

ECOLOGICAL SECTION REPORT—2007

Highlights from Botany 2006 (Chico, CA)

Botany 2006 in Chico, CA was an exciting centennial celebration for the Botanical Society of America as well as the 30 year anniversary for the Ecological Section. Our section contributed greatly with 33 talks and 27 posters, a symposium (co-sponsored with \$1,000 support) entitled “Human Transformation of California: Botany, History, and Sociology”, and a special presentation on “History of the Ecological Section for the Past 30 Years”. Our business meeting on August 1 was attended by 44 people who shared their enthusiastic ideas while also sharing food and drink. Following are highlights from our section’s business meeting and student awards in Chico.

Ecological Section Meeting

- We welcomed **Jeffrey Walck**, our new section vice-chair. His term began after the meetings in Chico, and continues until 2009.
- Members present at the meeting unanimously supported to **change our bylaws** by deleting “serve as fiscal officer” from the responsibilities of our secretary and program director.
- The Ecological Section offered **Student Travel Awards** for the first time in 2006. **Thanks to Timothy Bell and Carl Weekley** for developing materials for these awards during the past year. We had a lively discussion relative to guidelines for those awards in the future. Consensus was to implement the following **guidelines for 2007**:
 - 1) Students do not need to be a member of BSA, but they must have a sponsor (i.e. advisor or coauthor) who is a member,
 - 2) Students must be the lead author, and be the person presenting a talk or poster at the meeting,
 - 3) No reference letters will be required,
 - 4) No question will be asked relative to why they want to be an ecologist,
 - 5) A set number of dollars (\$1000) will be available for awards with those dollars being divided between top candidates (hence the amount per student may vary from year to year and the amount may be on a sliding scale based on estimated costs for student), and
 - 6) Students who receive an award must wait a year to reapply rather than apply every year.

A suggestion was made to increase section dues to help support these awards. No decision was made regarding this increase.

- **Carl Weekley** (outgoing vice-chair) was thanked for his service to the Ecological Section by a gift of a cutting board with snacks and a BSA hat.
- **Carol Baskin** shared insight, memories and various documents related to the **history of the Ecological Section**, which was formed on May 30, 1976 in New Orleans with 70 charter members. The section had 335 members in 1977, just one year after it formed. A photo taken at Botany 2006 in Chico, CA including three of its charter members (Carol Baskin, Jerry Baskin, James Quinn) was attached to our section’s fall newsletter.

Student Awards from Ecological Section (presented at society banquet in Chico)

- **Best Oral Presentation to Cristina Aragon** (co-authors Adrian Escudero and Fernando Valladares from the Universidad Rey Juan Carlos) for “Relationship between physiological status and fitness-related traits in a semi-arid specialist, *Helianthemum squamatum*, in two contrasting scenarios”. \$150.
- **Best Poster to Jessica Rabenold** (co-author Candace Galen from the University of Missouri-Columbia) for “Friend or foe: effects of ants on fitness of an alpine wildflower, *Polemonium viscosum*”. \$150.
- **Student Travel Awards to Rebecca Anderson** of Illinois State University (advisor Diane Byers) who presented a talk on “Selection and adaptation in heterogeneous soil nutrient environments” and to **Marissa Jernegan** of Eastern Illinois University (advisor Janice Coons) who presented a poster on “Seed longevity of *Lesquerella ludoviciana*, an endangered species of Illinois sand prairies”. \$500 each.
- **Thanks to our judges** for the oral presentations (**Margaret Devall, David Gorchov, and Katherine Preston**), for posters (**James Quinn, Jeffrey Walck, and Donald Young**), and for student travel awards (**Timothy Bell and Carl Weekley**).

Botany & Plant Biology 2007 (Chicago, IL)

Ecological Section Planned Activities

1) Sessions including **34 posters** and **38 papers**

2) **Co-sponsors** for the following **symposia**:

- Conservation Biology of Eastern Tallgrass Prairie: Integrating Issues of Management and Restoration for the 21st Century (\$600 support)
- Evolution in a Glaciated Landscape: Contribution of Endemism to Great Lakes Biodiversity (Name only support)
- Plant-Fungal Interactions (Name only support)
- The Evolution and Maintenance of Mixed Mating Systems (\$600 support)
- The Functional Significance of Leaf Shape Variation—Towards a Consensus from Gene to Community (\$400 support)

3) **Co-sponsor** for the following **workshop**:

- Measuring Eco-physiology of Plants from Cells to Ecosystems with Nondestructive Techniques (\$400 support)

Items of Interest

- We look forward to working with **Colette Amici** who has volunteered to help lead an effort for members of the Ecological Section to develop topics for “**plant talking points**” on the BSA website. These webpages will be simple thinking topics that might highlight important ecological concepts, and will be used for discussions by middle and high school students. We will discuss this activity in Chicago.
- A change is being recommended in the **amount of our section dues to fund our Student Travel Awards** which were initiated for Botany 2006 in Chico, CA.

Currently dues are \$2/year, generating \$800-900/year. The recommendation is to increase dues to \$4/year to provide a large portion of the money needed to support our Student Travel Awards which are \$1000/year. Without this increase, the Ecological Section will be faced with either reducing the amount provided for student awards or the amount provided to support symposia/workshops. This recommendation will be discussed in more detail followed by a vote in Chicago.

Student Travel Awards

The Ecological Section had 25 applicants for **Student Travel Awards** for Botany & Plant Biology 2007 making it difficult to choose from the many impressive applications. Congratulations to the following students who were selected to receive these awards:

- **Cassandra Broadway** of Grand Valley State University who will present a poster on “Growth and Nodulation in *Trifolium repens* and *Glycine max* in Response to *Ailanthus altissima* Extracts” (co-authors Jeff Dock and Gary Greer). \$300.
- **John Geiger** of Florida International University who will present a paper on “Experimental Seed and Seedling Performance of the Endangered Vine *Ipomoea microdactyla* Griseb. (Convolvulaceae). \$400.
- **Daniel Hewins** of Rider University who will present a poster on “Jack of All Trades: Biological Invasion Facilitated by Use of Multiple Forms of Nitrogen” (co-authors Danielle Cheong, Sheena Gayomba, and Laura Hyatt). \$300.

Thanks to our **judges** for these student travel awards (**Timothy Bell, Jeffrey Walck, and Carl Weekley**).

Respectfully submitted,
Janice Coons
Chair, BSA Ecological Section