

**Minutes of the Ninth Ordinary General Business Meeting of SEH held on 5 August 1997 in the Komorni Sal of the Congress Centre, Prague, Czech Republic**  
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Present: There were 38 people in all.

An agenda had been circulated under SEH News in Amphibia-Reptilia 18(1): 117-118 (February 1997), with changes that appeared on overhead projection.

1. Opening of the meeting: by the President, W. Böhme, at 20h10.
2. Election of a Chairperson of the meeting (Statute §4.4): The General Secretary, M. Lambert, was accepted unanimously.
3. Amendments: as distributed during the Meeting; no other amendments were received.

Changes to the By-laws:

Amendments §3.3c to 6.5, as distributed, were voted-on en bloc and, except §3.4 (relating to umbrella-organisation), were accepted (with one abstention):-

§3.3.c. Replace "... at the latest in December ..." with "not later than 31 December"; after ".. to be paid for," insert "to ensure uninterrupted delivery of the journal".

§3.3. Add "d. A late fee of DEM 10, or as fixed by the General Meeting, for all dues payments after 15 January (from 1996) will be levied with the first reminder on invoices paid after this date (postmark; date of bank or postal money order). There will also be a charge, maximum 50% of the late fee, for each full-fee payment reminder when incorrect, or when insufficient payment is under 90% of the membership fee."

§4.4.k. Add at end "and late fees."

§6.5. After "... DM 2000,--", add ", or for greater sums resulting exclusively from members' subscription prepayments to the journal of the association."

§7.3 (as per Agenda item 9b).

4. Communications received: none.

5. Announcements: none received.

6. Approval of the Minutes of the 8th Ordinary General Business Meeting in Bonn, 1995: approved unanimously.

7. Report of the President:

W. Böhme refers briefly to the editorial work for the Proceedings Volume of the Bonn meeting. The volume was successfully published in time for the 1997 Prague Congress. The contribution of the co-editors, W. Bischoff and T. Ziegler, was gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks were due also to the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Herpetologie und Terrarienkunde for substantial financial support,

without which publication could not have gone ahead.

Regarding the Society's development over the last two years, the President stressed that regrettably, membership seems to have become stabilised at a little under 500. This was insufficient for successful achievement of goals and financially fruitful activity. A future role for SEH still needed to be worked out, especially in relation to closer co-operation with national/linguistic herpetological societies in Europe. The President's thoughts about the possible additional function of SEH as a pan-European umbrella organisation were later included under SEH News (see *Amphibia-Reptilia* 19(2): 235-236, May 1998).

The President asked members to stand for a one-minute silence to honour the memories of two members of the Society who had died since the last OGM: Prof. Dr. M.C. Saint-Girons (Paris) and Prof. Dr. A. Morescalchi (Genova).

#### 8. Report of the General Secretary:

M. Lambert presented his report (appended to the Minutes).

#### 9a. Report of the Co-Editors:

G. Gollmann presents his report (appended to the Minutes).

#### 9b. Proposed change to the By-Laws relating to *Amphibia-Reptilia*:-

§7.3 "Amphibia-Reptilia publishes papers in English". This proposal generated lengthy discussion, contributed to by M. Hoogmoed, G. Gollmann, Y. Werner and L. Bauer, and was put to the vote, and eventually accepted: For, 11; against 8; abstentions 5.

#### 10. Society finances:

##### 10a. Report of the Treasurer:

H. Thommen presented his report for the period, 1 July 1995 to 30 June 1997 (appended to the minutes).

A verbal report on finances of the Conservation Committee was presented by A. Stumpel (Committee treasurer).

##### 10b. Report of the Auditors:

In the absence of the Auditors themselves, Johanna Wermuth and Peter Keymar, a letter from P. Keymar was read by C. Corti.

10c. Approval of the accounts, and reports of Council officers (President, General Secretary, Treasurer, Auditors, Conservation Committee treasurer): all were approved unanimously.

#### 11. Election of Council members:

The meeting chairmanship was given to K. Klemmer, who acted as voting scrutineer. Two members of Council were available for re-election for a further four-year term: W. Böhme and Z. Korsós. H. Thommen and V. Pérez-Mellado declined to return to Council. H. Thommen wished to resign as

Treasurer, but was ready to continue for a few more months until another candidate was found, since the proposed candidate, Sylvia Zumbach, was unable to take up the post. The candidate for the position of Second Co-editor, nominated by Council, was Prof. Dr. J. Castanet.

Curriculum vitae of Jacques Castanet:

Jacques Castanet (nationality French) was born near Paris in 1944, and is based at the Université Paris 7 (Université P. & M. Curie & URA CNRS 1137) in Paris. Married with two children, he is head of the Group "Formations squelettiques", and his research team applies theoretical and practical aspects of bone histology in vertebrates to assess biological time and associated life history characteristics (age, age of maturity and growth rate). He has proposed the name skeletochronology for his technique, which is now widely used in comparative ecodeography of living and extinct populations. Amphibians and reptiles remain his favourite models for testing and applying the technique. On a more general level, he is interested in the functional significance of skeletal structures at various levels of organization, and their relationships to ontogenetic, adaptative and microevolutionary processes, especially in tetrapods.

Results of the election: Council members: President, W. Böhme (re-elected); Vice-Secretary, Z. Korsós (re-elected); Second Co-Editor, J. Castanet.

12. Election of new Auditors: K. Grossenbacher and K. Henle were elected.

13. Report of the Chairman of the Conservation Committee: K. Corbett read out his report (appended to the minutes).

14. Report of the Chairman of the Mapping Committee: J.-P. Gasc presented his report.

The report focussed on production of the new SEH publication, Atlas of European amphibian and reptiles. Difficulties with the work were outlined, and all contributors acknowledged. A possible continuation is proposed with the extension of the geographical area covered by the Atlas to include all countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea. The General Secretary, M. Lambert, expressed the gratitude of the Society to the Mapping Committee Chairman for all the organisation and editorial work involved.

15. National Societies Representatives: Discussion on change of statutes and

16. Formation of a Captive Breeding Committee.

These items relating to the additional function of SEH as a pan-European umbrella organisation were taken together. U. Joger recalled that this question had already been discussed for some time without explicit results; he was sceptical about advantages to a large linguistic herpetological society like the DGHT. The OGBM agreed that the proposed changes could not be voted on as they were presented.

After further discussion contributed to by W. Böhme, M. Hoogmoed, M. Lambert, J. Lescure and G. Gollmann, the OGBM accepted that only those changes in the By-Laws unrelated to the umbrella-organisation proposal could be voted on at present. Discussion in more detail on SEH umbrella-organisation was postponed to an Extraordinary General Business Meeting at Le Bourget du Lac (Chambéry) in 1998.

17. Formation of a Zoological Nomenclature Advisory Board: After a short discussion on the proposal by A. Bauer, it was decided that no such committee needed to be formed, since the

International Committee of Zoological Nomenclature has a European forum where the herpetological questions were already discussed with the SEH President, W. Böhme, as a member.

#### 18. Venues for Ordinary General Meetings in 1999 and 2001:

Y. Werner pointed out that future OGMs would most likely coincide again with the next World Congress of Herpetology making attendance at SEH OGMs inconvenient for members outside Europe. M. Hoogmoed indicated that WCH timing would be adjusted to avoid coinciding, a decision being made in six months time. W. Böhme stated that SEH cannot easily change its statutes, which proscribe OGMs every other year. J. Lescure proposed that after the 1998 Le Bourget du Lac (Chambéry) meeting, the following OGMs could be held in 2000 and 2002; they would then never coincide with the World Congress. A. Bauer believes that the coinciding of OGMs with Congresses will be a less serious problem in future, for Congresses will invariably be held outside Europe. W. Böhme pointed out that the Bonn OGBM had decided that the next Ordinary General Meeting scientific conference would be held in 1998 at Le Bourget du Lac (Chambéry).

There had been an invitation for the 10th OGM at Sankt Petersburg (Russia) in 1999, but due to an unforeseen catastrophe in the Zoological Museum of Sankt Petersburg, I. Darevsky had proposed relocating this meeting to Moscow. This was voted for, and accepted, although it did not meet with general popularity; announcement of the final decision by Council was postponed until the Le Bourget du Lac (Chambéry) meeting.

R. Guyétant, organiser of the 9th OGM Scientific Conference at Le Bourget du Lac (Chambéry), France, 1998, was given the floor to present a report on preparation progress with slides.

19. Final questions: none.

20. The General Secretary, M. Lambert, thanked meeting participants for their contributions, and brought the meeting to a close at 22h30.

Zoltán Korsós, Vice Secretary. Budapest, 28 July 1998

Amended, linguistically adjusted and approved by Council, 28 August 1998.

Edited for publication by Michael Lambert, General Secretary, and

Günter Gollman, First Co-Editor Chatham, 6 November 1998

#### REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY, 1995-97

This is my first report to the SEH Ordinary General Business Meeting as General Secretary of the Society. I am the third General Secretary and first non-museum man since the Society's foundation in 1979. Following in the steps of the first General Secretary, Rinus Hoogmoed, I take up the cudgel from my friend and colleague Ulli Joger, who as the second General Secretary, and my predecessor with 8-years of sound judgement and efficiency, has set a hard act to follow. I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to my erstwhile colleagues on SEH Council whose input and cooperation have been invaluable during the last two years.

During the Society's founding years, it has been the General Secretary's duty to provide a run-down on numbers of members who have joined the Society, and their country of origin. Ulli Joger covered

this thoroughly during his last annual report at the last OGBM in Bonn, in 1995, and details were published in his report with the minutes of the 8th OGBM in the November 1996 issue of *Amphibia-Reptilia* [Volume 17(4)]. I will not repeat in such detail what he said at the last OGM Business Meeting of only two years ago, but, as has become traditional, I will provide an up-date of membership figures as they stood on 30 June 1997.

From 43 countries, membership stood at 462, again a slight decrease since the 8th OGM in 1995. A total of 350 members (76%) is based in European countries. Germany leads with 120 (26% of the membership), followed by the USA with 72 (16% of the membership). In the remaining 60%, the next five nations (all in Europe): Italy - 31, Switzerland - 27, Spain - 23, France - 22 and Austria - 17, are followed by Japan and the Netherlands, 15 each, and then Britain, 14. Apart from Sweden (10), the remaining nations each have less than ten members.

On arguably a rather more academic basis, members per million inhabitants present a different picture. The five countries with over one member per million inhabitants are Switzerland - 3.95, Austria - 2.13, Germany - 1.48, Denmark - 1.16 and Sweden - 0.16. The next five are the Netherlands - 0.984, Israel - 0.982, Greece - 0.88, Czech Republic - 0.78 and Belgium - 0.70. USA at 0.28 is 15th. The United Kingdom at 0.24 is 16th, and since the last OGM, has beaten back Australia (0.23) to 17th place.

SEH Council has met on five occasions since the 8th OGBM in Bonn: at the end of the Bonn meeting in August 1995; in March 1996 at Florence; in November 1996 at Basel; in March 1997 at Prague, and on Monday (yesterday) before this OGBM, again in Prague.

Main subjects for discussion on meeting agendas have been:

Financing societal activities without increasing the membership fee; among other cost savings, this has included a proposal to publish books and facsimile reprints of old classical works, in languages other than English (mainly covered by the USA).

SEH additionally functioning as an umbrella organisation for national/linguistic societies (representing the opinion, especially on conservation issues, of several thousand herpetologists in Europe, and not just the relatively small membership). If adopted, a Captive Breeding Committee would be established, and a pan-European newsletter published accordingly.

Arrangements concerning *Amphibia-Reptilia*:

formalising the agreement with E.J. Brill (Leiden), the publisher

liaising with the Editor of the *Herpetological Journal* (also in English, and published by the British Herpetological Society) about a merger to form one big journal, again in the context of SEH as an umbrella organisation.

Arrangements concerning SEH's input, including a display, for the 3rd World Congress of Herpetology in Prague, 2-10 August 1997.

Among other items was seeking a Royal Patron of the Society from among the European Royal Households to strengthen the Society's impact on environmental matters, especially conservation. An approach was made to His Royal Highness the Prince of the Asturias. Prince Felipe was involved with environmental issues in Spain and had taken an interest in the Canary Islands conservation project (even presenting a film on the subject on Spanish television), but unfortunately was unable to accept.

The Vice-President and I attended the 1996 Annual Meeting in the USA held in Summer by the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles at Lawrence, University of Kansas, and had membership application forms on display.

Peter Uetz (Heidelberg) has offered SEH an information database which is under discussion at present.

Additionally, there were discussions on subscription payment by members of newly independent Eastern European and developing countries (currencies weaker than the German mark); funding the publication of *Herpetologia Bonnensis*, the proceedings of the 1995 Bonn OGM (money was eventually provided by the German DGHT and Museum Koenig, Bonn); Societal representation on the International Nomenclatural Committee (the Society's President is a member) and formation of an SEH nomenclatural sub-committee, and developing an SEH web-site, which has been appended to that for the 3rd World Congress of Herpetology.

Finally, candidates had to be nominated to replace two Council members not wishing to stand for re-election; their names and curricula vitae have been circulated for this meeting (9th SEH OGBM).

#### REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

In the two years since the last OGM in Bonn, the Committee has met in:

Faro (Portugal), to enable field assessment of *Chameleo chameleon* in Iberia;

Bournemouth (UK), to enable field assessment of heathland reptile habitats, and on threats to the largest known European population of *Triturus cristatus*;

Milos (Greece), to enable field assessment on the plight of the key taxa *Macrovipera schweizeri* and *Natrix natrix schweizeri*, and on implications of ecological research on the former species the two Swedish members.

We will now also be meeting in Prague - albeit with a degree of disappointment that the organisers of the 3rd World Congress of Herpetology did not have the opportunity for bigger input from the Committee on herpetofaunal conservation in Europe, and indeed as envisaged in our previous report to the OGBM in Bonn.

During this period, we have participated in fora for the Berne Convention in Strassbourg of two Standing Committees and an Expert Herpetofauna Meeting, and in Navarre (Spain) on a workshop on Species Action Plans. We also attended a relevant Symposium in Hierro (Spain) on the progress and future direction of the Recovery Programme for *Gallotia simonyi*, and two further Symposia on respectively *Bombina variegata* and *Emys orbicularis*.

In 1998, we hope to meet in Sardinia, and then Chambéry, in combination with the 9th OGM SEH scientific conference. We also have a commitment to the next Berne Convention Standing Committee and Expert Herpetofaunal Meetings. We hope that members already appreciate and support our conservation input on behalf of SEH, and equally recognise the considerable financial implications. Our overall problem was clearly highlighted in our last report at Bonn, but the Society has not yet addressed the situation; on the contrary, it has even considered removing its modest though welcome annual subsidy of DEM 5 per member. One way or another, this fundamental

matter has to be overcome, at or before the Chambéry meeting, or else SEH must risk losing any active conservation role in the future.

There is no doubt that the SEH role has achieved positive change for herpetofaunal conservation in Europe, and usually via the Berne Convention - the next Agenda of which bears particular witness to that, having listed no less than eleven specific herpetofaunal items. However, no herpetofaunal component was invited within the Pan-European Nature Conservation initiative, while SEH input to and liaison with the European Union (towards their implementation of the Habitat and Species Directive) has until recently been non-existent! On the other hand, a joint political approach with colleagues in WWF International and Birdlife International is now proving helpful, and joining the European Habitats Forum may open other EU doors. At the same time, we are trying to forge a working link with the EU's European Topic Centre for Nature Conservation which may allow an SEH advisory input to their rounds of Habitat and Species Directive Biogeographic Meetings.

Committee members are all actively contributing to the IUCN/SSC Specialist Group for European Reptiles & Amphibians' (SSCERA) in their current production of an Action Plan, which has targetted 47 main herpetofaunal taxa across Europe. A finite grant for this purpose, from IUCN, has been allocated to help offset the costs of some of our recent meetings held jointly with SSCERA, reflecting the fact that many of our working colleagues are now members of both groups. In conclusion, this single purpose grant has coincidentally prolonged the working life of the Committee over the past two years. But, our fate into the year 2000 is now back in the hands of a future strategy for SEH's financial survival, while still fulfilling its dual purpose of research and conservation.

Keith Corbett