

Society of Systematic Biologists Mid-Year Executive Council Meeting  
Saturday 06/04/2013  
Skype Conference, 10:00 – 12:10 a.m. EST

**Participants:**

President: Lacey Knowles  
President-Elect: Jack Sites  
Immediate Past-President: Jack Sullivan  
Executive Vice President: Susanne Renner  
Treasurer: Brad Shaffer  
Program Director: Bryan Carstens  
Awards Director: Sean Brady  
Editor-elect: Frank (Andy) Anderson  
Editor: Ron DeBry  
Managing Editor: Lulu Stader  
Trustee: Joel Cracraft, 11-11:42 a.m.

SSB Bylaws say “A meeting of the executive council (President, Past President, President Elect, Executive Vice President, Program Director, Awards Director, Editor, Editor Elect, one Trustee, and relevant invitees) shall be held early in the New Year to set the agenda for the annual meeting and to discuss goals, progress, and evaluate finances.”

1) Introduction and President’s Comments

The Society is doing well fiscally and with respect to membership (no major drops since those that predate 2009). The society should explore ways to increase its visibility and making clear its relevance to a broad scientific community. Part of this can be accomplished through workshops (such as the one organized for 2013 Snowbird meeting), which we should consider offering yearly with a focused, but rotating theme, making sure to address the diversity of members (from taxon focused to theoretical folks). The society should consider doing more outreach (note that there is not anything akin to what the Evolution Society does).

2) Treasurer’s Report (**Appendix 1**): Brad Shaffer

3) Editor in Chiefs’ Reports: (Andy Anderson, Ron DeBry)  
(**Appendices 2 and 3**):

Discussion of way of reducing the time mss spent with AEs. Ideas for making reminders more specific, perhaps even suggesting reviewers if an AE takes an exceptionally long time. Also personalized messages asking AEs when they will assign reviewers. Lulu Stader brings up the need to change a possible “culture of delays” – might be achieved by using messages that require immediate reaction to an inquiry (even just required in by which AE will select reviewers). Suggest to AEs to pick 4 reviewers at the beginning, as opposed to 2, to reduce turn-around time of reviews

4) Managing Editor’s Report: Lulu Stader

Submission rate in 2013 so far is 26 mss/month. More details and numbers see **Appendix 4**.

5) Awards Director's Report: Sean Brady, **Appendix 5**.

Aim at giving out \$1200-2000 per award rather than always \$2000 with the goal of giving more awards overall. Perhaps try for 35 awards total if financially possible. Change the wording of the

announcement for the Ernst Mayr symposium to place the emphasis on participating in the symposium (rather than competing for an award). This may encourage a broader cross-section of people to apply.

6) Trustees' Report: Joel Cracraft. Discussed but not to be placed online

7) Program Director: Bryan Carstens: **Appendix 6.**

8) Nominating Committee & Ballot Report: The Systematic Biology Ballot 2013 will open at 7 a.m. on April 15th and close at 7 a.m. May 14<sup>th</sup> (both GMT).

Links and access details:

[http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/sysbio/society/ballot](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/sysbio/society/ballot) Results

[http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our\\_journals/sysbio/society/ballot/result](http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/sysbio/society/ballot/result)

9) SSB needs a new representative at AAAS meetings (section G, Biological Sciences).

Sean Brady volunteers for 2013, although may not necessarily attend the full meeting in Boston.

Keith Crandall is willing to continue as our rep at AIBS (his info on April 2013)

10) Discussion of NSF pre-proposal system:

Based on reports of Exec Council members who have attended recent NSF panels, NSF is unlikely to change the pre-proposal system in the near future. Best strategy now is for SSB members to be willing to populate panels.

Discussion of possible political presence/lobby in Washington: AIBS (Keith Crandall)

Discussion of adding student reps to Council; requires bylaw change.

Suggestions from SSB members or self-nomination should work. Three appointees for different lengths of time (1 year, 2 years, 3 years) or phase in three appointees over three years and see how things work? Needs to be discussed with the full council at our Snowbird meeting. Screening of applications should involve a short 200-300-word essay about why the student is interested in serving on the council

11) David Hibbett: Please include the following as my "report" for the mid-year meeting packet: 2013 mid-year report of the SSB Long-Range Planning Committee (LRPC):

In March 2012, I was asked if I would serve as Chair for the Long Range Planning Committee. I responded that I would be interested, and I asked for information about the other committee members, recent activities, the budget for the committee, and the term of the appointment, but I did not receive a response. Lacking direction, I have done nothing this year for the LRPC. The idea of having a committee focused on long-range planning may be appealing, but my experience in SSB suggests that the LRPC has never done very much. Moreover, long-range planning should be a basic responsibility of the SSB leadership and might not warrant a separate committee. Unless the SSB has a clear vision for the function of the LRPC, and is willing to commit resources to the committee, I would recommend that it be dissolved (I believe that this would require a vote of the Council). Respectfully submitted, David Hibbett

Suggestion to keep the LRPC, perhaps by asking people, such as Chris Simon and/or David Penny, who have long taken a strong interest in our Society and who are very much needed for the Society to have a "memory" and perhaps a longer term view than 3-yr appointees and phased-in/out officers.

## Appendix 1

### **Society of Systematic Biologists, 6 April 2013 Mid-year officers Skype meeting**

Treasurer's Report, *submitted by Brad Shaffer*

First of all, a big thanks to Jim Whitfield for three years of great service as treasurer. Jim has given me a lot of guidance on the role of treasurer, and hopefully the transition will be fairly smooth. Unfortunately, I was not able to make the meeting last year, so this will be a bit of a cold start for me. Here's hoping.

#### State of the Budget

SSB appears to be on stable, and perhaps slightly improving, financial footing for 2013. Our January-February realized Income/Expenses are down a bit compared to the same time period for 2012, but the overall projections for 2013 put us slightly ahead of 2012 (which was a good year). One way to look at this in a real 'bottom-line' way is to look at the Net Ordinary Income for both years—this is our total, after normal expenses, not counting our investment portfolio. In 2012, that number was \$65,099. In 2013, the projection (based on two months of actual data) is \$82,432.

I offer a few points below on SSB financial news that I have been able to pull together. Since we will have a Publisher's Report from OUP during this meeting, as well as a report on the Endowment funds, I will not elaborate on those.

- Our 2012 numbers from OUP are down about 10K compared to 2011- we still have a healthy income, but the direction of the numbers is not what we would like. Most of that is increased expenses, rather than decreased income. Projected income from OUP for 2013 looks to be a bit lower than 2012.
- We have an unanticipated expense of \$9426 that we just paid to UConn to cover our last expenses for Debbie. That will eat up most, but not all of the ~17K overage predicted in 2013 compared to 2012.
- According to my documentation, last year we awarded ~27K in awards for 2012. However, two of those totaling \$4460 have yet to be claimed. We may want to discuss a strategy for dealing with this. We also may want to decide on whether we should increase this amount or not.
- Our outlays include contributions SSB approved to AIBS and the Natural Science Collections Alliance. We continue to deal with these requests on an item by item basis.
- The 2012 Evolution meetings in Ottawa came out reasonably well financially, and the SSB share is \$2741. This has not yet hit our books.

Rob Clayton is continuing as SSB's contracted CPA; we now pay him \$9,000 per year. Based on my conversations with him today, he is a great person to work with. Very well worth it in my opinion, both for keeping track of the general flow of funds, handling checks, preparing our yearly tax returns, and helping out the treasurer.

One discussion that came up in the email traffic was whether we should contribute to the meeting expenses of our Exec Committee. The consensus was "no", but it is an important issue that may keep some members from attending. We may want to discuss it as a group.

Another financial issue was whether we should have a physical mid-year meeting or make them virtual meetings. Pros and cons were discussed, including financial ones, and we might want to discuss that as well.

## Appendix 2

2013 SSB Mid-year Executive Council Meeting  
Editor's Report – April 6, 2013  
Ron DeBry

### I. Submissions and Decisions: 2012

**Number of Submissions 2012: 249.** This is an increase of 36 (17%) compared to 2011, and follows the 18% increase of 2011 over 2010. 249 is on par with the peak years of 2007-2009. The separate Editorial Office report shows 253 submissions, but that includes 4 book reviews not counted here.

Of the 249 submissions, I rejected 65 (26%) without review, most as Not Appropriate. This is similar to the rate last year (28%). The manuscripts rejected under this category cover a very broad range - many are phylogenetic studies that are not of sufficiently general interest, but another large group is submissions that are simply in the wrong scientific discipline. The primary purpose of editorial rejection is to reduce the reviewing burden on the AEs, Editorial Board members, and outside reviewers, and I do not believe that their time would have been productively used on these manuscripts.

Of the 184 2012 manuscripts sent out for review, seven do not yet have their first decision. Four of those are in my queue now, so they will receive a decision in the next few days, while three are still with an AE. Therefore, as of 5 April 2013, we have completed review for 177 2012 submissions.

**Of the 177 completed reviews, I concurred with the AE recommendation 156 times (~88% of decisions).** This percentage is similar to most recent years. I find that I still have some manuscripts for which the AE recommends Accept with Major Revision, but which I feel are more appropriate as Reject with Resubmission Encouraged. This is a continuation of the effort to reduce the use of and more narrowly define the role of the Accept with Major Revision category.

Of the 21 times I made a decision that differed from the AE's recommendation, my decision was always just one decision category different from the AE's recommendation. Compared to the AE recommendation, the final decision was less favorable for the author in 14 cases. In seven cases the AE recommended Accept/major, but my decision was Reject with resubmission encouraged, while there were two manuscripts that I accepted with major revisions even though the AE had recommended Reject/encourage. Most of the remaining changes from the AE recommendation involved papers that were accepted, where I simply adjusted whether we were telling the authors that the revisions were "major" or "minor". A few others were rejected manuscripts for which the AE recommended the option of resubmission, but either there was no discernible enthusiasm for seeing a new version from the reviewers and AE or the manuscript had already been through two (or more) submissions and it seemed to me unlikely that another round would lead to a published paper.

#### **2012 Decisions: (242)**

Accept pending minor revisions: 35 (14%; 17% in 2011; 11% in 2010; 9% in 2009)

Accept pending major revisions: 26 (11%; 10% in 2011; 20% in 2010; 25% in 2009)

Reject, encourage/permit resubmission: 67 (28%; 25% in 2011; 24% in 2010; 29% in 2009)  
Reject: 50 (21%; 19% in 2011; 20% in 2010; 20% in 2009)  
Not Appropriate: 64 (26%; 28% in 2011; 24% in 2010; 17% in 2009)

Overall acceptance rate: 25% (27% in 2011; 31% in 2010; 34% in 2009)  
Overall rejection rate: 75% (73% in 2011; 69% in 2010; 66% in 2009)

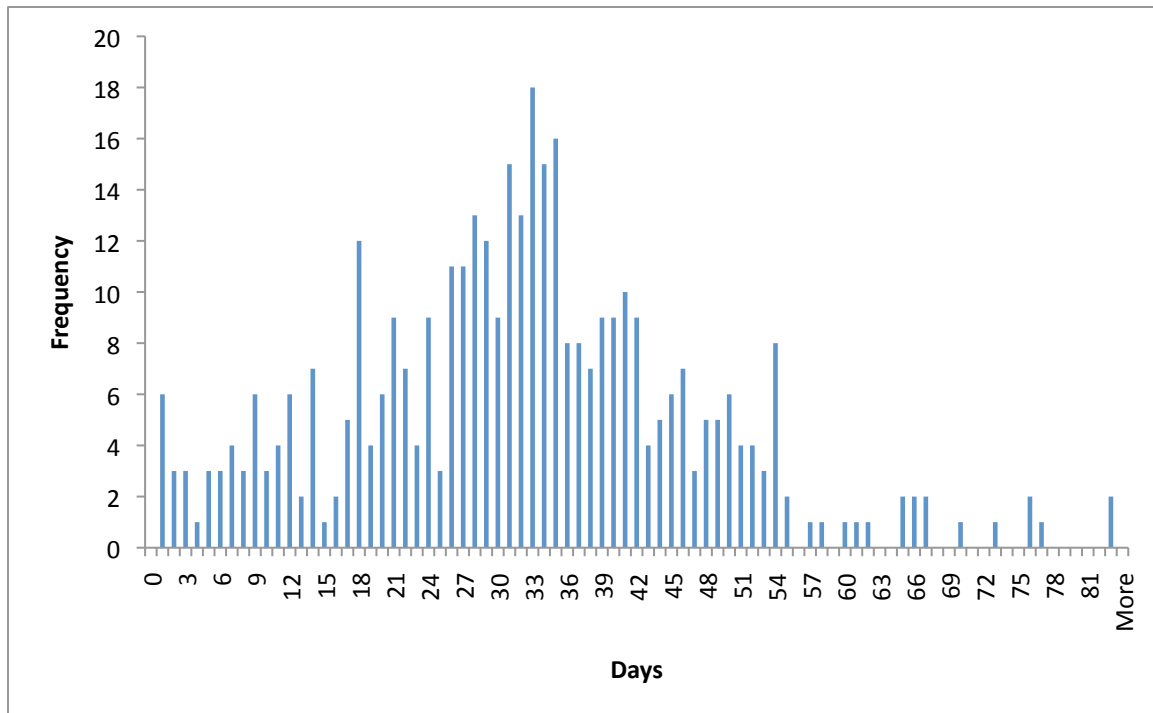
## **II. Manuscript Handling:**

During 2012, we transitioned from having a Managing Editor who was an employee of SSB to use of the OUP Virtual Editorial Office, with Dr. Lulu Stader serving in the Managing Editor's role for the journal. This arrangement appears to be working well.

We continue to work under the system in which OUP puts accepted papers up in manuscript form on the Advanced Access section of the journal's web site as soon as the authors have completed the copyright form. The 'raw' manuscript is replaced later with the typeset, proof-corrected version, once it is finished. As seen in the Publisher's report, OUP consistently meets their target of having manuscripts appear in Advanced Access within about a week of the authors receiving their acceptance email.

Processing of accepted papers, from export of the accepted manuscript by the Editorial Office through typesetting and print publication has been running sufficiently smoothly that we have reached the point where we have no cushion of accepted papers - once the authors return their corrected proofs the paper will appear in the very next print issue. This is actually causing some nervous moments around the time copy is due to the printers, so we may need to print one or two 'thin' issues to build back in at least a minimal buffer.

With major delays that are attributable to the editorial office being largely eliminated, it is time to start focusing on improving the manuscript handling time through the review and AE recommendation process. I recently discovered that I can have Manuscript Central generate a report showing the time taken by every individual review through the year, and it is not a very pretty sight:



We ask for reviews to be returned within 21 days, but we are obviously not doing a very good job of enforcing compliance. I will get together with Andy and Lulu and see if we can come up with changes to the reminder email system that might help.

### III. OUP

Cathy Kennedy retired from her position as Senior Publisher with OUP at the end of August, 2012. Cathy was an invaluable resource, and regularly shared her extensive experience in the journal publishing business with those of us who were summarily shoved into the world of journal publishing on the basis of an SSB Council vote.

Cathy's replacement, Claire Rawlinson, is not yet working with Systematic Biology. Jennifer Boyd continues to operate as the temporary Publisher for the journal. I have not yet been informed about the timing of Ms. Robinson's take-over.

The OUP Production Editors do not usually make it into the Editor's report, but I do want to acknowledge the current and immediate-past PEs because they have been particularly helpful to work with. For some two years, journal production was handled in England by Peter Jones, and Peter was very helpful in sorting out a number of issues that had developed over the years. This past Fall, production of the journal returned to Cary, NC, under the guidance of Adrienne Loggins. Adrienne has likewise been very helpful. One thing that will make a visible difference in the journal is that the dates listed for "Received", "Reviews returned" (= 1<sup>st</sup> decision), and "Accepted" will finally be grounded in reality on a consistent basis.

### IV. AE workloads

We appear to have about the right number of Associate Editors at the moment. When I started, it was common for some of the AEs to handle as many as 17 manuscripts in a year.

While that might be a normal, or even low, number for many journals, it is quite a lot for *Systematic Biology*, given the level of review input typically found in each AE report. I have tried to spread the workload around and, as you can see in the Editorial Office report, no AE was assigned to any more than 12 manuscripts in 2012.

## **V. Editorial Transition**

I am (extremely) grateful to Andy Anderson for accepting the job of editing the journal for the next four-year term.

### **Appendix 3**

2013 SSB Mid-year Meeting  
Editor-Elect's Report, Frank (Andy) Anderson

## **I. Submissions and Decisions: 2013 (as of Thursday, April 4, 2013)**

Manuscripts submitted since 1 Jan 2013: 79

Manuscripts rejected without being sent out for review: 19 (24%)

Rejected as Not Appropriate for the Journal: 16

3 of these were reviewed by AEs, who declined to send them out for review.

Rejected due to insufficient quality: 3

2 of these were Software submissions that I sent to AE Posada, who decided without review that the manuscripts did not describe software likely to be of high impact.

1 of these was sent to an AE who decided that the manuscript lacked focus, and revisions were unlikely to correct the problem in a way that would make the manuscript suitable for SB, and I agreed.

Manuscripts currently in review: 20

Manuscripts accepted in 2013: 6

14 manuscripts have been returned by an AE for EiC decision as of 4 April; final EiC decisions have been rendered for all 14.

There are currently 16 “long-standing” papers. The longest-standing paper submitted in 2013 is USYB-2013-01, received on 1 January. It has now been in the system for 94 days (it is currently awaiting AE recommendation, which is 16 days overdue).

Average times from submission to decision for manuscripts submitted in 2013, by manuscript type: book reviews (1 decision, 0 days), POVs (4 decisions, average = 32.75 days), regular manuscripts (25 decisions, average = 29.00 days), Software for Systematics and Evolution submissions (3 decisions, average = 6.33 days)

## **II. Associate Editors:**

The following AEs chose to step down at the end of 2012: Elizabeth Jockusch. On behalf of the Society, I thank Elizabeth for her excellent service.

The following individuals have graciously agreed to join the ranks of Associate Editorship: Benoit Dayrat, University of California, Merced (soon to be at Penn State University); John McCormack, Occidental College; Austin Mast, Florida State University.

## **Appendix 4**

The two pdf files submitted by the Editorial Office (Lulu Stader) contain many graphs and tables and will be placed online separately named as follows:

SSB\_Mid-Yr\_EdOffice Report Systematic Biology 2012end.pdf

SSB\_Mid-Yr\_EdOffice Report Systematic Biology Q1 2013.pdf

## **Appendix 5**

From: Seán Brady, Chair, SSB Awards Committee

Re: Awards Committee Mid-year report

This is my first year serving as the SSB Awards Chair, beginning my term 1 January 2013. It is my understanding that the awards budget will remain at \$31K for 2013, which is the funding level we had for 2012 and 2011. The following is a breakdown of the significant awards activities so far this year, and a summary of last year's activities.

### **Awards Budget**

From 2009–2011, the society funded only Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRA). But last year (2012) we agreed to bring back the mini-PEET type of funding. Because NSF's PEET program has been discontinued in its original form, the previous Awards Chair (Sydney Cameron) decided to call the resurrected award the mini-ARTS, after the new NSF ARTS program. NSF sent out an announcement of this funding opportunity in the form of a Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) in 2011. It seemed a good idea to model our award after the goals of this program: Advancing Revisionary Taxonomy and Systematics (ARTS). We advertised this on the SSB website and I sent application notices out to EvolDir and Taxacom. As stated on the SSB website:

“These awards are designed to allow SSB members (students, post-docs, and faculty) to spend a summer or semester apprenticed to an expert in a particular taxonomic group or to enhance revisionary taxonomic and systematics research in novel ways. Goals of this award program are to address constraints on our knowledge of undescribed biodiversity, assist in passing on taxonomic expertise before it is lost, increase the number of students with broad training in organismal biology and systematics, and support projects in biodiversity and taxonomy informatics as well as monographic and revisionary taxonomy.”

We anticipate funding 2-4 of these awards in 2013 @ the rate of 2-4K per award.

We have not reinstituted the International Travel awards.

### **Applications and Judges for GSRA and mini-ARTS this Year**

Submission deadline for the Graduate Student Research Awards (GSRA) and mini-ARTS awards was the usual date, 31 March 2013. Both programs were announced on the SSB website and the EvolDir and Taxacom listserves. We received 85 GSRA and 23 mini-ARTS proposals by the 31 March deadline. The number of applications for GSRA continued a trend in increased submissions over the past several years (see below). I have already arranged for 11 reviewers for GSRA and 2 for mini-ARTS. I am in the process of requesting one additional reviewer for GSRA and two for mini-ARTS, in order to bring the number of proposals each judge is asked to



rank to approximately 12. I will select Mayr Award judges once the student candidates have been selected, based on which potential judges will be attending the meetings.

#### **Applications and Scheduling for Mayr Talks this Year**

The Ernst Mayr deadline to submit talk abstracts is 19 April 2013, the final date for early-bird registration for Evolution 2013, located this year in Snowbird, Utah. All Mayr candidates will be notified of their status approximately 1 May 2013. Complete instructions are on the website at <http://systbio.org/?q=node/10>. A maximum of 12 Mayr contestants will be selected to participate, to fit with the allotted time for the Snowbird symposia. The Mayr symposium has been scheduled for Day 2 (Sunday, June 23, 8:00am – noon). I will attend the 2013 meetings, select the judges, and moderate the session.

#### **Results of GSRA, mini-ARTS, and Mayr Competitions from Last Year**

The number of applications for GSRA was 64 in 2011 and 74 in 2012. In 2012 we funded a total of 11 GSRA proposals (15% funding rate) with all but one award amounting to \$2,000 each (the other award was for \$1,500). The winners are posted on the SSB awards webpage, along with selected sample proposals.

The number of applications for mini-ARTS was 23 in 2012. Three of these proposals were funded, with awards ranging from ~\$2,600–\$3,000.

Ernst Mayr applicants increased this year by 9 (total 19) from last year's 8 total applicants (one withdrew before the meeting). The increase came after previous Awards Chair Sydney Cameron modified the listserve/website notice, emphasizing that applicants should be near completion of their PhD research and that this is the society's most prestigious award. The 2012 award was given to Chris Nasrallah for his talk entitled "Better Phylogenetics Through Population Genetics: An Example Using Compensatory Substitution in RNA."

## **Appendix 6**

Society of Systematic Biology Program Officer's Report 2013—Bryan Carstens

### **1. Two SSB Symposia for the 2013 Meeting are scheduled:**

*New Molecular Approaches to Species Delimitation.* (Sat June 22, 8-12)

Organizer: **Jean François Flot**

**Jonathon Marshall** (*Weber State University, USA – Associate Professor*) "A history of species delimitation methods applied in the *Sceloporus grammicus* species complex and what it tells us about the future"

**Nicolas Puillandre** (*Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France – Assistant Professor*): "A large-scale species delimitation method for hyperdiverse groups"

**Jean-François Flot** (MPI for Dynamics and Self-Organization) "Mutual allelic exclusivity as a criterion to delineate species"

**Tara Pelletier** (Ohio State University, USA – Ph D Student) "Using ecological niche models to predict species boundaries"

**Brian O'Meara** (University of Tennessee, USA – Assistant Professor) "Simulated likelihood for species delimitation and phylogeography"

**Rachel Whitaker** (University of Illinois, USA – Assistant Professor): "The architecture of genomic divergence in sympatric species of *Sulfolobus islandicus*"

*Current Advances and Challenges in Practical Phylogenomics.* (Tues June 25, 8-12)

Organizer: **David Posada**

**Alan Lemmon** (*Florida State University, USA – Assistant Professor*) – on sequence capture and anchored phylogenies.

**Lacey Knowles** (*University of Michigan, USA – Full Professor*) – on sampling and the role of lineage sorting in natural populations.

**Mike Harvey** (*Louisiana State University, USA – PhD student*) – on empirical intraspecific phylogenomics.

**Alexei Drummond** (*University of Auckland, New Zealand – Associate Professor*) - on model selection from multilocus data and \*BEAST.

**Leo Martins** (*University of Vigo, Spain – postdoctoral fellow*) - on building species trees in the presence of ILS, gene duplication and lateral transfer.

**Tandy Warnow** (*University of Texas at Austin, USA – Full Professor*) - on comparative performance of species tree methods.

**2. Organized a pre-meeting phylogenetics workshop as part of a membership drive (with a lot of help from Tracy Heath). Speakers (and Topics) will include:**

**Joe Felsenstein** (Phylip & model-based molecular phylogenetics)

**John Huelsenbeck** (Mr Bayes & Bayesian phylogenetics)

**Brant Faircloth** (Next Generation Sequencing for Phylogenetics)

**Jeet Sukumaran** (Bioinformatics and phylogenetics)

**Peter Beerli** (Migrate-n and phylogeography)

I would like to discuss a couple of topics related to the workshop at the mid year meeting.

**3.** Call for proposals for symposia for the 2014 meeting will be issued to members (via email) and published in a future issue of Systematic Biology. I will also submit a call on the EvolDir list-serve. I would like to solicit suggestions regarding the timing of these announcements. Proposals are due October 1st, 2013 (to Bryan Carstens) and will be distributed to the council prior to a vote to rank the proposals.