

Division of Vertebrate Morphology (DVM): 2004 Fall Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

Frank Fish

For many of us, another academic semester has started and all we can think of is when it will end so that we go to SICB in January. This time the site is San Diego, which is one of my favorite places to visit. With the San Diego Zoo, Scripps, and Sea World, this is a fantastic venue for any zoologist. In addition, you can go to Old Town for great restaurants or up to Point Loma to have one of those California spiritual experiences as you watch the sun set into the Pacific Ocean. The meeting is set to convene at the Town and Country Resort and Conference Center in San Diego from January 4 through 8.

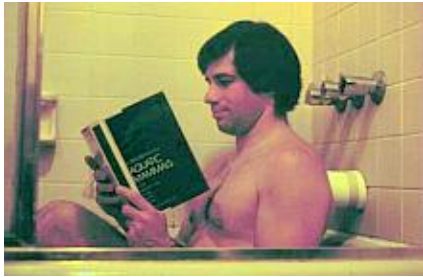
I was most pleased to see so many people in attendance at the seventh meeting of the International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology. The meeting was held in Boca Raton, Florida at Florida Atlantic University July 27 to August 1. The delegates in attendance totaled 448 and represented 30 countries. It was great to have such an opportunity to get together with morphologist from all over the world. The meeting ran smoothly because of the fantastic efforts of Jeanette Wyneken, Beth Brainerd and Monica McGarrity, president of the FAU student organization, ECOS (Environmental Conscious Organization of Students). Surely, the next scheduled ICVM will be hard to match this one, even if ICVM-8 will be in Paris, France.

At the end of the up-coming SICB meeting I will be stepping down as the chair of the DVM. Beth Brainerd will be replacing me as chair of the division and I cannot think of a better person to lead the DVM. As I step down, I would like to thank everyone for their support and willingness to help. Audrone Biknevičius has been sensational as DVM secretary, and Bret Tobalske and now John Bertram as program officers have provided us with a continuation of quality symposia, talk and posters. It is the effort of all the DVM members that makes the DVM not only the best division in the SICB, but maintains a high scientific standard, which keeps morphology as an important and innovative discipline. If you are interested in serving on committees, such as the Davis Award Committee, please email me at ffish@wcupa.edu. Rick Blob, Miriam Ashley-Ross, Lance McBrayer, Matt McHenry, and Natalia Rybczynski did an exceptional job on the Davis Award Committee last year. I hope that I can get some equally enthusiastic volunteers for this year's committee.

Finally, although I will be vacating the position of DVM chair, I plan to continue to contribute to DVM and to come to meetings. And so with apologies to Steinbeck, I'll be all around in the dark of the seminar room. I'll be at every meeting and in every lab. Wherever there's an animal so uncooperative that you can't collect data, I'll be there. Wherever there's a broken EMG lead, I'll be there. Wherever there's a granting agency beating down your budget, I'll be there. I'll be in the way people yell after their manuscript was rejected five times, and I'll be in the way graduate students laugh when they present their PowerPoint on data collected only an

hour before. And when morphologists are cited in textbooks and have their laboratories funded, I'll be there, too. Have fun and let's all get together to talk science at SICB in San Diego.

Note from the Secretary: If you're wondering what Frank will do with all of his free time after stepping down as chair at the 2005 SICB annual meetings, peek at the images below. Warning: One of the images is a bit risqué!



Frank is never far away from water.



Frank with his special friend – Shamu.

Message from the Program Officer

John Bertram

I am writing this letter as I return from the program officers organizing meeting. I can happily report that Kate Loudon and the Divisional Program Officers (DPO) have done an excellent job in organizing another great meeting. My personal thanks go out to Don Swiderski, the experienced DPO of Systematic and Evolutionary Biology, who went out of his way to help me, novice that I am, to organize some great sessions for DVM. There will be lots going on at the San Diego meeting, so I strongly recommend using the online program managing system, rather than depending solely on the hardcopy program you get on arrival at the meeting. As thoroughly as the organizers try to juggle the information in the program, it is impossible to give everyone all the information they need as conveniently as they would like to have it (everyone else's information seems to get in the way). The solution is the personally organized scheduling system, available through the meeting website. Of course, this means that some forethought and prior planning is needed.

The venue this year promises to make the meetings convenient. I particularly like the fact that the meeting rooms are adjacent to the out of doors, so we will not have to feel that we've been cooped up in a hermetically sealed environment for the entire meeting. The sessions appear to be conveniently located and opportunities for socializing during and after the meetings are well taken care of. The poster sessions run without concurrent sessions later in the afternoon when folks are ready to stretch their legs and chat with their colleagues at their posters. Although the conference center is not in downtown San Diego, it is located adjacent to the electric commuter train which provides quick and convenient service directly to Old Town, downtown San Diego, the beaches and even Tijuana (but do try to keep track of your grad students, we don't want any international incidents).

The DPOs had some discussion on the topic of the Best Student Paper awards society-wide. Although the BSP awards are funded and awarded by the Divisions independent of the Society, the integrative nature of the society and the blurring of the boundaries between divisions that occurs in much of our members (and their students) work, means that many students sign up to compete for awards in areas in which their particular divisional membership can make them ineligible. This is a headache for the DPOs to track, but may also mean

that students with worthy projects are not given the recognition they deserve. At this year's business meeting I am going to propose (in concert with the DPOs of their respective divisions) that we streamline our bylaws so that all divisions have the same eligibility requirements for BSP awards. We suggest that students be eligible to compete if their work is appropriate to the interests of the division, regardless of their official affiliation. We are also going to suggest that students be eligible to win only one award for an oral presentation and one award for a poster presentation society-wide within their student career. I list this issue now so that the division membership can consider these suggestions in advance of the meeting, which will hopefully generate some well considered discussion on the subject and a decision that represents the true feeling of the division.

I'm looking forward to seeing you all in sunny San Diego in January (if not the streets of Tijuana). Cheers,
John

Message from the Secretary

Audrone Biknevičius

1. 7th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology, Boca Raton, Florida, USA – The Congress brought together 448 morphologists representing 32 countries. The Congress kicked off with a plenary lecture by David Kingsley linking morphology and patterns of gene expression in the skeleton. Each subsequent day brought together participants for diverse symposia, contributed papers and thought-provoking plenary topic by experts (Drs. Herring, Galis, Rieppel, Aerts, and Witmer) bringing forward their diverse approaches to within morphology. Fifteen oral symposia, 4 poster symposia and 4 workshops covered fields as diverse as Finite Element Analysis of Vertebrate Skulls to Organization of Neural Crest and Placodes to Teaching Comparative Anatomy. Others ranged from Adhesion in Vertebrates to Linking Genes and Morphology to Applications of Advanced Imaging Technologies. Needless to say, this account just touches on a few topics to give a flavor of what we had at our disposal and leaves out many equally exciting topics that produced a tremendously important dialogue. For those who were unable to attend or attendees who might want to revisit the some of the presentation ideas, the program and abstracts are available on-line at <http://www.iconferences.org/icvm7/abstracts.shtml>.

The business meeting, presided over by ISVM President Jim Hanken and Secretary Matthias Starck, let us thank the many volunteers who made the scientific program so robust, the student volunteers and co-hosts who made ICVM-7 a successful major event, and let us welcome our president elect Marvalee Wake. There was enthusiastic support for proposed venue of ICVM-8 to be Paris, to be convened by Jacques Castanet and his colleagues.

As expected, when a group so geographically diverse comes together, of course ideas were exchanged; discussions ranged from the tame to the dramatic; new collaborations were forged and new friends were made and many of the future directions of morphology were hatched or fledged at this Congress. Attendees were treated to Florida hospitality, culture (the local music was bit loud for many) and, when not in the talks or at the posters and exhibits, delegates were entertained by vertebrate fauna that make Florida Atlantic University their home. (Submitted by Jeanette Wyneken and Beth Brainerd)

2. More on 7th International Congress of Vertebrate Morphology, Boca Raton, Florida, USA – Check out some of the highlights that were reported in the 3 September 2004 issue of *Science!* ICVM–8 will return to Europe and will be held in Paris in the summer of 2007. (Submitted by Matthias Starck)
Science Vol 305, pp 1396–1397 (PDF file)
3. Erratum – It was noted in the spring newsletter that the Marvalee Wake "minisymposium" at the New Orleans meeting was organized by "Kurt Schwenk and Wyatt Korff". The symposium was actually organized exclusively by Wyatt (Marvalee's last grad student). Kurt, however, is organizing/editing a Festschrift volume for Marvalee (which is where the confusion comes from) – but it is a separate, though obviously related, effort. (Submitted by Kurt Schwenk)