

Message from the Program Officer

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We are all very much looking forward to another exciting SICB meeting in Toronto. We have an outstanding group of symposia, contributed oral and poster presentations, special lectures, workshops, get-togethers, and socials. In addition, due to President Marvalee Wake's goal of increasing our international perspective, this meeting will include one official Canadian Society of Zoology symposium and two divisional symposia that are co-sponsored with CSZ. These symposia will be posted on the SICB website by mid-November. Almost 800 abstracts have been submitted, arranged into sessions, and are being posted on the SICB website for your perusal. We also plan this year to send the program in pdf format so you will be able to review the program prior to the meeting in Toronto.

Martin Feder, Professor of Organismal Biology and Anatomy and a long-time member and past-president of SICB, will open the meeting Saturday evening with a talk entitled "Days of Miracle and Wonder: The Future of Integrative and Comparative Biology." Professor Feder's research is on evolutionary physiology and adaptation, and exploits emerging synergies among integrative biology, molecular biology, and genome-enabled science. His talk will explore how new modes of integration – scientific, social, and electronic – may revolutionize how we think about organisms. This is a terrific way to start our meeting. Following this session, we will have an opening welcome reception.

In addition to Martin Feder's opening talk, there will be two other special lectures at the Toronto meeting. On Sunday evening, the DCPB George A. Bartholomew Awardee will give the Bartholomew Lecture. The following evening Dr. Hubert Vaudry, a pre-eminent endocrinologist from the European Institute for Peptide Research, France, will give the second DCE Howard A. Bern Lecture entitled "Synthesis of biologically active steroids in the brain of amphibians: regulation by neurotransmitters and neuropeptides".

There will be one Society-wide symposium entitled "Selection and Evolution of Performance in Nature". The official society-wide CSZ symposium is entitled "Biology of the Canadian Arctic". These symposia promise to offer very exciting, wide-ranging topics.

The ten Division-sponsored and CSZ-co-sponsored symposia include "Contemporary Approaches to Endocrine Signaling", "Flash Communication: Fireflies at Fifty", "Comparative and Integrative Vision Research", "Patterns and Process in the Evolution of Fishes", and "Comparative Biology of Cystic Fibrosis Transmembrane Conductance Regulator". In addition a special Kowalevsky Minisymposium on Wed, Jan 8, will provide a formal forum for presentations by eight recent recipients of the "Alexander Kowalevsky Medal", a prestigious international award given by the St. Petersburg Society of Naturalists. Check the Divisional Program Officers' messages in this newsletter for their accounts of the Divisional symposia, and view the symposium descriptions on the SICB website.

Again this year the oral and poster presentations will be organized by topics, effectively mixing the interests of many of the divisions, and facilitating exchange of ideas and viewpoints.

Among the special sessions planned will be workshops in conjunction with three of the symposia, a Media Workshop on "Killer Websites" by Ruedi Birenheide (SICB's outstanding webmaster), the Evolution Town Meeting and a workshop on Phylogenetics for Dummies. The Graduate Student/Postdoc Committee continues to organize events for students, the heart of our Society, with a luncheon on Sunday, a workshop Tuesday evening and finally a society-wide social later that evening. In addition, NSF will hold two workshops as well as have a booth for people interested in funding opportunities.

Since this is my first message as Program Officer for SICB, I would like to acknowledge and say many thanks

to John Pearse, Past Program Officer, who did an outstanding job the last four years. John provided invaluable experience and knowledge of aspects of programming for SICB especially during the transition between Smith–Bucklin and Burk & Associates. In the past two years, he spent two to three months putting the program together with the assistance of DPOs, and oversaw the shift from divisionally arranged contributed sessions to topical sessions. This required much more effort from the society Program Officer than in previous years. John has cared deeply for the programming of SICB and put many long, thoughtful hours into its arrangement. I have been absolutely amazed, as I have taken over for him, at the amount of time that he dedicated to SICB. MANY thanks, John.

In regard to my short tenure as program officer, my goals are to promote programs and symposia to enhance the concepts of integrative and comparative biology, and to maintain strong divisional structure. In order to accomplish these goals and to achieve new program directions and initiatives, with the assistance and input of Sue Burk and others of Burk & Associates, Ruedi Birenheide (SICB webmaster), the Executive Committee and Divisional Program Officers, I have initiated several new ideas and ways of programming. One of these ideas was the development of the web–page for promoting submission and evaluation of symposium proposals. This process allows among other things more general input from the Executive Committee, Program Advisory Committee, Divisional Program Officers and past officers to help provide advice and long–range planning. 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.

In addition, we have now added 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). The first meeting was held Sept 28 and 29, 2002, in Toronto, and it was an outstanding success. All divisions were represented, and with everyone's hard work and participation, we accomplished all of the objectives, especially putting together the entire program for the Toronto meeting and approving the symposia for New Orleans. Such meetings will be an excellent means of scheduling upcoming meeting programs as well as enabling long term planning. Since the program is the core of the SICB meetings, this annual planning meeting allows the divisional program officers to be more actively involved in this process. In the long–term this involvement will help promote continuity for SICB and will provide energy, vision and excitement for future programming. Importantly, having this meeting will facilitate getting the program to the members well in advance of the annual meeting.

Finally, I am so totally pleased that SICB chose Burk & Associates as our business managers. It has been a great pleasure to work with Sue Burk, Lori, and the rest of the staff as well as with the incredible webmaster and longtime member of SICB, Ruedi Birenheide. Sue and Ruedi have been simply outstanding and wonderful to work with.

I look forward to seeing everyone in Toronto.