Business Meeting
ISBE, Perth 2010

Kate Lessells, the new President of the ISBE, welcomed the 200 people who gave up part of Tuesday lunch to attend the biennial Business Meeting. She introduced the ISBE Executive, and encouraged members to contact any member of the Executive if they have queries or comments.

Kate outlined the major activities of the ISBE and benefits of being a member. Most conspicuously, the ISBE held biennial meetings, organized by a local committee, and Kate thanked Leigh Simmons and his team for a wonderful start to the Perth meeting. The Society also publishes a highly successful journal, Behavioral Ecology, a Newsletter, and has an active web site. Kate thanked all those involved, including Mark Elgar, Editor in Chief of Behavioral Ecology, and Mariella Herberstein, Newsletter and web site editor.

Another major benefit of being a member is that we provide travel grants to attend our biennial meetings. These grants are primarily designed to cover travel costs by students and early career behavioural ecologists, but can also include other expenses, such as registration. We encourage applications from developing countries, and provide as much assistance as possible. Kate emphasized that everyone should spread the word about travel grants.

Kate mentioned two developments in the Society. First, Behavioral Ecology is looking for a new Editor-in-Chief, after Mark Elgar steps down in 2011, and Kate encouraged applicants to apply for the position. She welcomed applications from current Editors of the Journal as well as other behavioural ecologists. Kate warmly thanked Mark for his stewardship of the Journal, which has flourished in the time he has been Editor-in-Chief. Second, Kate mentioned that the ISBE is in the process of re-negotiating the Journal contract with Oxford University Press. Both the Journal and publishing environment have changed since OUP published our first issue in 1990. The Society and OUP have come a long way in the last 20 years!

Walt Koenig gave the Treasurer’s report. Despite the global financial crisis, the Society had an income, primarily from the Journal, of about $100,000 US per year. After meeting its other financial commitments and establishing a modest contingency fund, the Executive believes the best use of these funds is to support students, early career researchers and others in need to attend our biennial conferences. This year we awarded $120,000 to support 65 people from around the world, and for the next conference, in Lund 2012, we hope to allocate more money and support more applications. Walt indicated that he would prefer to retire at the end of his current term in 2 years, and asked anyone interested to contact him. It is best, given the Society’s financial arrangements, if the Treasurer is in the USA.

Mark Elgar, as Editor-in-Chief, reported on the fortunes of Behavioral Ecology. The editorial structure includes the EIC, 11 Editors and 15 members of an Editorial Board. The journal is currently thriving, and its Impact Factor, although flat over the last few years, still leads comparable journals in the field. The journal receives many more manuscripts than it can publish, which is another good indicator of its health: overall 32% of submissions are accepted, 29% rejected without review and 38% rejected after review. Manuscripts are allocated at random to Editors, as a way of encouraging papers of broad interest, and the current Editors reject 72% of papers and take an average of 42 days to reach a decision. The double-blind reviewing process seems to work well, and there is no difference in acceptance of papers by female (30%) or male (31%) first authors. The journal’s major initiative is the establishment of a Forum section, including an Ideas section for short papers expressing new ideas, and an invited Reviews section focussed on forward-looking reviews, not just summaries of current knowledge. Anyone interested in writing a review should first contact Rob Brooks, the Forum editor. Mark raised the issue of data archiving, a process in which authors are encouraged or required to submit data along with manuscripts. This is a new move in publishing, with potential benefits and costs, and Behavioral Ecology will need to consider its policy. Mark finished by wishing the journal and his successor well, and thanking everyone who has been involved with the journal for their support. He has been associated with the journal since its inception, as a Board Member, then Editor and finally Editor-in-Chief, and has clearly left the journal in good shape.

As people drifted off to re-join the conference, I overheard one graduate student – obviously still in shock – muttering about 72%!, and recalled Mark’s words about an Editor’s burden of having to inflict more pain than joy. Perhaps that’s why the ISBE runs both a journal and a conference. The conference was 99% joy, and after the conference dinner I noticed the same graduate student on the dance floor like everyone else.

I’d like to add my thanks to Leigh, everyone involved in organizing, and delegates for a marvellous conference.

Rob Magrath
ISBE Secretary
Australian National University