

AIBSnews

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AIBS *news*

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2008 AIBS Annual Meeting on Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases; Registration, Posters, and Program Online

The 2008 annual meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, "Climate, Environment, and Infectious Diseases," will be held 12–13 May at the Westin Hotel in Arlington, Virginia. Registration and poster submission forms are online at www.aibs.org/annual-meeting.

Relationships among climate, the environment, and human health are manifested in infectious disease patterns, notably seasonality. Vector-borne diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, avian influenza, SARS, and related diseases are known to be closely linked to the environment and to climate. Investigators in the United States and abroad have studied interactions among climate, climate change, and the environment extensively, and the AIBS annual meeting will address these issues in depth.

The interplay of science and science policy in crosscutting themes involving science, public policy, and education will also be addressed in a special session with plenary speakers featuring science communicators, including authors of popular books addressing various aspects of infectious disease, human health, climate, and the environment. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the issues of climate change as these issues intersect with human health.

The rest of the meeting's program will be rounded out by a contributed poster session, AIBS awards presentations, and a teachers' workshop organized by the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS) and the National Association of Biology Teachers. The AIBS annual meeting this year is a joint meeting with BSCS, which began as a part of AIBS and is now celebrating 50 years of independent operations.

The program chair is 2008 AIBS President Rita Colwell, of the University

of Maryland, College Park. Confirmed plenary speakers and the topics of their presentations are listed below:

- Andrew Dobson (Princeton University): the role of climate, immunity, and biotic interactions in the dynamics of infectious diseases
- Durland Fish (Yale University): Lyme disease
- Howard Frumkin (National Center for Environmental Health): environment and health
- Stephen Hoffman (Sanaria, Inc.): malaria
- Duane Gubler (University of Hawaii): dengue fever and other emerging fevers
- Stephen Morse (Columbia University): avian influenza
- David Rogers (Oxford University): infectious diseases and the environment

Confirmed participants in the communications symposium are Kim Stanley Robinson, author of *Sixty Days and Counting*, and Robert Morris, author of *The Blue Death: Disease, Disaster, and the Water We Drink*. Additional speakers have been invited.

Fourth Annual Evolution Symposium at NABT Sponsored by AIBS and NESCent

AIBS, in conjunction with the National Evolutionary Synthesis Center (NESCent), will host the Fourth Annual Evolution Symposium at the National Association of Biology Teachers Annual Conference on 1 December at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Atlanta, Georgia. The theme for the 2007 symposium is "Evolution: Applications in Human Health and Populations." Speakers will present current information about the role of evolution in disease, medicine, and human health, and discuss the ethical questions these issues pose.

NESCent will supply attendees with an instructional CD-ROM that is being developed specifically for this symposium. It will contain teaching resources, curricular materials, video and audio clips, and other useful tools for the classroom.

The speakers and their presentation titles, in order of appearance, are as follows:

- Gregory Wray: "Genomic Perspectives on the Evolution of Human Health and Disease"
- Carlos Bustamante: "Sign, Sign, Everywhere a Sign: Interpreting Evidence for Recent Natural Selection on the Human Genome"

I N S I D E

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Executive Director's Recent Blog Entries Online at <http://blogs.aibs.org/richardogrady>

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

- Marc Lipsitch: "Sex, Drugs, and Natural Selection: Evolutionary Perspectives on Antibiotic Resistance"
- Sandra Romero-Steiner: "The Race between Bacterial Adaptation and Protection of the Host"
- George Armelagos: "The Road to the Viral Superhighway: Emerging Disease in the Time of Globalization"
- Sandra Soo-Jin Lee: "The Ethical Implications of Representing Evolution and Interpreting Difference"
- David Sloan Wilson: "Evolution for Everyone: How Darwin's Theory Can Change the Way We Think about Our Lives"

For more information on the symposium, including speaker bios, presentation times, and links to previous symposia, visit www.aibs.org/special-symposia/2007-evolution-in-human-populations.html.

AIBS Joins Other Scientific Groups Online on Facebook

AIBS has joined the Facebook social networking community with the launch of its group page at www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=5534817377. Facebook is an online networking utility that connects people with others who work, study, and live around them. Professionally, Facebook makes it possible to learn more about colleagues, peers, and like-minded members of professional communities and is a useful way to keep in touch with them. AIBS joins other scientific groups on Facebook such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Science Teachers Association, the National Center for Science Education, and the American Chemical Society.

Members of AIBS are invited to sign up with the AIBS Facebook group in order to network with each other and with AIBS staff on biology topics.

Two AIBS programs, the Student Chapters Network and the Diversity in Biological Sciences (DIBS) Coalition, also have their own Facebook groups. Following efforts to improve networking and communication between AIBS student chapters, AIBS has created a group for the student chapters to allow for the diffusion of a wealth of information, such as programming ideas and career oppor-

tunities. It will also serve as a venue for the discussion of current news, issues, and research in biology.

The DIBS Facebook group is a new forum for discussion, and the sharing of best practices will help expand the coalition's reach and its ability to effect change in the biological community. Links to both of these sites can be found on each group's page on the AIBS Web site.

AIBS Accepting Applications for the 2008 Diversity Scholars Program, Diversity Leadership Award, and Media Awards

AIBS is now accepting applications for the 2008 Diversity Scholars Program. The program recognizes and promotes the achievements of underrepresented minorities in the biological sciences. Diversity scholars will receive support to present their research at a meeting of their choice, participate in the AIBS annual meeting, and become a member of AIBS. Students may be nominated by a member society or they may apply directly to AIBS. AIBS encourages member societies to nominate graduate or undergraduate students who wish to present research at the annual meeting. The deadline to submit an application is 15 January 2008. To download an application, visit the Diversity Scholars page on the AIBS Web site at www.aibs.org/diversity/diversity_scholars_program.html.

AIBS is also accepting applications for the 2008 Diversity Leadership Award. The Diversity Leadership Award has been established to promote best practices and disseminate successful strategies to broaden the participation of women, persons with disabilities, and underrepresented minorities in the biological sciences. The award is given each year to recognize programs that demonstrate outstanding creativity, commitment, and effectiveness in promoting diversity in biology. AIBS encourages nominations from scientific societies, K-12 schools, colleges and universities, government entities, and nonprofits, as well as other biological institutions such as museums, botanical gardens, and field stations. The deadline for submitting a nomination is 15 January 2008. To download a nomination form, visit the Diversity Leader-

ship Award page on the AIBS Web site at www.aibs.org/diversity/aibs_diversity_leadership_awards.html.

Applications for the 2008 Media Awards are now being accepted. The Media Awards, established in 1995, recognize outstanding reporting on biological research in both print and broadcast journalism. The awards will be presented at the AIBS annual meeting, to be held 12-13 May 2008 in Arlington, Virginia. Winners receive an all-expenses-paid trip to Washington to attend the awards ceremony, and a cash award of \$1000. An application form accompanied by five copies of the submission must be received by 15 January 2008. The application form and complete rules of eligibility can be found at the AIBS Media Awards Web site at www.aibs.org/about-aibs/award_aibs_media.html.

AIBS, Member Societies Are Core Participants in New Collections Initiative

As various reports in the news media and in *BioScience* and other scientific journals have recently recounted, natural history collections and the researchers who use them have faced some difficulties because of constricting budgets and curator time restraints. According to many in the natural history community, responding to these challenges has been impeded by the lack of a cohesive natural history collections community in the United States.

The National Science Foundation has awarded a Research Coordination Network (RCN) grant to contribute to the development of the natural history collections community in the United States. "A stronger community will facilitate research by providing better lines of communication between collections managers and researchers, and establishing improved mechanisms for access to specimens and specimen data," said L. Alan Prather, curator of the herbarium at Michigan State University and one of the principal investigators for the grant. To achieve the goals of the RCN, the funding will be used for a number of Web resources for the collections community, a series of workshops and symposia dealing with issues of importance relating to

collections, and several student internships.

To share information and advance its work, the RCN recently launched a new Web site, *www.CollectionsWeb.org*. The site will have announcements of upcoming workshops and symposia, and will provide links to community-wide resources.

The initial steering committee members for the RCN's efforts are Henry L. Bart (Tulane University, vertebrate systematics), Meredith Blackwell (Louisiana State University, fungal systematics), L. Alan Prather (Michigan State University, plant systematics), and James B. Woolley (Texas A&M University, invertebrate systematics). These people represent an array of institutions, taxonomic specialties, and methodologies, and bring together a diverse set of skills to help facilitate this RCN. Thirteen additional core participants have been added, and more will be chosen in the near future.

Three partner societies have been involved with the RCN since the planning stages: AIBS, the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections (SPNHC).

As described on the *CollectionsWeb.org* site, AIBS will "help organize the Stakeholders workshop, where their formal ties to other societies, as well as their role in policy and connections with governmental and nongovernmental agencies will prove especially valuable." The NSC Alliance is an association that "supports natural science collections, their human resources, the institutions that house them, and their research activities for the benefit of science and society." The role of the NSC Alliance in the RCN is to co-organize the databases workshop, host a symposium at an annual meeting, and help to design and implement some of the online resources developed by the RCN. The SPNHC will establish a best-practices working group and will host a best-practices symposium at an annual meeting, in addition to overseeing best-practices student interns.

Other participating societies, mostly taxon-based professional societies, also play an important role in bringing together people involved with natural

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history collections across many disciplines. These organizations include the American Malacological Society, the American Ornithologists' Union, the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, the American Society of Parasitologists, the American Society of Plant Taxonomists, the Botanical Society of America, the Entomology Collections Network, the Entomological Society of America, the Mycological Society of America, the North American Benthological Society, the Phycological Society of America, the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology, and the Paleontological Society of America.

OMB, OSTP Encouraged to Provide New Funds for Natural Science Collections

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and federal agencies are currently negotiating budgets for the fiscal year 2009 budget request. While these budgets are being negotiated, the Interagency Working Group on Scientific Collections (IWGSC) is completing a report on the status and needs of federal scientific collections. The report and the IWGSC itself are results of language in recent federal research and development memoranda issued by the OMB and the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Additionally, through the IWGSC, the National Science Foundation (NSF) is expected to launch a survey of nonfederal collections this fall.

Amid this convergence of activity, the Natural Science Collections Alliance (NSC Alliance), an AIBS member society, sent a letter to the OMB and OSTP on 29 October. The letter acknowledges the inclusion of collections as important components of the nation's research infrastructure, recognizes the efforts of the IWGSC, and calls attention to the importance of new funding for collections-related programs at the NSF.

The full text of the letter is on the NSC Alliance Web site at *www.nscalliance.org*.

AIBS, MSOs Work to Defeat Creationist Measure in Senate

On 23 September, the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans reported that Louisiana Republican Senator David Vitter re-

quested \$100,000 in a fiscal year 2008 appropriations bill for the Louisiana Family Forum, a group that opposes the teaching of evolution in public school classrooms.

The earmark, buried in the appropriations legislation for the Departments of Education, Labor, and Health and Human Services (S. 1710), would have been used “to develop a plan to promote better science education.”

The Louisiana Family Forum previously backed efforts by the Ouachita Parish School Board in 2006 to permit science teachers to teach the strengths and weaknesses of Darwinian evolution. This “teach the controversy” tactic has become a core strategy and common approach of creationism and intelligent-design advocates.

A coalition of concerned organizations, including Americans United for Separation of Church and State, AIBS, and several AIBS member societies—the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study, Organization of Biological Field Stations, Herpetologists’ League, Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles, and Society for the Study of Evolution—joined forces to oppose the measure. On 10 October, these and other organizations sent a letter to every member of the Senate asking that the provision be removed. The full text of the letter and its signatories can be viewed at www.aibs.org/public-policy/public-policy/Vitterearmark.pdf.

On 18 October, Senator Vitter requested that the earmark be removed and asked for the money to be moved to another Louisiana priority project funded in the bill. On the floor of the Senate, Vitter insisted that the money was not designed to promote creationism.

To stay on top of the most recent news and threats to evolution education, visit www.aibs.org/public-policy/evolution_state_news.html.

NEON Connects with the Science and Engineering Alliance

The National Ecological Observatory Network (NEON) was represented at the Science and Engineering Alliance (SEA) 17th Annual Student Technical Conference in Gaithersburg, Maryland, for the

second consecutive year. At the conference, which was held 10–13 October, leaders from SEA member institutions received an update on NEON activities from CEO David Schimel. Science teachers and students visited the NEON exhibit, collected project information, and spoke informally with NEON public information representative Dan Johnson.

The SEA is a nonprofit consortium of four historically black colleges and universities: Alabama University, Jackson State University, Southern University and A&M College, and Prairie View A&M University. The SEA also includes Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The primary goal of the SEA is to ensure a supply of minority scientists to meet the development and research needs of the public and private sectors. Since 2006, the organization has participated in the NEON design effort through its responses to the observatory’s request for information for candidate core-site locations and for compelling national experiments. The SEA has also received several National Science Foundation (NSF) grants to engage underrepresented faculty and students in NEON-relevant research.

The SEA morning session on 12 October, “Strategic Involvement of Minority Serving Institutions in the National Ecological Observatory Network Initiative,” focused initially on the next steps in NEON development. Schimel began his report by noting that candidate core-site selections for the 20 NEON ecoclimatic domains would be completed in fall 2007, including a candidate site for the mid-Atlantic domain.

With the candidate core-site selections made, NEON will initiate two processes: first, the announcement of openings for domain chief scientist positions, and second, the election of locations for the initial deployment of relocatable instruments (in areas of scientific interest apart from the 20 core wildland sites). Schimel confirmed that the final NEON construction-ready blueprint would go out for review in late 2008; that review will initiate the project’s construction phase, beginning in January 2009.

Schimel emphasized the effort that NEON is making to rapidly add new staff. Recent hires include a chief of science, chief financial officer, director of human resources, procurement manager, comptroller, and several staff scientists. A “call to arms” announcement has been circulated to attract additional staff to work in the Washington, DC, NEON office and its recently opened science and education office in Boulder, Colorado. Schimel also said that the observatory has issued a call for NEON visiting scientists to work remotely on aspects of observatory design and take advantage of NEON opportunities as they evolve. “We’re looking for the best and brightest,” he said. “We need a wide range of skills.”

Schimel then outlined the strategy for NEON deployment of instruments in the 20 domains. The inaugural NEON site, located in the midcontinent, will be a test bed as well as the first completed domain. The second round of construction will focus on four sites at once—in Alaska, California, Puerto Rico, and the mid-Atlantic—to essentially bracket the entire United States. The final phase of construction will roll out instrumentation in the remaining 15 domains.

Finally, Schimel reported that NSF funding for NEON will include opportunities for researchers to request the use of NEON resources as well as targeted proposals; grant opportunities in the Division of Biological Infrastructure; and postdoctoral fellowships aligned with NEON (for example, support for minorities in bioinformatics). Schimel concluded by taking questions from SEA representatives.

Two SEA leaders then reported on their recent activities related to NEON design and development. Larry Robinson, a professor in the Environmental Sciences Institute at Florida A&M University, presented a summary of the NEON education “tiger team” meetings. The team has delivered a revised draft education plan (focused on leveraging the unique data resources of the observatory) to the NEON Board of Directors for comment. Teferi Tsegaye, of the Department of Plant and Soil Science at Alabama A&M University in Huntsville, reported on his service as a member of

the Preliminary Design Review Committee, which conducted the second of three NSF reviews that NEON is required to pass in order to advance to its construction phase.

The next step for the SEA: an NSF-sponsored workshop, "The Mechanics of Developing Competitive Proposals." In January 2008, representatives of the Directorate of Biological Sciences will join SEA executive director and workshop facilitator Robert L. Shepard in Atlanta, Georgia, for a workshop for junior faculty, new university faculty members, and graduate researchers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The workshop will focus on strategies for successfully completing proposal submissions to federal government agencies.

NEON Welcomes 47 Founding and Institutional Members

A total of 43 universities and scientific institutions were approved as founding members of NEON before the application deadline of 1 November 2007. An additional four organizations comprise the nucleus of the observatory's institutional membership. The voting representative and the chief research officer for founding members and institutional members are both eligible to attend the annual meeting of NEON, Inc. Through their voting representative, a founding or institutional member may also elect members from a slate of representatives to serve on the NEON Board of Directors.

The NEON institutional members are Archbold Biological Station (Lake Placid, Florida), University of Central Florida, Idaho State University, and the University of Maryland (Chesapeake Biological Laboratory). NEON continues to accept additional applicants for institutional membership on an ongoing basis.

The founding members of NEON are listed below.

East

American Institute of Biological Sciences, University of Connecticut (Center for Environmental Sciences and Engineering), Ecological Society of America, George Mason University, Harvard University (Harvard Forest), Marine Biological Laboratory (Ecosystems Center),

University of New Hampshire, Science and Engineering Alliance, Smithsonian Institution, University of Virginia, UT-Battelle Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and Williams College (Center for Environmental Studies).

Midwest and South

University of Alabama, University of Florida, Indiana University, University of Kansas (Biodiversity Institute), Kansas State University, University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, Murray State University, University of Notre Dame (Environmental Research Center), University of Oklahoma, University of South Carolina, and University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

West

University of Arizona (Institute for the Study of Planet Earth), Arizona State University, University of Calgary, University of California-Berkeley, University of California-Los Angeles, University of California-Riverside, University of Colorado-Boulder (INSTAAR—Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research), Colorado State University, University of Hawaii (Hilo), University of Hawaii (Manoa), University of Montana, Montana State University, North Dakota State University, Oregon State University, USDA ARS (Jornada Experimental Range), University of Utah, Utah State University (Ecology Center), University of Washington, and Washington State University.

For information about institutional membership in NEON, see www.neoninc.org/neon-membership/join-neon.html.

AIBS at FAST Conference

The Florida Association of Science Teachers (FAST) held its annual conference in Orlando, 25–27 October. More than 800 educators attended the event, which featured workshops, presentations, and exhibits with the theme of "Light the Fire." The focus of the workshop was how to engage students in achieving in the community, and learning from each other and the community.

One of the highlights of the conference was a chance to speak with NASA astro-

nauts, who visited the exhibits and sessions. Joseph M. Acaba, mission specialist educator and NASA astronaut, talked about his involvement with the mangrove revegetation project in Vero Beach, his teaching experience in area middle and high schools, and his current work at NASA.

FAST is Florida's largest nonprofit professional organization dedicated to improving science education at all levels, preschool through college. The association's membership includes science teachers, science supervisors, administrators, scientists, representatives of business and industry, and others interested in science education.

The conference gave AIBS an opportunity to experiment with exhibitor participation in educator events at the state level. Oksana Hlodan, editor in chief of actionbioscience.org, informed attendees about AIBS products and services, explained the BEN digital library portal to which AIBS is a contributing partner, and introduced the recently created COPUS (Coalition for the Public Understanding of Science) project.

Executive Director's Recent Blog Entries Online at <http://blogs.aibs.org/richardogrady>

- Strategies for Ecology Education, Development and Sustainability (SEEDS) mentoring program at ESA receives presidential award
- Twelve academics jailed and tortured in Bangladesh
- Biodiversity from NSF Research Coordination Grants to YouTube
- AIBS SPARS and IT work on post-traumatic stress disorder/traumatic brain injury research
- A hard-won victory for science education in Louisiana

Recent Articles Online at www.actionbioscience.org

Original article in English

- "The African Elephant: Conservation Challenges," by Holly T. Dublin, chair of the IUCN Species Survival Commission and the African Elephant Specialist Group

Spanish translation of a previously posted article

- “Faltas de Comunicación: Las Pruebas Genéticas y las Poblaciones Indígenas” [Talking Past Each Other: Genetic Testing and Indigenous Populations], by Ikechi Mgbeoji, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Canada

Recent Public Policy Reports Online at www.aibs.org

Public Policy Report for 12 November 2007

- National Academies to host symposium on the interaction of physical and life sciences

- New agriculture secretary nominated, farm bill stalled in Senate
- Federal agencies invite input: Human exposure studies, ecological economics, and energy
- GAO and NAS report on environmental accounting
- Senate confirms FWS head
- New in *BioScience*: “Ocean Acidification: The Biggest Threat to Our Oceans?”
- From the *Federal Register*
- Employment opportunity: AIBS Public Policy Associate

Public Policy Report for 29 October 2007

- National Science Foundation report examines decline in research funding rates

- US Government Accountability Office recommends federal data-sharing policy
- Senator Vitter withdraws creationism earmark
- Senate approves Commerce–Justice–Science spending
- Senate adopts Labor–HHS–Education appropriations plan
- Proposed revisions to stream buffer zone rule draw criticism from stream scientists
- White House edits warming testimony
- Employment opportunity: AIBS Public Policy Associate
- From the *Federal Register*

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AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Announcing a New Ph.D. Program in Comparative Biology

The Richard Gilder Graduate School at the American Museum of Natural History

Our new Ph.D. program in Comparative Biology at the AMNH is designed to educate the next generation of biologists through an integrative approach that focuses on the history, evolutionary relationships, and interactions among organisms. The Richard Gilder Graduate School will be housed in a newly refurbished complex in the American Museum of Natural History at 79th and Central Park West in New York City. Training and research opportunities exist in systematic and evolutionary biology, paleontology, conservation biology, comparative genomics, computational biology, Earth history, anthropology, and biological and cultural diversity. Global field work with AMNH faculty provides exceptional research opportunities for students.

This is the first such program offered at a museum in the Western hemisphere, taking advantage of the Museum’s internationally recognized collections and scientists. The AMNH houses more than 30 million specimens and artifacts, which students can investigate through formal coursework and independent research. Additionally, students will have access to the exceptional natural history library of more than 400,000 scientific volumes, and will be taught by more than 40 world-renowned curator-professors. Students can also gain teaching experience through the Museum’s innovative exhibits and K-12 education programs, and will enjoy access to various collaborations between the AMNH and other New York City universities such as Columbia, NYU and CUNY.

The program is accelerated and designed for students to complete their degree in four years. For these academically outstanding students, The Richard Gilder Graduate School is pleased to offer a full tuition fellowship, generous annual stipend, research funding, health insurance and computer. There also are guaranteed housing options available for all students enrolling in this new program.

To view a more detailed program description and to download application materials, see: <http://rggs.amnh.org>. Please contact us at info-rggs@amnh.org for further information.

The deadline for applications is **December 28, 2007** for September 2008 enrollment.

The American Museum of Natural History is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity institution, and affirmatively seeks to attract to its scientific staff and student body qualified persons of diverse backgrounds. The Museum does not discriminate due to age, sex, religion, race, color, national origin, disability, marital status, veteran status, sexual orientation, or any other factor prohibited by law.



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