

SEH News

SEH Grant in Herpetology for 2004

The SEH Council have revived the "SEH Grants in Herpetology", initially instigated on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of SEH in 1989. A grant of up to EUR 2000 will be provided for a project orientated to conservation of the amphibians and reptiles of Europe and the Mediterranean basin, focussed on either a species or habitat. Project applications will be vetted by the SEH Conservation Committee, and priority will be given to those addressing specific conservation priorities identified by the Committee (for further details, please contact Keith Corbett, e-mail: Keithcorbett@herpconstrust.org.uk). The recipient of the funds need not be an SEH member, but the applicant must be an SEH member before the deadline date. Applications from young researchers are particularly encouraged.

The deadline for applications is 31 October 2003, and they should be sent to the Treasurer, Dr Jakob Hallermann (Zoologisches Institut und Zoologisches Museum Hamburg, Martin-Luther-King-Platz 3, D-20146 Hamburg, Germany; e-mail: Hallermann@zoologie.uni-hamburg.de). Applications should include:

- A short curriculum vitae of the prospective candidate.
- An outline of the project, including a time table, the goals that are intended to be achieved and the means for reaching these goals.
- A financial plan, including a statement on other financial support for the project.

A decision on the applications will be taken before the end of the year 2003. The grant will be provided on the understanding that the funds are used exclusively for the purpose that they are provided for, and that a report will be submitted to SEH Council immediately after the project has been completed.

12th Ordinary General Business Meeting (OGBM) of SEH, St Petersburg (Russia), 2003

Proposed changes to SEH Statutes

§5.1. Using initially the English version of the Statutes, add after "...Second Co-Editor" "Third Co-Editor". It is proposed that there should be an additional co-editor of *Amphibia-Reptilia* in view of both the larger number of manuscript submissions received and increased number of pages per volume.

§5.4. Using initially the English version of the Statutes, add after "...majority of votes" "which include those of sub-committee chairs". It was considered by SEH Council that when there is voting on Council decisions, the votes should be allowed of sub-committee Chairs, who are co-opted onto Council with approval at OGBMs, and serve for a period of four years (like other Council members) to carry out specific societal functions.

Biennial reports of Council members

The following reports will be discussed at the 12th SEH OGBM at St Petersburg, Russia, 12-16 August 2003.

Report of the General Secretary 2001/2002

This is my fourth and final biennial report as General Secretary outlining Societal activities for the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2002. Notwithstanding that this is a valedictory report, I would as always like to take this opportunity to thank my colleagues on SEH Council whose input, co-operation and support have been invaluable during the last two as well as earlier years. This was especially so when my input to Council activities was impaired by illness for much of 2001/02, combined with a change-of-office in November 2001 that took over a year to reorganise. It would be invidious to mention names, but all of the members of Council have assisted in one way or another with the Society's development. During the whole of my time as General Secretary, apart from enjoying Council meetings at the various venues at which they have taken place, I have always been impressed by the genuine desire of Council members to place pan-European herpetology and Societal interests foremost, and before any that they might have of their own. I have, however, strived personally to strengthen the Society's influence in environmental issues, and other aspects of applied herpetology in general, and herpetofaunal conservation in particular.

Now over 23 years since SEH was founded in Bonn (Statutes dated 11 September 1979), membership on 31 December 2002 stood at 393 (Ordinary, 366; Affiliated, 8; Corporate, 12; Honorary, 4; Life, 34) from 40 countries. This again represents a decrease from 427 in 40 countries (31 December 2000) indicated in my report for the 11th OGBM at Žalec, Slovenia, and is probably due to the increase of subscription on 1 January 2000. The decrease is, however, compensated for by an increase in the number of independent individual and institutional journal subscribers made directly to the publisher of *Amphibia-Reptilia*, Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden/VSP International Science Publishers, Zeist, whose subscribers pay higher rates than the membership fee. This benefits the societal membership as a whole by ensuring that *Amphibia-Reptilia* is commercially viable, and so assists in keeping the Society's contribution to production costs — commensurate with membership numbers — down. It also allows the membership subscription to be maintained at a stable level, meaning that it does not have to be raised at each OGBM! As a result, and at the behest of the Finanzamt in Bonn in relation to the Society's non-profit making status, there has been the opportunity to resurrect the offer of a small annual research grant for a worthy project aimed at herpetofaunal conservation. However, the consequence of this is that apart from publication of the journal, there is no surplus money available for any other activity. Greater development of other Societal activities must therefore depend on external funding sources, which need to be sought actively by an SEH member acting as financial manager for the activity under consideration.

European-based members on 31 December 2002 totalled 278 (71% of the membership), with those in Germany making-up 22% of the membership. North American-based members represented 19% of the membership (a slight increase from 18% on 31 December 2000), and elsewhere 10% (a small increase on 8% on 31 December 2000) — non-European members now therefore stand at 29%.

Since the 11th OGBM in Žalec, SEH Council has met on three occasions: at the end of the Žalec meeting in July 2001; in February 2002 at Hamburg (Germany), in November 2002 at Florence (Italy) — with a further meeting planned before the 12th OGBM over the weekend 22/23 March 2003 at Brighton (England). Members often have difficulty in attending Council meetings, and so effort is being made to reduce their frequency and to increase communication by e-mail.

Like the preceding biennial period, time since the last OGM in July 2001 has again been more one of consolidation than of innovative activity, apart from re-introduction of the research grant. Main subjects for discussion on meeting agendas have addressed:

- *Arrangements for the 12th OGM [to be held at St Petersburg, Russia, 12-16 August 2003]*. An invitation was accepted from Natalia Ananyeva, as President of SEH, for the meeting to take place in St Petersburg, Russia, as part of the City's 300th year celebrations, and to be held in conjunction with Nikolsky's Herpetological Society under the Russian Academy of Sciences, with the official language English.
- *Development of the SEH WebPages on <http://www.gli.cas.cz/SEH/>, especially in relation to establishing the Pan-European Herpetological Network*: Edoardo Razzetti (Pavia), the webmaster, is reporting separately on this at the 12th OGBM (see agenda item 17).

- *Co-ordination of the SEH research grant.*
- *Identification of four candidates for nomination to Council.* In relation to their functions on Council, nominations are required to replace the Vice-President (elected for a period of 2 years at the 11th OGBM, 2001) and three other Council members not eligible for re-election. Council nominations, with short curricula vitae for the candidates, are at the end of the Council members' reports.

Michael Lambert, London, 25 February 2003

Report of the Co-Editors 2001/2002

Amphibia-Reptilia is growing in several respects. In the year 2002, we received a record high of 141 new manuscripts from 31 different countries representing all continents. Of these manuscripts, 59 had been accepted and 63 rejected at the time of editing this report, whereas for 19 submissions the decision was still pending (state of 12 April 2003). Median time from receipt to first decision was 51 days, from receipt to final decision 71 days. It takes now usually between six and nine months from acceptance to publication. In terms of geographic origin (address of corresponding author), 46% of the papers came from Europe, 25% from South America, 13% from North America, 9% from Asia, 5% from Africa and 2% from Australia. In comparison to the previous years, the proportion of submissions from Europe has increased (mainly at the expense of North America). Half of the manuscripts came from only four countries: Brazil 24, Italy 19, USA 17, Portugal 10; these nations are followed by Germany 8, Spain 7, Argentina 7, India 6, United Kingdom 4 and South Africa 4.

In view of the increased number of submissions, the publisher kindly allowed to use extra pages, without extra charges, for volume 23 (2002), which thus became the thickest volume in the history of Amphibia-Reptilia (538 pages).

We sometimes got the impression that the diligence of referees can hardly keep up with the productivity of authors. Occasionally we had to submit a given paper to additional referees, because we were not satisfied with the responses of the first referees. All the more are we grateful to the members of the Editorial Board and the many other colleagues who gave their time to review manuscripts for Amphibia-Reptilia. Their efforts are crucial for maintaining the high standard of our journal.

Günter Gollmann, Wien, and Luca Luiselli, Roma, 12 April 2003

Provisional report of the Treasurer 2001/2002

This report is provisional until approved by the Auditors and by SEH members at the 12th OGBM, and covers the period 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2002. The accounts will be examined, together with the books and vouchers, by the Auditors before the Business Meeting takes place during the 12th OGM at St Petersburg (Russia), 12-16 August 2003. The last financial report, dated 31 December 2000 [printed in SEH News, *Amphibia-Reptilia* 22(1), 2001] was approved by the Auditors and, following discussion, by SEH members at the 11th OGBM in Žalec (Slovenia), 15 July 2001. It closed with a positive balance of EUR 28,767.48. A summary of the accounts for 2001/2002, in Euros, is given below.

Income:

Membership fees	1.i-31.xii.2001	22.686,93	
	1.i-31.xii.2002	17.179,65	39.866,58
Donation to the Conservation Committee	2001	990,84	
	2002	726,88	1717,72
Income from bank interests	2001	490,85	
	2002	563,53	1054,38
Donations to the Society	2001	90,40	
	2002	65,00	155,40
Profit from currency exchange	2001	126,42	
	2002	575,60	702,02
Charges for late payment	2001	40,00	
	2002	0,00	40,00

Additional income:

2001	Sales of Society publications		405,90
	Repayment by Brill for overpaid printing costs		2250,26
	Member's payment for credit card charges		406,03
2002	Member's payment for credit card charges		<u>197,35</u>
			46.795,64

Expenses:

Shares in printing costs	2001	19.272,00	
	2002	17.958,00	37.230,00
Office requisites, copies	2001	174,15	
	2002	0,00	174,15
Postage	2001	547,18	
	2002	189,80	736,98
Telephone, telefax	2001	16,69	
	2002	0,00	16,69
Credit card charges	2001	434,98	
	2002	202,16	637,14
Postal charges: account, foreign cheques	2001	159,18	
	2002	111,89	271,07
Payment to Conservation Committee for 2000	2001	1166,88	
Payment to Conservation Committee for 1998, 1999	2001	127,82	
Payment to Conservation Committee for 2001	2002	990,84	2285,54
2001 membership dues for IUCN	2001	491,60	491,60
2002 membership dues for IUCN			
Loss from currency exchange	2001	0,41	0,41

Additional expenses:

2001	Reimbursement of extra expenses to the Treasurer by the credit card agency (GZS)		127,81
2001	Repayment of membership fee 2001		60,00
2001	Money cash remainder		<u>214,83</u>
			42.246,22

Final clearing:

Balance brought forward from 31 Dec. 2000		28.767,48	
Income	1 Jan. 2001 - 31 Dec. 2002	46.795,64	
Expenses	1 Jan. 2001 - 31 Dec. 2002		42.246,22
		75.563,12	<u>42.246,22</u>
			33.316,90
		75.563,12	75.563,12

The balance of EUR 33.316,90 is covered by the following account assets:

Bank savings account	15.440,90
Postal giro account	<u>17.876,00</u>
	33.316,90

Jakob Hallermann, Hamburg, 3 February 2003

Accounts of the Conservation Committee 2002

Accounts for previous years were printed in SEH News in *Amphibia-Reptilia* 22(4): 509-511, 2001. Here is the statement of the financial transactions for the year 2002 that took place through the Postbank account no. 259182 of the SEH Conservation Committee (savings account included) in the Netherlands.

Balance, total income and total expenditure	€
Cash balance on 1 January 2002*	14,725.37
	+
Income	1,276.14
	16,001.51
	-
Expenditure	0.00
Cash balance on 31 December 2002	CREDIT 16,001.51

Commentary

1. Income transactions	€
1.1. March 5	
<i>Interest Postbank savings account ("Lion account")</i>	280.31
1.2. March 13	
<i>Donation of SHE to Conservation Committee for 2001</i>	990.84
1.3. December 3	
<i>Interest Postbank account</i>	4.99
	+
Total of income	1,276.14
2. Expenditure transactions	€
<i>No expenditure for 2002</i>	+
Total of expenditure	0.00

*The difference from the cash balance on 31 December 2001 is due to rounding-off (in 2001) when converting Netherlands guilders into Euros.

Anton Stumpel (treasurer, on behalf of the SEH Conservation Committee), Bennekom, 8 March 2003

Report of the Conservation Committee 2001/2002

The list of species covered by the 1979 Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife (Appendix II: "Strictly Protected Fauna Species") and 1992 European Union Habitats and Species Directive (Appendix IV: "Animal and Plant Species of Community Interest in Need of Strict Protection") are included with the SEH WebPages under the Conservation Committee.

The Committee is pleased to welcome Patrick Haffner a our new representative for France replacing Jean Lescure, who retired professionally after an eminent career and prominent role in herpetofaunal conservation often on behalf of the Bern Convention. Indeed, those followers of our work will recall how regularly the Committee has sung the praises of this pan-European Convention, and worked within it to record many notable conservation successes. In recent years, however, progress has slowed down and even gone into reverse, with many issues thought resolved proving otherwise. One might even think that some Governments had misled the Convention, although the Committee "could not possibly comment"! Some countries have ignored specific Recommendations; others have contrived to see outstanding Case Files closed while resisting the opening of new Files. The ultimate procedure of on the spot Appraisals now appear increasingly to have their proposals ignored.

If and when any outstanding Recommendations appear on their Agendas for "Follow up", member states may fail to attend or to provide requested information, thus precluding any discussion. In any case, all such items are "for information only" and there has thus been no chance for any official conclusions or elated progress. Part of the underlying problem is due to Bern's enforced budget cuts and changed priorities, but too much is also down to what appears to be political obstruction. The Committee has now agreed a working meeting with Bern's Secretariat in 2003 to try and find a mutual way forward in terms of herpetofaunal conservation.

If Strasbourg is proving problematic, the Committee's relations with Brussels via the NGOs' European Habitats Forum are increasingly productive. We have been able to provide input to dialogues on the interpretation and implementation of the Habitat and Species Directive, a well as on national proposals for Natura 2000

sites within the official Biogeographic Seminar processes. Our input for the latter could be efficient if only we could assess the detailed map proposals, but despite European legislation for access to environmental and other information, certain countries insist on pseudo-confidentiality. By the time any legal challenge might bear fruit, the time would long be passed to have an influence on any erroneous site designations.

Herpetofaunal advice has been provided on the draft European Red List for Vertebrates, a joint initiative from the Bern Convention and the EU, and similarly on the draft Strategy dealing with Alien Invasive Species in Europe. The Bern Convention was also discussed with the Council of Europe during a meeting in Paris on 6 March 2003. Committee members participated in a three-day Working Group on the Hungarian Meadow Viper, which was convened and organized by IUCN/SSC's Specialist Group on Conservation Breeding. The findings were on the bleak side, but do not yet appear to have been accepted or adopted by the Governments concerned. Conversely, it is pleasing to report on the good start made by the Netherlands Government-funded "Important Herpetofaunal Areas" (IHA) project, and which is based largely on updating the ground work laid done by the SEH Conservation Committee.

What is the future for SEH's Conservation Committee? It is difficult to be optimistic. There is insufficient funding to allow regular meetings; in fact, there has not been a meeting since one in Rüdeshheim in 2000 and we certainly can no longer carry on our important habitat assessment work. New blood is required for the Committee, but the SEH membership appears to be on the wane, and does not attract many from among those experienced in conservation and applied ecology. *Amphibia-Reptilia*, SEH's journal, that in other respects strengthens from year to year, could do more to reflect this need, but appears to remain less involved with our European taxa than species elsewhere, and our previous warnings — considering in particular volumes 20(2), 1999, and 22(2), 2001 — have gone unheeded.

The Committee hopes to be able to meet in association with the Bern Convention Expert Herpetofaunal Group meeting to be held next year in Sweden, thanks to political pressure and funding from the Swedish Government. Much soul searching will be on our agenda, as will the need to appoint a new Chair before the end of 2003.

Keith Corbett (Chair), Bournemouth, 22 March 2003

Report of the Mapping Committee 2001/2002

The Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle underwent a strong reform three years ago. One of the consequences was that the Service du Patrimoine Naturel (SPN) is now included in a Scientific Unity "Unité Inventaire et Suivi de la Biodiversité", and has a new head (Prof. Jacques Moret). Since it is uncertain whether the SPN will be able to continue processing the data for the atlas of European amphibians and reptiles, SEH council needs to be made aware that the Committee will eventually have to find an alternative solution.

Notwithstanding, the project for the Atlas of Western Palaearctic Amphibians and Reptiles has continued, and various evaluations have been made on the data gathered for the Atlas of Amphibians and Reptiles in Europe during 2001 and 2002. Among them, Worldmap (Paul Williams and colleagues) used data for three research projects on bioindicators. Maps were also used in some publications. Some of the maps are now on line with the SEH Website.

A Mapping Committee meeting was held in Žalec during the 11th OGM of SEH. An atlas protocol was also presented at Žalec, during a roundtable of the Declining Amphibian Populations Task Force (DAPTF) on monitoring protocols, organised by Richard Griffiths.

A taxonomic list of Western Palaearctic amphibians and reptiles is being prepared with the assistance of Ulrich Joger and Kurt Grossenbacher. The list prepared within the framework of Fauna Europaea now has to be taken into account. This list could be an item for discussion during the 12th OGM of SEH at St Petersburg, August 2003.

There is also a project to produce a reprint of the *Atlas of Amphibians and Reptiles in Europe* in 2003. Only a few corrections (typographic) are under consideration. However, a more complete commentary could be published in *Amphibia-Reptilia* since our knowledge of the European herpetofauna has greatly changed since the first edition in 1997.

Patrick Haffner (deputy Chair) and Jean-Pierre Gasc (Chair), Paris, 20 March 2003

Report on the SEH web site and Pan-European Herpetological Network

Updates are regularly put online with the SEH website: www.gli.cas.cz/SEH/, including all information on the 12th SEH OGM sent to me by the President, or the news about new European herpetological associations e.g. Societas Herpetologica Hellenica. A working draft for the new SEH website is temporarily online at <http://www.gli.cas.cz/SEH/draft/>. It is intended that the revised website will be completed before the 12th OGM takes place in August 2003. The membership module and structure page were updated at the beginning of 2003. Please can members e-mail me when they have something that could be interesting for the web site, and check the web site regularly for mistakes or outdated information requiring correction as soon as possible.

Pan-European herpetological network: During recent months, together with Nuša Vogrin (Hadjina), I coordinated input to the HerpNet mailing list on <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HerpNet/>, which now has 238 members, and disperses among the herpetological scientific community all news about regional societies, congresses, new books, and enables the exchange of scientific data among members. The mailing list is continuously updated, and any problems are quickly addressed. During the past 12 months, there was one problem, when a member sent a commercial advertisement for a porn website; this was immediately and permanently eradicated from the list!

Edoardo Razzetti (Webmaster), Pavia, 21 March 2003

Curricula Vitae of Candidates nominated by Council for election at the 12th OGBM, St Petersburg, 2003

Vice President: **Miguel Vences** (Amsterdam). Double nationality: German and Spanish. Born 1969 in Cologne (Germany), now working in the Netherlands. Studied biology at the Universities of Cologne and Bonn (Diploma in 1996). Received the SEH grant in herpetology in 1990. From 1996 on, he was a PhD student of Wolfgang Böhme at the Zoologisches Forschungsinstitut und Museum A. Koenig in Bonn, obtaining his Dr. rer. nat. (≡ PhD) in 2000 with a dissertation on the phylogeny of ranoid frogs and the origin of Madagascan vertebrates. He subsequently worked as a postdoc researcher at the Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris (with Alain Dubois) and at the University of Constance (with Axel Meyer). Since 2002, he has been Assistant Professor and head of the vertebrate section of the Zoological Museum of the University of Amsterdam. His main scientific interests include the systematics, phylogeny and biogeography of Madagascan herpetofauna (in long-term collaboration with Frank Glaw, Munich), speciation mechanisms, and the ecology of montane amphibians. He has published 120 research papers and co-authored the descriptions of 46 new amphibian species and eight new supraspecific taxa.

General Secretary: **Marco Zuffi** (Pisa). Nationality: Italian. Obtained his degree in Natural Sciences, University of Pavia, 1983; Certificate in "Faunistics and management of natural animal patrimonies", University of Pavia, 1984; Certificate in "Faunistic management", University of Pavia, 1986. Curator of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy of Non-Mammalian Vertebrates, Museum of Natural History, University of Pisa, since 1988. Assistant in Comparative Anatomy, University of Pisa, 1992-2001. Assistant in Naturalistic Museology from 2001. Official referee of 25 graduate students (Universities of Milan, Pavia and Pisa). Field of research: Herpetology: faunal lists and museum catalogues of amphibians and reptiles. Morphometrics, reproductive biology and ecology, behavioural ecology of chelonians and snakes. Systematics of chelonians and snakes. Member of several professional bodies. Referee of several international journals and member of editorial boards of main European herpetological journals. Author or co-author of 109 scientific articles, 31 of which have been published in peer-reviewed international journals, 25 in peer-reviewed Italian journals, and 14 in International Congresses.

First Co-Editor: **Mathieu Denoël** (Liège). Nationality Belgian, born 1974. Studied biology at the University of Liège, and obtained his PhD in 2001 on the evolutionary ecology of paedomorphosis (neoteny) in the Alpine newt. He is carrying out research at the Laboratory of Fish and Amphibian Ethology (Liège). His research focuses on the evolution of phenotypic plasticity in amphibians, taking place in both the laboratory and the field (e.g. Alps, Apennines, Cantabrian, Pindos and Rocky Mountains), and includes different fields of herpetology:

feeding habits, habitat selection, skeletochronology, population dynamics, sexual selection, biogeography, and conservation. He is collaborating with several laboratories in Austria, France, Italy, Serbia, and the USA. He has published over twenty research papers in a large variety of international journals (e.g. Anim. Behav., Behav. Ecol. Soc., Biol. J. Linn. Soc., J. Biogeogr., J. Herpetol., Proc. Roy. Soc. Lond.). He has been a member of SEH since 1991 and of eight other herpetological societies since 1991-1995 (AHE, ASIH, BHS, HL, ISSCA, OGH, SHF, and SSAR). He has been a referee for five leading journals, including *Amphibia-Reptilia* since 1998 and on the SEH editorial board since 2001.

Vice-Treasurer: **Benedikt Schmidt** (Zürich and Bern, Switzerland). Nationality Swiss, born and grew up in Basle, Switzerland. Received his diploma in biology from the University of Basle in 1995. From 1996 to 1999, worked for a governmental conservation agency and was responsible for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles. He then moved to the University of Zurich where he received his Ph.D. on predator-induced phenotypic plasticity in larval newts in 2003. Currently, he is working as a postdoc at the University of Zurich and a scientific collaborator at KARCH, the Swiss centre for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles. His main interests are on the evolutionary ecology and conservation biology of amphibians. The latter is the focus of current research on the demography and dynamics of amphibian populations. He also has a strong interest in practical conservation (not only conservation science). For many years, he has been a member of the German herpetological society (DGHT), SEH, the American Society for Ichthyology and Herpetology (ASIH), and the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB). Further information can be found on his web site at <http://www.zool.unizh.ch/ecology/bSchmidt/>.