



Division of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology (DSEB): 2007 Spring Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

Don Swiderski

Many thanks to our out-going secretary and program officer, Pat Reynolds and Michelle Nishiguchi for jobs well done, and welcome aboard their respective replacements, Marta deMaintenon and Rachel Collin. Pat has been especially helpful in getting our by-laws and elections in order. Nish has done a fine job ensuring our division is well represented and well served by the symposia presented at the meeting; we can look forward to seeing more of that work bear fruit in San Antonio. Thanks also to Ted Garland for his presentation on independent contrasts and related methods in this years Phylogenetics for Dummies.

Once again our students represented us well at the meeting. I especially want to congratulate the three students who gave outstanding presentations that earned best student awards from our division:

Poster (tie):

M. Zhong (Auburn Univ.) *Phylogenetics analysis of Terebelliformia worms (Polychaeta, Annelida) based on mitochondrial genomes*

and

B. L. Banbury (Washington State Univ.) *Inferring ancestral function in morphologically redundant complex traits*

Talk:

E. C. Snell-Rood (Univ. Arizona) *Phenotypic plasticity and the origin of novel traits: butterflies modify behavior and morphology in response to a novel environment*

Unfortunately, I must now turn to a somewhat less cheerful topic. As you may have heard by now (especially from the Society President and Treasurer), this is something of a watershed year for the society as we are now in a position to plan ahead and proactively manage our expenses - especially those for the annual meeting. I'll leave it to those august individuals to discuss implications for the society as a whole. But as your representative on the executive committee, I ask you to carefully consider their evaluations and recommendations, and email to me your thoughts and suggestions on the directions that the society should be taking.

On a positive note, budget allocations to our division are not expected to change meaningfully. In part, this is because DSEB has been less extravagant than some. Consequently, we can continue to support symposia and Phylogenetics for Dummies to the level we have in the past, increase the student award to a more meaningful level, and still make a modest contribution to a joint social with other divisions. So on these matters, what we ask are your participation, and your suggestions for future topics.

Best wishes in the New Year,

Donald Swiderski

Message from the Program Officer

Rachel Collin

This year's SICB meeting in Phoenix was a great success. As usual there were many great student talks and posters, and it was a difficult job for us to choose the winners of this year's best student oral and poster presentations (see Don's message for the winners!). The DSEB division continues to promote and encourage students to participate in the meetings, and this award recognizes those young scholars who have demonstrated excellence in their research.

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It's hard to believe, but it's time to start thinking about the 2008 meeting in San Antonio. DSEB will be sponsoring two symposia: a society-wide symposium entitled "Evolution in the Classroom", and "Crustacean Phylogenetics". The Phylogenetics for Dummies workshop is still in the planning phase. There is a current call for half-day symposium for 2008. Please contact the SICB Program Officer Linda Walters (ljwalter@pegasus.cc.ucf.edu). Please have ready a title and a list of 7 speakers for 30 minute presentations in the AM or 4-5 speakers for 30 minute presentations in the PM. Shorter presentation slots are also possible.

The deadline for receipt of symposium proposals for 2009 Boston meeting is August 17, 2007. The divisions will discuss and decide on funding at the officers meeting in September, so please start developing your ideas and talking with your colleagues and program officer of your division. I have already heard one interesting idea for a symposium but DSEB has the funds to sponsor more than one symposium as well as Phylogenetics for Dummies. DSEB is interested in expanding this workshop to include comparative methods, or even focus on topics such as phylogeography. Again, ideas are welcome to any of the DSEB officers.

Message from the Secretary

Marta deMaintenon

Aloha! It was good to see everybody in Phoenix! I would first like to thank Pat Reynolds for the work he has done as secretary over the last several years, including staying on for an extra year and straightening up the by-laws! His efforts will make everybody's jobs much easier. Thanks also to Nish who has done a stellar job of organizing symposia and coordinating the best student paper awards. Finally, thanks go also to Mike Alfaro, who has volunteered to run for Program Officer elect starting next year.

The primary issue I need to mention, as in previous years, has to do with the DSEB web site; some research-related pictures would be a really great way to liven it up! So if anyone has anything they'd like to share, please forward it to me or any of the other officers.

And finally, please note we do have an election and a by-laws amendment to vote on, so don't forget to put in your two cents on those. Thank you!

Marta deMaintenon

Message from the Student-Postdoctoral Representative

Audrey Aronowsky

Greetings fellow DSEB students and post-docs!

First, I'd like to say a special thanks to all of the student workers at the annual meeting in Phoenix; the meeting would not have been possible without you. And to those of you who joined us in Phoenix, congratulations on a great decision! It was a fantastic meeting; fabulous presentations and posters, stimulating discussions, and the best coffee breaks and snacks in recent memory. From the Wednesday afternoon orientation session to the Saturday evening student-post-doc social, the annual meeting was informative, interesting, and fun. All of the events were well-attended; indeed, it was standing room only at the DSEB-sponsored Phylogenetics for Dummies workshop on tree-based statistics.

It's not too early to think about next year's meeting in San Antonio. DSEB has doubled the monetary award for best student presentation, so if you have original research that you plan to present, remember to enter the competition.

It's also time to think about ideas for the 2009 meeting in Boston. Each year SICB divisions sponsor symposia that are organized by graduate students and post-docs; you don't have to be a faculty member to suggest or organize a symposium. Organizing a symposium is a great experience; you can develop the symposium you have always wanted to attend, invite and meet the leading researchers in your field, and it looks great on a CV. So check the SICB website and consider submitting an idea.

If you have any questions regarding student/post-doc activities, please contact me. Good luck with your spring semester and your summer field work!

Minutes of the 2007 DSEB Business Meeting, 5 Jan. 2007, Phoenix

The meeting was opened by Don Swiderski with a brief intro, after which Dianna Padilla discussed some ongoing changes at NSF. Specifically, the NSF Division for Integrative Organismal Biology has morphed into Integrative Organismal Systems, to emphasize the idea of working to understand organisms as systems. There was a workshop during the Phoenix meeting to discuss the change.

Chair Don Swiderski then announced the 8th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology, which will be held this July in Paris. Abstracts and registration were due February 10.

Secretary Marta deMaintenon attended the Division Secretaries Meeting at noon on Jan 5 (after getting lost looking for the room). Most of the discussion at the meeting was about the changing template of the SICB web site, and ideas for getting more interesting items in the divisional web sites. The general upshot is that there's a bunch of stuff the division can put up, depending on what people want. Photos and research blurbs, or synopses of student award winners, would be especially informative.

Chair Don Swiderski opened a discussion of amending the by-laws to make the DSEB Program Officer term three years plus one year as Program Officer - elect, similar to some other divisions. The reason for doing this is that officer's job is fairly demanding and a longer term would give the person elected to the role sufficient time to work with it successfully. No formal resolution was made at the meeting, but a suggestion was made to put the item before the membership for a vote.

The division needs to elect a new Program Officer-Elect starting 2008; Mike Alfaro volunteered to run, his bio will be available at the end of this newsletter.

Outgoing Program Officer Michele Nishiguchi discussed future meeting venues. The DSEB sponsored symposia for San Antonio (2008) are set, and symposium ideas are needed for Boston in 2009. There will be more money available for symposia in future years thanks to a new endowment. One idea to take advantage of this would be to have "quick symposia", essentially theme

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sessions for a group of people who want to do a series of related talks. Several ideas regarding potential symposia for 2009 were discussed.

Ideas are also needed for the Phylogenetics for Dummies workshops, organized in tandem with DSEB - sponsored symposia. Any ideas on these can be forwarded to Program Officer Rachel Collin. The Phoenix meeting featured a workshop on Tree-based statistics.

Student/ Postdoctoral representative Audrey Aronowsky has just started her term, she is open for any issues that students want to bring up. One issue, as always, is how to get more students to participate in DSEB; more on this below.

Chair Don Swiderski reported that SICB's membership is in good shape, the number of members continues to grow, and now there is an on line membership database that can be easily accessed. SICB's budget, however, is in the red this year and next, in part because institutional journal subscriptions are decreasing. Another contributing factor is the amount of money spent on socials, which are quite expensive. Any ideas to cut costs are welcome!

SICB has also been asked to provide financial support for symposia at other meetings, which seems unlikely given the current budget constraints.

DSEB's division budget has been increased slightly; ideas were discussed on ways to spend the budget. Rich Mooi suggested increasing the amount given for the best student presentation awards (currently \$100 each).

- Ken Halanych made a motion to adjust the size of the award
- Rich Mooi amended the motion, to double the award (to \$200 each for paper and poster)
- Jon Norenburg seconded the new motion
- The motion passed, the student award will be adjusted to \$200 each for best student paper and best student poster.

Under new business, ideas are needed for the division web site. One idea is to post winning student papers or posters, but posting the presentations directly could cause problems because they may count as publications in some instances. So maybe putting up pictures of the paper or posters would suffice.

Finally, many thanks to outgoing Program Officer Michele Nishiguchi and outgoing Secretary Pat Reynolds; their contributions over the years truly count as going above and beyond the call of duty!

Ken Halanych made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded, and the meeting adjourned.

Upcoming Meetings of Interest to the Division

Evolution 2007, the joint annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Evolution (SSE), the Society of Systematic Biologists (SSB), and the American Society of Naturalists (ASN), will be held June 16-20, 2007, hosted by The Allan Wilson Centre for Molecular Ecology and Evolution in Christchurch, New Zealand. More info: <http://www.evolution2007.com/>

SMBE 2007, the annual meeting of the Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution (SMBE) will be held June 24-28, 2007, hosted by Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. The meeting is being co-hosted by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research. More info: <https://smbe2007.dal.ca/>

Hennig XXVI, the Annual Meeting of the Willi Hennig Society, will be held June 28 - July 2, 2007, at the Royal Sonesta Hotel, on Bourbon Street in New Orleans, LA. More info: <http://www.cladistics.org/meetings.html>

Elections: Change to DSEB By-Laws

Officers' Terms:

A proposal was made to adjust the term length of the Program Officer, to be consistent with lengths of terms in the other divisions, and to give the Program Officer a term long enough to be able to learn how to run the office effectively.

The current by-laws read, in Article III section 1:

"The Program Officer-Elect shall be elected to serve for one year and shall then successively and automatically become Program Officer for two years."

It is proposed that this sentence be changed to:

"The Program Officer-Elect shall be elected to serve for one year and shall then successively and automatically become Program Officer for three years."

Elections: Candidate for Program Officer-elect

Michael Alfaro

Current Position: Assistant Professor, School of Biological Sciences, Washington State University, Pullman, WA (since 2004). <http://alfarolab.sbs.wsu.edu>

Education: 2000 Ph.D. Committee on Evolutionary Biology, University of Chicago, IL. 1994 M.A. (Biology), Humboldt State University, Arcata, CA. 1999, B. A. (Dramatic Art), University of California, Davis, CA.

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Professional Experience:

Assistant Professor, School of Biological Sciences, WSU, 2004 - present
Postdoctoral Fellow, University of California, San Diego 2003-2004
Phylogenetics Postdoctoral Fellow, UC Davis 2001-2003
Research Associate, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, 2001- present
Postdoctoral Researcher, Field Museum of Natural History 2000-2001

Awards and Honors: 2000 Honorable Mention, Dwight Davis Award. 1997 Lester Armour Graduate Fellowship, Field Museum of Natural History.

SICB Activities: lifetime member; symposium organizer: Motor Control of Vertebrate Feeding (Chicago, 2000); co-chair of numerous contributed paper sessions; published and reviewed papers for *American Zoologist*.

Research Interests:

1. Phylogenetic (especially Bayesian) methods
2. Evolutionary Dynamics of Functional Traits
3. Trophic Evolution in Fishes and Snakes

Five recent publications (of 19):

M. E. Alfaro and M.T. Holder. 2006. The posterior and the prior in Bayesian phylogenetics. *Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution, and Systematics* 37:19-42

M. E. Alfaro & J. P. Huelsenbeck. 2006. Comparative performance of Bayesian and AIC-based measures of phylogenetic model uncertainty. *Systematic Biology* 55 89-96

M. E. Alfaro, D. I. Bolnick, and P. C. Wainwright. 2005. Evolutionary consequences of a redundant map of morphology to mechanics: an example using the jaws of labrid fishes. *American Naturalist* 165:E140-E154.

M. W. Westneat and M. E. Alfaro. 2005. Phylogenetic relationships and evolutionary history of the reef fish family Labridae. *Mol. Phyl. Evol.* 36:370-390.

M. E. Alfaro S. Zoller, and F. Lutzoni. 2003. Bayes or bootstrap? A simulation study comparing the performance of Bayesian Markov chain Monte Carlo sampling and bootstrapping in assessing phylogenetic confidence. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*. 20:255-266

Goals as Program Officer: It is truly an exciting time to be a comparative biologist. Phylogenies are becoming increasingly available for much of the tree of life, providing an expanding framework for addressing creative and integrative biological questions. Concomitant with this has been the development of novel phylogenetic methods and a proliferation of software packages that make using methods, new and old, easier. As program officer, I would like to promote integrative sessions and symposia that feature applications of phylogenetic methods to broad questions in evolutionary biology. The "Phylogenetics for Dummies" program provides an excellent venue for introducing SICB members across divisions to phylogenetic methods. As program officer, I would support efforts to make Phylogenetics for Dummies even more useful by tying topics to symposia, paper sessions, or to requests from other divisions. I would also focus on increasing student membership and participation in DSEB.