



International Society for Neuroethology

Newsletter/September 2016

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The Prez Says

Catharine Rankin
President of the ISN



Happy September Everyone!

For those in the Northern Hemisphere that means back to school, while in the Southern Hemisphere it's getting close to break time! Beginnings and endings...that is part of the theme of this letter. We now have the results of the election for the officers of the society which means the beginnings of terms for some and the completion of service for others. A very, very close election for President-elect was decided in favor of **Eric Warrant** of Lund University. We welcome him as president-elect of ICN and thank **Martin Giurfa** for his commitment he displayed to the ISN in running for the position. Next I want to thank completing councilors

Amir Ayali, Ari Berkowitz, Melissa Coleman, Rüdiger Krahe, José Peña, Sarah Woolley, and Sakiko Shiga, all of whom served as ISN councilors from 2012 –2016. In addition, Early Career Representative **Cynthia Harley** also completed her term. Grateful thanks to all for your important service to the ISN for the past few years.

Welcome aboard to the newly elected councilors who will serve from 2016 – 2020: **Almut Kelber, Daniel Tomsic, Roy Ritzmann, Cole Gilbert, Rüdiger Krahe, Elke Buschbeck, and Paloma Gonzalez-Bellido!** In addition, we had a tie in the voting for Early Career representative. Because both **Gabriella Wolff** and **Sara Wasserman** received the same number of votes, they will serve a joint term. As per our bylaws, they will together (along with **Kate Feller**) have 2 council votes. The election was very close and we thank all of the dedicated candidates who agreed to stand for election. Please extend a warm welcome to all of the newly elected Officers of the ISN!

The other vote now concluded was for the site of the 2020 International Congress. Competition was again extremely tight. The winning bid (drumroll please!) is **Lisbon, Portugal!** We thank Cambridge for their bid and hope that a future congress will take place in Cambridge. Start planning now for a trip to Portugal during summer 2020.

Upcoming events: The Neuroethology Gordon Research Conference (GRC) and Graduate Research Seminar (GRS) will be held in **Les Diablerets, Switzerland** June 18 – 23, 2017. These are great meetings and provide a great opportunity for students to meet many active researchers. See the note that follows from GRC Co-Chairs **Melissa Coleman** and **Keith Sillar**, and watch the GRC website for Program details. Don't forget that students may apply for Heiligenberg Travel Awards to attend the GRS/GRC. Also, we are already gearing up for a fantastic International Congress in Brisbane, Australia, in summer 2018. The Local Organizing Committee is headed by **Justin Marshall** and the Program Committee is led by **Harold Zakon** and **Karin Nordström**. These folks are already busy attending to thousands of details, ensuring we will have a wonderful experience in Brisbane. I know from experience that it takes a lot of work to put on a Congress. We are very lucky to have such a committed membership that there is never a shortage of volunteers willing to step up and share the load! I am already looking forward to seeing the fruits of all of the volunteer labor in Brisbane.

We are still almost two years out from the 2018 ICN, but I do want to remind you that six months before this congress there will be a call for nominations for new Fellows of the ISN. Check out our webpage for the list of current fellows and if one of your favorite neuroethology heroes is not there, please read the nomination process on

the website and submit a nomination. The strength and community we experience today in neuroethology is founded on the contributions of researchers who preceded us and developed our field into what we have today. Nominate people that you feel have made a difference in the field!

Finally, you can stay in the *neuroethology loop* between congresses and newsletters by taking time to check out and contribute to the ISN Facebook page. Here you'll find links to really cool science, job postings and updates about all things neuroethology!! The more participants in the conversation, the better.

Catharine Rankin
President, ISN



2017 GORDON RESEARCH CONFERENCE PREVIEW

2017 GRC Co-Chairs **Melissa Coleman** and **Keith Sillars** have provided the following update.

We are excited about the 2017 Gordon Research Conference (GRC) on Neuroethology: Brain, Behavior and Evolution (<http://www.grc.org/sites.aspx?id=26>). The conference will be held at Les Diablerets Conference Center in Switzerland, June 18-23, 2017. The working theme for this GRC is **Strategies for Survival**. We are currently working on the schedule and list of potential speakers. Potential session topics include predator-prey interactions, the use of toxins, social interactions, and circuits underlying behaviors. We will have a special session in honor of the memory of **Annemarie Surlykke**, who was elected to be a co-chair of this meeting. Look on the GRC website for updates on the conference. We know this will be a great venue and hope to have a fun and diverse group of speakers. Applications for this meeting must be submitted by May 21, 2017. Note that the Neuroethology GRC is a welcoming, inclusive meeting. If you have never previously attended a GRC, why not give it a try?

The GRC will be preceded by a Gordon Research Seminar (GRS) on June 17 & 18, chaired by **Lena Veit** and **Eva Fischer**. The GRS is an opportunity for graduate students and post-docs to present their research to peers and future colleagues, and to interact with a senior faculty mentor for career and life advice. GRS attendees should also plan to attend the GRC. Follow this link to learn more about the GRS:

<http://www.grc.org/programs.aspx?id=14999>



EARLY CAREER PERSPECTIVE: KIDS & ACADEMIA

Early Career Representative **Cynthia Harley** (Metropolitan State University-Twin Cities) shares her thoughtful views and comments from ISN members on a topic of broad interest to all in academia, from those considering starting a family to senior scientists in the position of judging job candidates. Cynthia also sent photos of her son Malcolm that are sure to raise your oxytocin levels.



A few years ago, I found myself in Japan for the Neuroethology congress. I was remarking to my thesis advisor about how horrible my jetlag was—I felt nauseous and exhausted and it was not going away. Soon, I figured out that what I had was not jetlag at all—I was pregnant. From a personal perspective I was incredibly excited, but from a professional perspective I was terrified of the potential repercussions of having a child on my career. I feel like most of us will have children if we want children: the bigger issue is not whether or not to have kids, it is when. This was echoed by many colleagues upon my asking them what the *right* time was for having children. While I will admit that having a child 4 months before starting a position as an assistant professor has been difficult, in my case, it was simply what happened, and I do not know that it would be any less difficult at any other time. But, being a scientist I felt compelled to collect data. I interviewed several neuroethologists (male and female) who had children at different stages in their careers. Their responses are kept anonymous in this piece to allow for freer expression of opinions.

One male responder eloquently stated, *During graduate school, having children would take away focus on research, during postdoctoral training having children would take time away from research and securing a job, and as junior faculty having children would take away time from starting a lab, grant writing, and securing tenure. If we waited for all this to happen we can forget*

about it. My questioning revealed that there is no time where having a child will not impact your career in a negative manner, but still I wanted to know, are some times better than others? Not unexpectedly, I learned that each career stage has its own pros and cons.

Grad student: During these years students have limited resources, and a need for productivity. However, those that had children during these years stated that it was difficult, with one responder in a dual academic career couple admitting *The bad part is that it almost certainly delayed my work, and definitely derailed my wife's work.* However, it was not a completely horrible situation because of the flexibility they had: *we were able to take time in a way. With no clock to punch, no set schedule, we could be home when we needed to be. [...] I can't imagine doing it now when we both have full schedules.* They also stated that they had energy, and that it was easier to approach later parts of their career with older children.

Post doc: During these years careers are uncertain, many move to other parts of the country or even other countries, and resources are often stretched (though not as thin as during the graduate years). Many responders expressed the benefits of flexibility with hours and youthful energy. However, others acknowledged the difficulty of having children at this critical stage when pushing toward a demanding career. *The postdoc years are essentially anti-mother and the critical stage when women drop out of science. Having my own funding was key to being able to have kids, although it meant it took longer to get out papers.*

Faculty: This stage brings with it stability both financially and geographically, however, one responder stated *Work life balance is challenging when trying to obtain a faculty position and then tenure. [...] constant pressure to fulfill two roles on a full time basis.* One faculty member waited for tenure and stated *If I did it any earlier while an assistant prof I would have stopped my tenure clock for a year because it has certainly slowed down my productivity (unsurprisingly).* Another stated, *being a faculty member doesn't open up tons of time for you to shower on your children.* Another responder shared that they were advised to wait until tenure, however, with rapidly increasing durations of postdoctoral training, this is not an option for many young scientists, especially women. But, at the end of the day, all of the academic parents agreed, regardless of your position in your career, you make it work.

What is the secret to making it work?

One thing all responders had in common was spousal support. Many responders stated that they relied heavily



on their spouse for the majority of the childcare duties. One even stated *there are so many demands on this job that if your partner is not there to pick up the slack, your probability of falling off*

the academia wagon increases. However, in some families this is not an option, especially in some dual academic career families. In those cases, many admitted that they worked as a team with their spouse, splitting duties equally. One responder from a dual career academic family stated, *I think that [the kids] didn't really slow down either of our careers, but that is probably because we shared equally. That said, I am sure that we could have been more successful if we did not have kids. That is, we could have spent more time working. [...] but I am happy about how it all worked out.* So when is the right time? One person stated: *My advice is to have them while you still have energy to chase toddlers AND write manuscripts.*

Is having children in academia just like having children if you were in any other career path? The short answer is no. There are many additional challenges imposed on academics.

Geography

As our training often dictates our location, we are not often near family which can help with the childcare load.



Some responders did not live in the same state or even country as their spouse during part of their training.

Family leave

Maternity and paternity policies are wildly different in other countries. In the US we get up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave. This is the least generous leave policy in the world with the exception of Papua New Guinea! While some institutions allow for 6 weeks of paid leave, this cannot come from direct costs on an NSF or NIH grant and must be achieved via other means, usually by billing indirect costs. In comparison to our potential for 12 weeks of leave (6 weeks of paid leave) in the US, the UK offers 6 weeks at 90% salary and an additional up to 27 weeks unpaid, and Germany and Japan offer 14 weeks at 100% and 60% pay and up to a year of time off. Many countries also offer paternity leave for fathers. While longer unpaid leave may work for some, others still need money for rent and food. It is no small wonder why leave duration has remained a

hot button issue in the media. That said, even if you had a long leave scenario with pay, it would result in a lag in publication timing. Such lags could result in it being more difficult to obtain a faculty position. I have known scientists whom have come off of leave early to avoid such a lag.

Finances

One cannot overlook the costs associated with children and childcare, and moving for the best academic opportunity may not result in being near familial support systems. During graduate and postdoctoral years, low salaries may make affording childcare unobtainable. One responder stated, *Until trainees are paid reasonable salaries for the work they do, childcare is out of reach for many people. Then again, there's a decline in energy and fertility, especially for women, so I've seen friends who waited desperate to start a family. I'd heartily recommend having a kid early if support was better or if the job had more normal hours or better pay.* One postdoc, who is a father of two living in the US, stated that his family qualifies for WIC, EBT food credits, and Medicaid and that this helps them to afford their child care expenses. [Note: these are US government-based anti-poverty programs.] Another responder stated that they split childcare and the lab into shifts so that they would not have to rely on outside childcare. And yet another, managed to have a space in their office where their child could play while they work, something which does not work with every child or office space. Fortunately, recent policy changes are in play to increase postdoc and graduate student stipends within the US. Perhaps these sorts of changes will open more timing options to those seeking academic careers.

Closing Remarks

Undoubtedly, having children (especially as an academic) is a task which requires some creativity to tackle. My responders were mostly from the US and have enjoyed successful academic careers. This is a very biased sample, and I cannot discern the percentage of neuroethologists leaving academia as a result of family issues. Furthermore, these numbers may be different now than they were 5, 10, or 20 years ago. I did get one response where the scientist's fixed term faculty position was terminated due to *lack of funding* upon their announcement of pregnancy. While there are laws in place that are supposed to protect against firing due to fecundity, they are not completely protective.

What can neuroethologists do?

- Issues of policies about parenting and parental leave are currently being reexamined at many levels, and it would behoove us to be ahead of the

game. Perhaps we should re-evaluate what is currently being offered and push science funding agencies to change their policies.

- Thankfully, salaries of trainees are being re-evaluated and that will very likely help to start to combat the issue of paying for childcare. I am still stunned that one of the solutions to this issue that was used by a responder is to use a low income public assistance program. This is a highly educated, highly trained person collecting food stamps. Is there any better indication that salaries are too low?
- One thing that can be done is that more institutions can offer childcare or establish discounts at local childcare facilities for employees. If there are facilities, it is worth investigating the realities of what is on offer, including cost and wait time. When I found out that I was pregnant, my institution had a daycare. I called and quickly found out that their cost was no better than surrounding facilities and like surrounding facilities, their waitlist was over a year, meaning I would have to have registered my child before getting pregnant. I confronted the institution and was told that their undergraduates did not need the use of a childcare facility, so they did not see the utility in another one. This attitude neglects the needs of faculty, staff, postdocs, and graduate students. We fortunately found a different daycare, but had we not there is no way I could have asked my non-academic husband to quit his much higher paying job to care for the child while I chased a low-paying academic dream. I would have had to *take time off* which inevitably would have resulted in me leaving academia. I cannot help but wonder how many have been forced to make this difficult decision.
- Discrimination remains an issue. It is still out there and alive and we may not even realize that we could be the ones stoking the fire by being intolerant of publication delays or lapses in employment. This is extremely difficult to guard against, because when you have two job candidates with all else equal it of course makes sense to pick the one with the largest number of high-impact publications. For this, I have no solution other than to say, before you say things like *this candidate has been a post doc for a very long time* or *why do they have a gap in publications*, it would be a good idea to consider

that there may be a reason for these situations that has absolutely nothing do with scientific talent.



LATE SUMMER READING SUGGESTIONS

ISN Secretary **Susan Fahrbach** (Wake Forest University) has a few summer reading suggestions may for neuroethologists. Two books and two short opinion pieces caught her attention this summer.

You are definitely an academic when your cure for reading papers and reports all day in the office and lab is – what else – more reading. Here’s a few suggestions that you may not be able to cite in your next proposal but might still inform your scholarship.

1. The subtitle of *Governing Behavior* by ISN member **Ari Berkowitz** is *How Nerve Cell Dictatorships and Democracies Control Everything We Do*. The dust jacket cover features a barn owl with its head tilted and a blue crab with its claws raised high, a combination no self-respecting neuroethologist can easily resist. Chapter 1 briefly explains the author’s metaphors, but if you read into Chapter 2 you will find a compelling explanation of why understanding the electrical activity of neurons is so important for understanding behavior. This chapter ends with a clear statement of the relevance to human behavior of studying neural circuits in non-human animals. Even if the author’s choice of metaphor is not the choice you would make, you will want to continue reading as Berkowitz’ informal, accessible prose style takes you through the history of neural circuit approaches to behavior and reviews key experiments. Baseball fans will especially appreciate Chapter 8. I am already looking forward to reading this book with the undergraduate researchers in my lab during the coming year.

2. I had the pleasure of meeting **Craig Packer** earlier this year. Packer is professor of ecology, evolution, and behavior and director of the Lion Research Center at the University of Minnesota. Of course Packer studies lions in Africa, not in Minnesota. His 2015 book, based on extensive field research in Tanzania, is titled *Lions in the Balance, Man-Eaters, Manes, and Men with Guns*. If you want to understand why it is so difficult to put our hard won knowledge to use conserving even species as charismatic as the African lion, this book is a good starting point, let Packer be your guide. It’s a complex story you won’t soon forget.

3. If you follow the ISN on Facebook, you are already aware of the interesting and important conversation ISN

Past-President Paul Katz started at ICN 2016 about the use of the term *model organism*. Paul has since distilled his thoughts into a brief article published in *Current Biology* this past July. If you are the type of reviewer who is forced to think all too often that *two species do not a phylogenetic comparison make*, this article is for you. Actually, this article is for all biologists, and you should not only read it yourself, but take the time to share it with your students.

4. **ISN Fellow John Hildebrand** is another fan of the ISN Facebook page. It was through a comment John posted to Facebook this past summer that I became aware of a short article in *PNAS* titled *NIH Must Support Broadly Focused Basic Research* by Allan C. Spradling of the Carnegie Institution for Science. As a neuroethologist, you know in your heart that a “mammals only” funding strategy is sadly narrow and ultimately unproductive, but now you can be inspired by Spradling’s eloquence to make your case with fuller force to your non-neuroethologist colleagues and elected representatives. Yes, alleviating human suffering is an important research goal, but Spradling makes the case that it will take longer to achieve this goal if all we study is human suffering.

1. Berkowitz, A. (2016). *Governing Behavior*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
2. Packer, C. (2015) *Lions in the Balance*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL.
3. Katz, P.S. (2016) ‘Model organisms’ in the light of evolution. *Current Biology* 26, R649-R650.
4. Spradling, A.C. (2016) NIH must support broadly focused basic research. *PNAS USA* 113, 8340-8342.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Postdoctoral positions in the new Jarvis Laboratory at the Rockefeller University, NY, NY, USA

ISN Fellow John Hildebrand sent the following announcement on behalf of Erich Jarvis:

As some of you know, I have accepted a new position at The Rockefeller University in New York and will be starting later this year. This includes re-opening the Rockefeller Field Center for business, where we will be setting up a large breeding operation to create transgenic songbirds for the community. I will also have lab space at the New York Genome Center and at Hunter College.

For these efforts, I am looking to fill at least 6 post doc positions within the coming year. The expertise I am looking for range from experimental skills in virology, cell and molecular biology, electrophysiology, animal behavior and/or neuroscience broadly, as well as computational biology/bioinformatics. Having one or

more of these skills in combinations is a plus. Further, the ability to work in teams, think broadly, take on ambitious projects, and be efficient at it, are plusses. The projects include, deciphering brain mechanisms of complex traits, like vocal learning, engineering brain circuits, and performing large-scale genomic research for the bird 10,000 (B10K) and vertebrate 10,000 genomes (G10K) projects.

If you are interested, know someone that is, or would like to recommend someone, please send me your/their resume, and a brief statement of interest (E-mail: jarvis@neuro.duke.edu).

You can find out more about some of our research efforts at: https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A-jarvislab.net&d=DQIFAg&c=cIK7kQUTWtAVEOVIgvi0NU5BOUHhpN0H8p7CSfnc_gI&r=XpGqnFKnJHmx0CQn9Ipv8BoZo-WGWpT8WvIwieK2nBI&m=rMbgxAheqzKJczA-8itTqSJe3fa2fXp00fvkaULPXKg&s=Q5UsDvawZgNDR1Cj0oGuE--Q7Bct_KgIMuxgiQJgIg&e=

Tenure Track Faculty Position at St. Olaf College in Northfield, MN, USA in Neuroethology/Neurobiology

The Biology Department and Neuroscience Program at St. Olaf College invite applications for a position in Biology with research experience in the neural basis of behavior. Teaching assignments will include Neuroethology, Cellular/Molecular Neuroscience, and Animal Behavior. Potential for excellence in teaching in a liberal arts setting and for developing a productive research program suitable for both undergraduate collaboration and external funding are required; postdoctoral research is strongly preferred. Application review begins September 21, 2016.

More information can be found at this link: <https://stolaf.hiretouch.com/job-details?jobID=1191&job=neurobiology-neuroethology-tenure-track-2017>

Tenure Track Faculty Position at the University of Minnesota, USA, in Animal Physiology

The College of Biological Sciences at the University of Minnesota announces a tenure-track position in Animal Physiology in the Department of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior. This is a 9-month appointment expected to be

hired at the Assistant Professor level, although more senior applicants may be considered as well. We welcome applications from organismal biologists conducting integrative and/or comparative research in any area of animal physiology related to the behavior, evolution, or ecology of either vertebrate or invertebrate animals. We seek outstanding applicants whose research spans two or more of the department's disciplinary strengths in behavior, evolution, and ecology. We are especially interested in applicants whose research program would also establish natural bridges to other scientists on campus who conduct research in various areas of organismal biology (e.g., neurobiology, sensory biology, developmental biology, and endocrinology, among others). Primary teaching responsibilities include a large-enrollment course in animal physiology taught in an active-learning classroom and an upper-division course.

The successful candidate will develop a strong, extramurally funded research program, pursue a teaching program in animal physiology, advise undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral researchers, and contribute to professional service. Faculty positions at the University of Minnesota provide outstanding opportunities for collaboration among researchers in many disciplines, and participation in several excellent graduate programs.

Required Qualifications:

- Ph.D. (or foreign equivalent) in animal physiology or a related discipline, and appropriate post-doctoral experience
- Strong publication record in disciplines related to the position
- Evidence of potential to initiate and sustain extramurally funded research
- Demonstrated effectiveness in communicating with multiple audiences
- Evidence of commitment to equity and diversity
- Teaching experience

How to Apply:

This position will remain open until filled, but for full consideration, completed applications must be received by November 4, 2016. We expect to complete our review of applications by December and conduct on-campus interviews in February 2017. Questions about the position should be addressed to Sharon Jansa (jansa003@umn.edu).

DON'T GO PHISHING WITH MEMBERS OF THE ISN COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The ISN has become aware of recent phishing attacks using the names of ISN Council and Executive Committee members. Recent phishing e-mails look as though they are coming from ISN leadership to other ISN members. Often the e-mail requests immediate financial assistance in the form of a short-term loan. Don't respond! Immediately delete any such e-mail. Phishing works because people are often willing to respond to e-mails from someone they know. Do not become a phishing victim by responding to these e-mails or clicking on any links therein. Note that no member of the ISN Council or Executive Committee will ever ask you directly for money. We leave membership renewals and donations in the hands of our capable management team at Allen Press. It is important to note that phishing using the names of ISN leadership does NOT mean that our website has been compromised. All of the names that have been used are listed on the public part of the website, and that is where the phishers phind them.

