrate Morphology (DVM): 2004 Spring Newsletter

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## Message from the Chair

*Frank Fish*



*And gentleman in England now a-bed  
Shall think themselves accurs'd they were  
not here,  
William Shakespeare (King Henry V)*

There is a lot I can say about the SICB meeting in New Orleans and it's all good. I have never seen a higher level of science than what was presented in New Orleans. The biggest problem at the meeting was trying to decide which competing talks to go to see. The hotel had an excellent location, being only a few blocks from Bourbon Street, the Mississippi River, and the Audubon Aquarium. Of course, dinner was a major undertaking, as there were so many extraordinary restaurants to choose from. To make things even more fun, SICB hired a band to entertain everyone. Being New Orleans you have to have music. The band was truly appreciated by the students. If you didn't attend, then you missed a meeting that was really special. However, you can make up for this past sin by being sure to prepare for next year's meeting in San Diego.

The students performed marvelously in New Orleans, making highly professional presentations. This made the job of the Davis Award Committee even more difficult, when you consider that they had to judge over 40

oral and poster presentations. Indeed by the end of the meeting, the committee had tied on the winner of the Davis Award. So this year there are two co-winners of the Davis Award (see photos in secretary's report). The winners are Jill A. Holliday (Florida State University) for her presentation "*Character evolution in carnivora: specialization, stasis, and directional bias*" and Tobias Landberg (University of Massachusetts) for his presentation "*Aquatic escape performance through ontogeny and metamorphosis of spotted salamanders, Ambystoma maculatum.*" The winner of the DVM Poster Award was Julia C. Schaum (James Madison University) for her poster "*Hindlimb kinematics during bipedalism in Propithecus verreauxi.*" Also acknowledged is Robert Levine for Honorable Mention for his presentation "*Contribution of eye retraction to swallowing performance in the Northern leopard frog, Rana pipiens.*" I would like to thank Rick Blob (Clemson University), chair, Miriam Ashley-Ross (Wake Forest University), Lance McBrayer (Stephen F. Austin St. University), Matt McHenry (Harvard University), Natalia Rybczynski (Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa) for their fine work as the Davis Award Committee.

Although the DVM did not sponsor a regular symposium this year, a mini-symposium to honor Marvalee Wake was organized by Kurt Schwenk and Wyatt Korff. Marvalee is entering a new phase of her career. Her accomplishments and influence in the field of vertebrate morphology were being celebrated. Marvalee has been a driving force in science, SICB and particularly the DVM. We all wish her well in her new endeavors.

At the business meeting in New Orleans, a number of issues were brought up. Some of the venues for future meetings have been scheduled. We will meet in San Diego in 2005, Orlando in 2006 and San Antonio in 2008. 2007 has not been booked at this time and there is some consideration that SICB may meet in Mexico. The issue of changing the length of oral presentations was discussed. For the present time, it looks like talks will still be 20 minutes in length, although this may have to change if the SICB continues to grow. Presently, only the length of symposium talks will change to 30 minutes from 40 minutes. Melina Hale (University of Chicago) has been appointed to the Editorial Board for Integrative and Comparative Biology. Any concerns about the journal should be forwarded to her. Audrone Biknevičius (Ohio University) has agreed to remain as DVM secretary, for which I am very thankful as she has continued to maintain order in the DVM and kept me focused. Bret Tobalske (University of Oregon) has now officially stepped down as division Program Officer. Bret was instrumental in helping to schedule the mini-symposium for Marvalee Wake with a very little notice. John Bertram (Florida State University) has now come on board as the DVM Program Officer.

An important function of the DVM is to support additional meetings for presentation of ideas in vertebrate morphology. Two regional meetings were planned in 2003. The Southeast regional meeting at James Madison University went off well, but the Northeast regional meeting at SUNY at Stony Brook unfortunately did not come to fruition. Despite any set-backs, these meetings are important and provide a venue for students, who cannot afford to come to the national meeting or who use it to develop their ideas. Please think about organizing a regional meeting. The DVM has funds to help in this endeavor. One meeting sure to provide a lot of interest is the International Congress of Vertebrate Morphologists (ICVM-7) scheduled this summer in Boca Raton, Florida. I suggest everyone make an effort to come as the strength of the schedule of this meeting makes it one not to miss.

I would like to ask that people provide information on websites of interest to morphologists. As more and more information accumulates on the world-wide web, it becomes harder and more time consuming to find useful information. There is a wealth of free software downloads, information on new equipment, teaching sites, and images that can be accessed. If you come across websites of interest, forward a brief description and web address to Audrone, who can include the information in the newsletter.

Lastly, be prepared to vote for the new DVM Chair-elect. The election will be an epic contest between two titans in the field of vertebrate morphology. We have our candidates Kiisa Nishikawa (Northern Arizona University) and Kurt Schwenk (University of Connecticut). Be sure that no one will be speaking with a forked tongue and that this will be a fair and balanced election without the need for a recount in Florida. I wish to

thank the selection committee of Peter Wainwright (University California at Davis), Miriam Ashley–Ross (Wake Forest University), and John Long (Vassar College) for getting two outstanding candidates.

I hope that things continue to go swimmingly for you and your research.

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### **Message from the (Novice) Program Officer**

*John Bertram*



First, thank you to those who had faith enough in me (or bore a large enough grudge) to elect me to this position. I hope I can carry on the work that has been done so well over the last couple of years by Bret Tobalske. My thanks certainly go out to him for leaving the DVM program for San Diego in such good repair.

The San Diego meeting may seem a rather distant concept at this point, but it is certainly time to begin thinking about making room in your schedule and planning your participation. I was particularly impressed with the poster sessions at the New Orleans meeting. They were extremely well attended and there was a great deal of interesting exchange between the presenters and the crowds filing past. Personally, this was by far my most enjoyable poster experience. Keep this in mind as you consider whether you would prefer to present your work as a poster or platform presentation.

DVM is co–sponsoring three symposia this year; a society–wide symposium organized by Nigel Hughes and David Jacobs, "*Terminal addition, segmentation, and the evolution of Metazoan body plan regionalization*"; a symposium organized by Robert Dudley and Douglas Altshuler, "*Adaptations for life at high elevations*"; and a symposium organized by Moya Smith, "*Evolution and development of vertebrate dentition*". As always, we

would entertain suggestions for more great symposia as meetings are planned for upcoming years. Having done this in the past, I highly recommend initiating the process well in advance.

If you recall, in New Orleans a new and controversial scheduling plan was being discussed. The suggestion was made that the platform presentations be shortened to 15 and the symposium presentations to 30 minutes. The purpose for these changes was to allow for increased numbers of symposia while maintaining congruence between the timing of symposia and regular sessions. My perception was (1) that there was a groundswell of resistance to shortening the regular platform sessions and (2) that there was no particular need to keep the regular and symposium sessions in absolute congruence if other factors dictate. Although the final program for San Diego has not been set, I would claim that the program staff has responded well to the Society's membership. The current plan is to maintain the 20-minute platform presentations while shortening the symposia presentations to 30 minutes. Now, before too many objections are sounded and alternative plans presented, please keep in mind that maximizing program satisfaction with such diverse individuals and divisions will always necessitate some compromises. Also, realize that the program drives like a supertanker – adjustments cannot be made at the last minute and any adjustments that are made have their effect one or two meetings in the future.

I sincerely hope your research goes well this spring and summer. I look forward to seeing you all in San Diego. Lets all hope our protocols are approved, our grants are funded and we all catch our own errors before they appear in print!

Cheers, John

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## Message from the Secretary and Candidates for Election

*Audrone Biknevičius*

1. **7th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology.** The 7th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology will held on 27 July – 1 August 2003 at Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida, USA. Please visit the ICVM-7 web site for registration, travel and housing updates: <http://www.iconferences.org/icvm7/>.

2. **2004 SICB–DVM Student Awards.** As noted above in the chair's report, we were treated to outstanding student presentations (oral and poster) at the 2004 SICB meetings. Please join me in cheering on this year's awardees:



Jill A. Holliday  
Florida State University

Tobias Landberg  
University of Massachusetts

Julie C. Schaum  
James Madison University

(Tobias requests that we acknowledge the co-author of his study: "Manny Azizi is a fellow graduate student, a friend and a mentor. Without him, this study would not have been possible.")

### 3. SICB–DVM ELECTIONS FOR DIVISION CHAIR

(Candidates listed alphabetically) SICB–DVM will be holding elections for a new divisional chair–elect this spring. Below are our two candidates. You will be contacted in a future e–mail from the society office to submit your vote.

#### **Kiisa Nishikawa**



**Current Position:** Regentsâ€™ Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, Northern Arizona University, <http://www2.nau.edu/~kiisa/>

**Education:** 1980, B. S. Biology (Magna cum laude), State University of New York, Albany, NY. 1985, Ph. D. Zoology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

**Professional Experience:** 1985, Postdoctoral Fellow, Dept. of Anatomy, Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada. 1985–87 Miller Fellow, Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, CA. 1987–89 Assistant Professor, Dept. of Biological Sciences, University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY. 1989 Visiting Professor, University of Bremen, Germany. 1990 Visiting Professor, Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes, Germany. 1997 Visiting Associate Professor, Dept. of Physiology, Univ. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. 1998 Visiting Associate Professor, Department of Zoology, Duke University, Durham, NC

**Awards and Honors** 1985, Miller Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of California, Berkeley, CA. 1993, Burlington Resources Foundation Faculty Achievement Award for Scholarly Research, NAU. 1996, Presidentâ€™s Faculty Award, Northern Arizona University. 1997, Honorable Mention, Presidentâ€™s Award for Cultural Diversity, NAU. 1998, Excellence in Teaching Award, Alumni Association, State University of New York, Albany.

**SICB Activities:** 1989, Judge, Best Student Paper Competition, Comparative Biochemistry & Physiology, American Society of Zoology (ASZ). 1990, Chair, Best Student Paper Committee, Division of Vertebrate Morphology, ASZ. 1992–93, Member, Membership Committee, American Society of Zoologists. 1992–94, Member, Program Committee, IVth International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology. 1995, Member, Best Student Paper Committee, Division of Vertebrate Morphology, ASZ. 1995–98, Secretary, Division of Neurobiology, Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology. 2002, Member, Nominating Committee, Division of Vertebrate Morphology, SICB.

**Other Memberships:** American Society of Ichthyologists & Herpetologists (ASIH), International Society of Vertebrate Morphologists, International Society for Neuroethology, The J.B. Johnston Club (JBJC), Organization for Tropical Studies (OTS), Sigma Xi, Society for Neuroscience (SN) **Research Interests:** Neuromuscular control of ballistic movement; mechanisms of power amplification in ballistic movement; functional morphology of feeding in vertebrates; evolution of brain and behavior.

**Statement of Goals:** My goals would be: 1) to maintain/increase membership in the DVM, and work to increase minority participation at all levels; 2) to promote the importance of vertebrate morphology in contemporary and interdisciplinary research; 3) to maintain/expand regional meetings of the DVM; and 4) to work with the SICB to ensure continued support for regional meetings, symposia and other DVM events.

## Kurt Schwenk



**Current Position:** Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Connecticut; <http://www.eeb.uconn.edu/faculty/schwenk/schwenk.htm>

**Education:** Ph.D. 1984: University of California, Berkeley; B.A. 1977: Oberlin College.

**Professional Experience:** Present: Professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Univ. of Connecticut; Curator of Mammalogy, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Research Collections; Associate of Zoology, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University; 1995–2001: Associate Professor, EEB, UConn; 1989–1995: Assistant Professor, EEB, UConn; 1989: Lecturer on Biology, Dept. of Organismic and

Evolutionary Biology, Harvard University; 1987–1989: NIH Postdoctoral Fellow, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University; 1986–1987; Instructor in Anatomy, Dept. of Oral Anatomy, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago School of Dentistry; 1984–1987: Postdoctoral Research Associate, Dept. of Oral Anatomy, Univ. of Illinois at Chicago School of Dentistry; 1976–1977: Zookeeper, Depts. of Herpetology and Mammalogy, Bronx Zoo.

**Awards and Honors:** 1976: Sigma Xi, elected member; 1977: graduation with High Honors in Biology; 1982–1983: University of California Regents Fellow; 1984: Honorable Mention, Stoye Award for best student paper, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists; 1987–1989: NIH National Research Service Award; 1990: Associate of Zoology, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University; 1993: Keynote speaker, Univ. of Leiden, The Netherlands; 1995–2002: NSF advisory panels, Doctoral Dissertation and Ecological & Evolutionary Physiology Programs; 1998: Phi Kappa Phi, elected member; 2000: plenary lecture, International Congress of Zoology, Athens, Greece.

**SICB Activities:** 1986–present: Chair, contributed paper sessions, DVM; 1988 and 1996: Chair, D. Dwight Davis Award Committee, DVM; 1989: Nominating Committee, DVM; 1993–1994: Editorial Committee, 4th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology; 1999–2000: Program Officer, DVM; 2001–2002: Nominating Committee, SICB; 2002–2004: Scientific Program Committee, 7th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology; 2004–2006: Associate Editor, *Evolution*.

**Other Memberships:** American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists; International Society of Vertebrate Morphology; Sigma Xi; Society of Systematic Biologists; Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles.

**Research Interests:** Evolutionary and functional morphology of tetrapod feeding systems; evolutionary and functional morphology of squamate chemosensory systems; comparative anatomy of the tongue; phenotypic evolution, especially in functionally integrated, complex systems; evolutionary constraint.

**Statement of Goals:** As Division chair, I promise to remain amusing, no matter how ineffectual. Beyond this, my central goal will be to retain the strength, vitality and centrality of DVM within SICB and in the arena of comparative biology. I see a potential threat in future fragmentation of DVM as additional divisions are created to accommodate niche interests, such as evo–devo. While obviously an asset to the Society and of tremendous interest to DVM members, such new divisions could result in a realignment of memberships and alliances within the Society, with a concomitant loss of member participation and devotion to DVM (attendance at the DVM business meeting in New Orleans, for example, was shockingly poor). I would therefore work with division members to re–define our vision of ourselves and to re–affirm the empirical and conceptual centrality of morphology to diverse disciplines. I would advocate a position of inclusiveness so that niche interests feel they are best served within the division. One strategy is to solidify and extend practices that attract and support student participation in the division and at the meetings – something DVM already does well. We could then bend student wills to ours, molding them like putty, instilling in them an undying allegiance to DVM... Sorry – got carried away. Nonetheless, I feel passionately that vertebrate morphology is more vital, more exciting and more central than ever before – anyone who attends the meetings knows this to be true. But by virtue of DVM's integrative nature, the diversity of our interests tends to pull us in different directions. I see this diversity as a core strength of DVM, but it could become a source of divisiveness if we are not pro–active. I would therefore work inside and outside the society to strengthen the perception of morphology as both relevant and timely across a wide variety of disciplines. I would also work to avoid run–on sentences in future DVM blurbs.