

Message from the Program Officer

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We are all much looking forward to a very exciting SICB meeting in New Orleans. We have an outstanding group of symposia, contributed oral and poster presentations, special lectures, workshops, get-togethers, and socials. This meeting has the largest number of presentations, 1128, since 1996. As examples, the number of presentations was 524 in 1997, 916 in Anaheim (2001) and 778 in Toronto (2002). The 1128 abstracts have been submitted, arranged into sessions, and will be posted on the SICB website for your perusal by early November. The grid is already posted.

Our meeting begins on Monday, Jan 5 with our plenary speaker: Professor John A. McLachlan – "Environmental signaling: A systems biology approach to human and ecological health." John A. McLachlan, Ph.D., is the Weatherhead Distinguished Professor of Environmental Studies; Professor of Pharmacology; Director, Center for Bioenvironmental Research; Tulane and Xavier Universities; Acting Director, National Center for the Mississippi River. Dr. McLachlan is one of the preeminent scientists in the field of "Endocrine Disruptors." His research areas include developmental pharmacology, toxicology and endocrinology; estrogen action and environmental estrogens; signalling, gene regulation, and gynecologic cancers. His plenary talk complements one of our symposia entitled "EcoPhysiology and Conservation: The Contribution of Endocrinology and Immunology" and supports recognition of conservation biology re-emerging in SICB.

Prior to our plenary lecture, Professor Howard Bern, Distinguished Professor at Berkeley and a Past-President of SICB will give a short talk entitled "A Tribute to Aubrey Gorbman." Following these two talks, we will have a welcome opening reception.

In addition to the opening talk, there will be two other special lectures at the New Orleans meeting. On Tuesday evening, we will have the DCPB Bartholomew Awardee, Dr. Jason Podrabsky, presenting the Bartholomew Lecture entitled "From mud puddles to microarrays: Searching for the molecular basis of eurythermy and diapause in the annual killifish *Austrofundulus limnaeus*." The Bartholomew lecture will follow a SICB wide-symposium entitled "Integrative Biology: A Symposium Honoring George A. Bartholomew." The following evening, Wednesday, Dr. Yoshitaka Nagahama, a preeminent endocrinologist from the National Institute for Basic Biology Okazaki, Japan, will give the third DCE Howard Bern Lecture series with a talk entitled ""The Plasticity of Fish Gender: An Evolutionary Basis for Sex Determination and Differentiation in Vertebrates".

There will be a second Society-wide symposium entitled "In Vino Veritas: The Comparative Biology of Ethanol Consumption." This SICB-wide symposium promises to offer very exciting topics and perhaps appropriate for New Orleans. The ten Division-sponsored symposia range from "Bateman's Principles: Is it Time for a Re-evaluation?" to "The Evolution of Thermal Reaction Norms for Growth Rate and Body Size in Ectotherms," to "Sponges: New Views of Old Animals", to "Morphological Innovations," to "Advances in Neurobiology." In addition, we have a special mini-symposium entitled "Wake Mini-Symposium" in Honor of Marvalee Wake. Check the Divisional Program Officers' messages in this newsletter for their accounts of the Divisional symposia, as well as the symposium descriptions on the SICB website.

This year the contributed oral and poster presentations both will again be organized by topics, effectively mixing the interests of many of the divisions, and facilitating exchange of ideas and viewpoints.

NSF program officers Dr. Judy Verbeke and Dr. Bill Zamer, will be present on Thursday to meet with members and discuss funding opportunities. Among the special sessions planned will be three workshops: Biology as a Way of Knowing (a student/postdoctoral committee sponsored workshop) and two annual workshops: Evolution Town Meeting and the Phylogenetics for Dummies Workshop. The Graduate

Student/Postdoc Committee has continued to organize events for students, the heart of our Society, with a luncheon for students on Tuesday; and a very different and exciting society-wide social on Thursday evening with a Zydeco Band (be prepared to dance).

As my last message as Program Officer for SICB, I would have to say that this has been an extremely intense and time consuming job yet rewarding and challenging position. Many of my goals were accomplished because of the input and assistance of extremely capable divisional program officers, input from the Presidents (both Marvalee Wake and John Wingfield), Ron Dimock (treasurer) and others on the Executive Committee, John Pearse (Past Program Officer), Kate Loudon (incoming Program Officer), and outstanding assistance from Sue Burk and others of Burk Associates, Ruedi Birenheide (SICB webmaster). These goals were to promote programs and symposia to enhance the concepts of integrative and comparative biology, to maintain strong divisional structure and to integrate leading edge symposia and speakers. New ideas and ways of programming were implemented.

The most successful idea to be implemented was adding an annual program meeting in early Fall of each year to fully develop a comprehensive and cohesive program. This meeting includes all the divisional program officers, SICB program officer, past Program Officer and Meeting Director and Assistant Director (Burk Associates). Our second meeting was Sept 27 and 28, 2003 in New Orleans and similar to last year, it was an outstanding success. All divisions were represented and we accomplished all of the objectives: putting together the entire program for the New Orleans Meeting and approving the symposia for San Diego led by our incoming Program Officer, Kate Loudon. It was and will continue to be an excellent way for scheduling the upcoming meeting as well as long term planning in a timely fashion. This annual planning meeting allows the divisional program officers to be more actively involved in this process and therefore in the long-term help to promote the program for SICB and to help it continue to grow and thrive. In addition, this and future meetings will allow a continuity of the process, will invest more members into the program and provide the energy, vision and excitement for future programming. Decisions for symposia are now made over a year in advance allowing the symposium organizers to have time to prepare their symposia and to apply for funding. Importantly, this also allows us to get the program to the members well in advance of the meeting.

It has been a great pleasure to work with especially Sue Burk and the rest of the staff of Burk Associates, Inc., and also with our ever-incredible webmaster.

I look forward to seeing everyone in New Orleans