Division of Animal Behavior

DAB Officers & Representatives

Jennifer Gumm
Chair 2016-2019

Erica Westerman
Secretary 2018-2021

Scott MacDougall-Shackleton
Program Officer 2017-2020

Sydney Hope
Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee Representative 2018-2021

DAB 2018 Best Student Presentation Awards

Thank you to all of the students who participated in the 2018 Best Student Presentation competitions! With 43 student competitors and 40 judges across the inaugural Zuk and Adkins-Regan competitions, many of our members were involved in these competitions, and we are proud of this high level of participation. We had a fantastic inaugural Marlene Zuk Best Student Oral Presentation, with six finalists giving excellent talks to a packed room. We also had an impressive 25 students competing for the first annual Elizabeth Adkins-Regan Award for Best Student Poster.

The inaugural Marlene Zuk Award went to Sydney Hope for her oral presentation titled, “Incubation temperature and social context affect nest exodus performance of precocial ducklings.”

Sydney is a PhD student in Dr. Bill Hopkins’ lab at Virginia Tech where she studies how different factors (e.g., clutch size, weather, urbanization) influence avian parental care behavior, and how the temperature at which eggs are incubated (an important aspect
of parental care) influences the behavior of avian offspring once they hatch. Her presentation in San Francisco described how incubation temperature and social interactions influence a crucial early-life behavior in wood duck ducklings: the nest exodus. You can read more about Sydney’s research here: www.ecophys.fishwild.vt.edu/sydney-hope.

The inaugural Elizabeth Adkins-Regan award went to Margaret Tanner for her poster entitled, “Effects of physical activity on behavior in house crickets.”

Margaret is a graduate student in Dr. Benjamin Greenwood’s Exercise Behavioral Neuroscience lab at the University of Colorado, Denver, where she studies the effects of physical activity on monoaminergic neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, norepinephrine, and octopamine, a norepinephrine analog, in the house cricket (Acheta domestica). One of her research goals is to determine the effects of physical activity on the monoamine-dependent behavior, bite-force. In the study Margaret presented, male and female common house crickets were exposed to physical activity that was preceded by and also followed by a measurement of bite-force capacity. She observed that bite-force capacity increases following physical activity. Initial data suggests these patterns are conserved across the animal kingdom. You can read more about Margaret’s research at the Greenwood Lab website: https://clas.ucdenver.edu/exercise-neuroscience-lab.

Many congratulations to our two best presentation winners, and a big thank you to all the judges who helped evaluate the student talks and posters!

Thank you to all the student presenters and DAB judges that make these awards possible.

We owe a huge thank you to Michele Johnson, our outgoing Secretary, for her excellent work over the past few years. Michele played a big role in getting the student awards named, and she has streamlined the poster judging process, while increasing the amount of feedback we are able to provide the students. She helped me learn the ins and outs of DAB and SICB over the last few years, and I cannot thank her enough. Most importantly, our students and the DAB division are both better off due to her efforts. Thank you, Michele!

In other personnel news, we are excited to have Sydney Hope join us as the new Student/Postdoc Representative for the Division and Joel Slade assist us in our Social Media Outreach efforts (see their bios above and below). As always, if you are interested in becoming more involved with the DAB, please contact me or any of the other divisional officers.

Message from the Program Officer
Scott MacDougall-Shackleton, DPO.DAB@sicb.org

We had a great scientific program in San Francisco. Thanks to all attendees and presenters for a fantastic meeting. The social at the Thirsty Bear was also a highlight of the meeting.

Symposia continue to be central to SICB annual meeting, and the Division of Animal Behaviour co-sponsored five symposia in San Francisco: “Science Through Narrative: Engaging Broad Audiences”, “Sensory Feedback and Animal Locomotion: Perspectives from Biology and Biorobotics”, “Understanding the Evolution of Endocrine Systems Variation through Large-scale
Comparative Analyses”, “Science in the Public Eye: Leveraging Partnerships”, and “Behavioral and Physiological Adaptation to Urban Environments”.

Symposium proposals for the 2019 meeting in Tampa have been received, but it is never too soon to start thinking about symposium proposals for the 2020 meeting in Austin. The symposium proposals for Austin are due on August 24, 2018. If you have any questions about organizing a symposium, please send me an email or flag me down. The work is not too onerous, but it does require some planning and organization. We would like the breadth of animal behavior research to continue to be reflected in the symposia and resultant publications in the society’s journal, Integrative and Comparative Biology.

In recent years, our symposia have mostly been jointly sponsored with other divisions. This is great because it reflects the integrative nature of our work. However, it would also be great to have an upcoming symposium that has behaviour as the key focus. If there are hot and developing topics in behavioural ecology or animal behaviour that you think someone should organize a symposium on, please let me know.

Message from the Secretary

Erica Westerman, Secretary.DAB@sicb.org

As I take on the role of secretary for DAB, I would first like to thank Michele Johnson, our previous secretary, for her years of service and hard work for our division. She did an excellent job for us, and started a number of secretarial traditions, such as newsletter research highlights and giving judge feedback to student competitors, that I look forward to continuing in the coming years. Many, many thanks, Michele!

Many thank yous as well to the poster judges who volunteered their time to engage and give feedback to the student contestants in the Adkins-Regan competitions. Many of you provided thoughtful feedback, which has been passed on to the student participants. For the student participants who would like to receive feedback, it is not too late! Please send me an e-mail and I will send you the judge’s comments.

Our division has an ever-increasing presence on social media, and Joel Slade has agreed to take on the role of enhancing and managing the DAB Social Media Outreach. Thank you, and welcome Joel! We encourage you to follow @SICB_DAB on Twitter, or join the “SICB Division of Animal Behavior” group on Facebook for late-breaking information on activities of the division and news about our members. You also have the opportunity to participate in SICB’s online Researchers Database. If you would like to have your information included in this database, please send me a word document or PDF with your name, a brief description of your work, and a high-resolution .jpg photograph, at Secretary.DAB@sicb.org.

Message from the Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee Representative

Sydney Hope

I’m excited to join the team as the new Student/Post-Doctoral Affairs Committee Representative for DAB! We had a great meeting this year, and we’re already starting to plan for next year’s meeting in Tampa.

The SPDAC is always looking for ways to help students and post-docs with professional development. In the past, we have held workshops and roundtables (e.g., grant writing, publishing vs. outreach). If you have any suggestions for a topic that could be addressed at the next meeting, please email me (shope@vt.edu).

Additionally, DAB is looking for ways to help students and post-docs become more involved with the division. If you have suggestions for an event that DAB could host that would help students and post-docs network and become more involved (examples from other divisions include DCE’s “Lunch with a Comparative Endocrinologist” and DEE’s “Beers and Brains”), please let me know!

Introducing our new DAB Social Media Outreach Coordinator: Joel Slade

Joel is a vertebrate evolutionary and behavioral ecologist who is interested in the role that immune genes play on host-pathogen interactions, communication, mate choice, and population divergence. Joel completed his undergraduate honors degree at Dalhousie University (Halifax, NS, Canada) in Marine Biology and Oceanography. During his BSc he found courses that focused on animal behavior to be the most interesting, therefore, he pursued a MSc on
sexual selection in birds at Saint Mary’s University (Halifax, NS, Canada). He also worked on birds for his graduate work at the University of Western Ontario (London, ON, Canada), where his PhD research focused on the role of the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) on immunity, signals, and mate choice in song sparrows. Joel is currently a postdoctoral research associate at the BEACON Center for the Study of Evolution in Action (Michigan State University; East Lansing, MI, USA), where he is researching chemical ecology, immunogenetics, behavior, and microbial symbionts in a model songbird that is known to use chemical communication, the dark-eyed junco. For more information about Joel and his research, please check out his website joelslade-biologist.com and add him to your Twitter feed @EvoEcoJoel.

Divisional Candidates for Chair
(in reverse alphabetical order)

Kendra Sewall
Current position: Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences and School of Neuroscience, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA
Education: B.S., Biology, Middlebury College (2000); PhD, Animal Behavior, UC Davis (2008);
Professional experience: SPIRE Postdoctoral Fellow, UNC Chapel Hill (2008-2010); NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow, Duke University (2010-2013)
SICB Activities: meeting participant and session chair, member of DAB and DCE, symposium organizer 2014 (DAB/DCE), judge for best student poster (DAB)
Other Memberships: Society for Behavioral Neuroendocrinology and Animal Behavior Society
Research Interests: Research in my lab aims to understand how environmental conditions shape the brain and behavior. We do this work in songbirds because they offer an opportunity to examine the influence of the environment on a specialized form of learning. Our work therefore includes studies of behavior, endocrine and neuroendocrine mechanisms, and cognition. Current projects in my lab address the impacts of social dynamics on postnatal brain and behavioral development and the consequence of urbanization for neural and behavioral phenotypes.
Goals Statement: I have been coming to SICB since my first year of graduate school and identify most strongly with the DAB. I feel that the SICB DAB is ideally positioned to advance truly integrative animal behavior research. If elected chair of DAB I would build on the great recent initiatives to highlight how central animal behavior is to the research of many of the scientists attending SICB. I would also prioritize (1) career development for trainees and early career scientists, (2) support for members from groups under-represented in the sciences, and (3) promotion of outreach and education in integrative animal behavior. Specific efforts would include:

- Ensuring that any symposia supported by DAB include presenters from early career stages and/or under-represented groups.
- Supporting workshops that offer students and early career scientist training and networking opportunities and supporting funds or reduced costs for students.
- Continuing to provide platforms and recognition for research by students, early career scientists, and members of groups underrepresented in the sciences, such as poster and talk awards.
- Encouraging members to present or share teaching and outreach initiatives at annual meetings or through the SICB website.

Caitlin Gabor
Current Position: Professor of Biology, Texas State University
Education: B.A. University of California at Santa Barbara; M.S. and Ph.D. University of Louisiana at Lafayette
Professional Experience: NSF Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Texas, Austin (1997-99), Chair ABS Public Affairs Committee (2009-2014); Associate Editor for Behavioral Ecology and Sociobiology (2005-present) and Amphibia-Reptilia (2009-present)
SICB Activities: Meeting Participant, Member of DAB, DEE, and DEDE
Other Memberships: Animal Behavior Society, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists, Sigma Xi
Research Interests: My research program spans behavioral ecology to conservation physiology. My lab studies the historical forces of natural and sexual selection on speciation in a unisexual-bisexual species complex of live bearing fish from a behavioral and physiological standpoint. We also explore predator-prey dynamics from a conservation perspective. Most recently my lab has been focusing on the consequences of anthropogenic factors on amphibian declines from a behavioral and conservation physiology perspective.

Goals Statement: For many years colleagues told me that I would love SICB meetings. They were correct. I finally attended my first SICB meeting in 2014 and have not looked back. I especially appreciated the Division socials (especially DAB) where you could meet and talk to so many people doing similar research all in one place. I found the socials to be a real equalizer with graduate students and faculty alike all hanging out together. This plus it was stimulating to listen to talks with an integrative perspective on behavior and physiology. My students have also benefited from SICB meetings and DAB in particular as they are exposed to novel methods and interesting integrative experiments on physiology and behavior.

If I were to be elected chair, I would aim to continue to support students and postdocs via pursuing funding opportunities and developing workshops and events that provide opportunities for students to engage with faculty and expand their research. Following up on this idea, it would be nice to incorporate breakout socials during symposia to increase the opportunities for junior members to interact with faculty and the key players in the field associated with the symposia. I would also like to further the divisions involvement in scientific outreach by having sign-up opportunities during registration for students (or faculty) to volunteer to write Twitter feeds (during the symposia) that are written for the general public and highlighting the exciting aspects of the research being presented.