

Division of Vertebrate Morphology (DVM): 2005 Fall Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

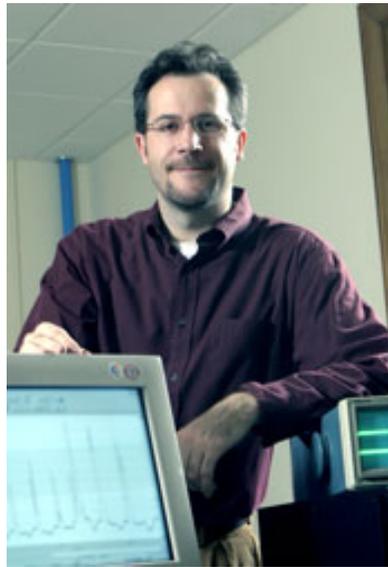
Beth Brainerd

I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at the SICB meeting in Orlando Florida in January. The warm climate will be a treat for those of us from the cold parts of the world, even if we have to share the hotel with people in giant mouse and duck costumes. Indeed, "dining with favorite Disney characters" is listed as one of the special features of the meeting hotel! Something we can all look forward to.

Elections were held for DVM Secretary and DVM Program Officer and I am pleased to welcome Gary Gillis as the DVM Secretary Elect and Jeff Walker as the DVM Program Officer Elect.



DVM Program Officer elect: Jeff Walker



DVM Secretary elect: Gary Gillis

Kudos to George Lauder and Dan Lieberman for so capably and generously organizing the Northeast Regional DVM meeting this fall. It was held mid-September and was a great success with a total of 58 (!) five-minute talks given all in just one day.

I would like the DVM membership to start thinking about a proposal that we will discuss at the DVM business meeting this year. The Davis Award Committee from last year (David Carrier, Steve Deban, Nate Kley, Callum Ross, Adam Summers, Roshna Wunderlich) has suggested some possible ways in which the Davis Award competition and the process of judging the entries might be improved.

Most importantly, the committee suggests that students be allowed to compete only once for the Davis Award. Currently many students compete at an early stage in their research, at a time when the work will be greatly improved in a year or two. Given only one shot, students would tend to take the process more seriously and plan over a period of years for the best time to compete. This would emphasize to everyone that the award is intended to recognize truly outstanding research and significant contribution to the field.

This change would also have the effect of reducing the number of participants in any year. The value of a reduced number of participants is that all of the talks could be presented in a single session. Other societies do this (e.g., Society of Vertebrate Paleontology). Having all of the talks presented in a single session would make the competition talks an event, calling attention to the Davis Award and to the students participating. All of the students competing would be on display, as would the DVM. In these respects, the competition would present students with challenges more similar to those they will encounter in job interviews.

Having all of the talks presented in a single session, early in the meeting, would also allow the winner to be announced at the Division social, rather than months later in the newsletter. The committee believes that the net effect of these changes would be a more rigorous competition and an elevated significance of the award.

I look forward to a spirited discussion of this proposal at the DVM business meeting. I hope that students in particular will come and give their opinions.

Message from the Program Officer

John Bertram

Here in the Northwest my kids are anxiously awaiting the accumulation of snow that will open the ski and snowboard runs, but my mind keeps drifting back to my recent visit to the venue of our upcoming Orlando meeting as part of the organizing committee. I can verify that having ice only come in a tall one from the poolside bar can make for a pleasant interlude and there is something about lounging in the outdoor hot tub that is particularly conducive to contemplating the grand mysteries of biology.

The meeting program has been set and it looks like another very good meeting. We have nearly 200 abstracts from members associated with the Division. Touring the facilities in Orlando we will obviously have presentation rooms with adequate space this year, solving one of our problems from last year. The poster sessions with the dedicated afternoon time-slot continues to grow in popularity. We have two Division sponsored symposia this year, Biomechanics and Neuromuscular Control and Zebrafish in a Comparative Context. Two very different symposia that demonstrate the diversity of perspectives in the Division and the potential of our members to interface with virtually all areas of modern biology. For more details on these symposia and the others offered in Orlando visit the meeting website.

It has been a treat to participate in the organizing process with the other Divisional representatives and the Society PO Kate Loudon. This was Kate's final meeting as PO and the ease with which I was able to do my job came largely due to Kate's management of the overall program, her ability to work through problems in a positive way and her general enthusiasm for these endeavors. This year also marks my final year as DVM DPO and the experience has been both enlightening and gratifying. The mantle will be passed to Jeff Walker for the Phoenix meeting and I anticipate Jeff will benefit from the same support and understanding of the Division membership that I've received over the last couple of years.

Last spring I mentioned that the Society of Experimental Biology has stated an interest in discussing the possibility of a joint SEB-SICB meeting. That society has recently been in contact with our Society officers. There are numerous logistical factors to be considered that should not be underestimated, but such a meeting could make for a special experience. SEB will be sending an officer, Christine Trimmer, to Orlando to meet with our membership and officers to discuss the potential for the project. I'll introduce her at the DVM Business meeting where she will make a brief presentation of the SEB perspective on the meeting. If you see Chris please welcome her and take some time to chat. One suggestion for the location of a joint meeting is Iceland. I understand they have some great (geothermic) hot tubs as well – something to think about. I'm looking forward to seeing you all in Orlando.

Cheers, John

Message from the Secretary

Audrone Biknevičius

1. Bylaws Revision (submitted by A.R. Biknevičius)

You will be receiving soon by e-mail a ballot concerning a proposed DVM bylaw revision. Your responses will be entered directly onto a balloting website and the results will be announced at the 2006 DVM business meeting. Below is the ballot issue:

A proposal was forwarded at the 2005 Division of Vertebrate Morphology (DVM) business meeting at the San Diego SICB meetings concerning term limits for the DVM Program Officer. Current DVM bylaws state (Article VIII – Program Officer):

"The Program Officer shall arrange for the programs of the Division. This person shall serve two years, asynchronous with the Chair-Elect, without eligibility for re-election."

Both current (Bertram) and former (Carrier, Tobalske) program officers noted that there is a large learning curve for the post so that peak effectiveness only occurs in year 2 and that additional service might not be onerous to the individual and actually would be beneficial to the division. Frank Fish proposed that the term of the Program Officer be modified as following (changes capitalized):

"The Program Officer shall arrange for the programs of the Division. This person shall serve two years, asynchronous with the Chair-Elect, and SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR ELECTION TO ONE ADDITIONAL TERM."

This proposal was met with unanimous approval by the DVM membership attending the 2005 business meeting.

2. Report of 2005 Northeast regional SICB-DVM meetings at Harvard University (submitted by Dan Lieberman and George Lauder)

On Saturday, September 17th, the Northeast regional meeting of the Division of Vertebrate Morphology was held at Harvard University. Organized by Dan Lieberman and George Lauder, approximately 90 people registered and 58 talks were presented in a successful (and busy) one-day format. In order to fit everyone in, all talks were limited to 5 minutes, but 20 minute breaks were scheduled each hour to allow plenty of time to interact with speakers.

Although 5 minutes does not provide time to present a complete study, most speakers got right to the point and used their time to give the audience a general sense of their research question, methods and conclusions. The talks were scheduled randomly by topic so each hour treated the audience to a wide diversity of work. There was a great deal of interaction during the numerous breaks, lunch, and dinner. Box lunches were provided which allowed all participants to stay at the meeting and chat during lunch, and dinner was catered in Romer Hall of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, permitting viewing of the public museum exhibits as everyone relaxed after the papers.

We were fortunate to have participation from a variety of visitors outside the immediate Northeast area who added greatly to the meeting atmosphere. Although this was primarily a "Northeast meeting," we very much encourage participation of anyone with an interest to attend future meetings. See you there!