



# Newsletter

Number 20

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November 2002

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### **From the Editor**

Firstly, a reminder that the next Biennial, which will be held at Trinity College in Dublin, is now less than 12 months away. Look out for more information on the website or by snail-mail.

If you aren't already reading (or participating in) the debate on the future of systematics, and in particular the role of the internet, in the journal *Nature* triggered by Charles J. Godfray's commentary entitled "Challenges for Taxonomy", do have a look at [http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v417/n6884/full/417017a\\_fs.html](http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v417/n6884/full/417017a_fs.html). A different point of view is expressed in a letter of response - "Taxonomy needs Evolution, not Revolution" by a group of NHM systematists including the President ([http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v419/n6907/full/419559a\\_fs.html](http://www.nature.com/cgi-taf/DynaPage.taf?file=/nature/journal/v419/n6907/full/419559a_fs.html)).

Finally, I would be very grateful to receive any systematics-related articles for inclusion in the next Newsletter. It's a vehicle for the views of the membership, so use it!

**Paul Wilkin ([p.wilkin@rbgkew.org.uk](mailto:p.wilkin@rbgkew.org.uk))**

### **Annual General Meeting 2002**

At 5 pm On Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December 2002, the AGM will be held in the Lecture Room of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London.

At 6 pm There will be the Annual Address by Dr Quentin Wheeler, Division Director, National Science Foundation, Virginia, USA, "Tree of Life or Roots of Destruction? Phylogenetics and Taxonomy."

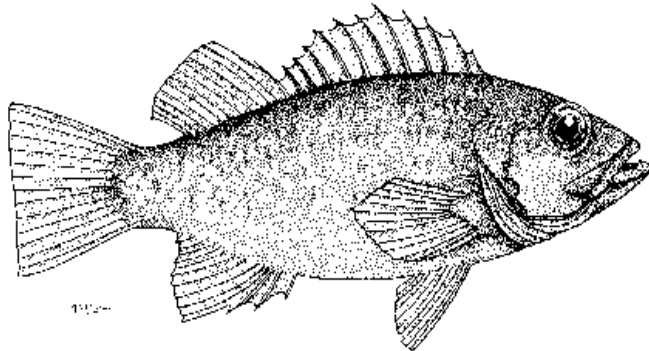
At 7.15pm Wine will be served to members and their guests in the Library of The Linnean Society

### **Agenda**

1. Minutes of the 2001 Annual General Meeting.
2. Matters arising from the Minutes.
3. President's Business.
4. The Secretaries Annual Report.
5. The Membership Secretary's Annual Report.
6. The Treasurer's Annual Report.
7. The Editor-in-Chief's Annual Report.
8. Election of Officers.
9. Election of Council Members. \*There will be vacancies for 7 members to be elected for 3 years. The following have retired or are due for retirement by rotation and are not eligible for re-election for at least one year.  
Dr A.Milner    Russell Seymour    Professor A.Gale

**10. Any other business (please inform the Chairperson before the meeting of any matters to be raised).**

\* Nominations for Officers and for Council Members must be signed by two members and accompanied by an indication from the nominee of their willingness to stand. Nominations must reach Zofia Lawrence (CABI Bioscience, Bakeham Lane, Egham, Surrey TW20 9TY) by November 29<sup>th</sup> 2002.



## **SYSTEMATICS ASSOCIATION**

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2001**

*Minutes of the 60th AGM held at 5.00pm Wednesday 5th December in the Meeting Room of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London.*

Prof. C.J. Humphries (President), Dr D. Williams (Secretary), Dr Z. Lawrence (Secretary), Dr D. Quicke (Secretary), Dr. G. Curry (Treasurer), Dr G. Reid (Membership Secretary) and 19 members. Apologies Dr A. Warren (Editor in Chief).

### **Minutes of the 2000 AGM.**

The minutes of the previous AGM were circulated and accepted.

### **President's Business.**

The president thanked the organisers of the Biennial meeting and those involved in organising all its sessions. 11 students funded by the Association attended, and the President was very impressed by the effort that was put into their presentations. Alexandra Wortley and James Cotton received prizes for the best student paper and poster respectively. The judges were thanked.

After receiving offers from Reading, Cardiff and Dublin, the President reported that Dublin had been selected as the venue of the 4<sup>th</sup> Biennial conference which will be held in 2003

The President thanked Peter Hollingsworth who retired from the Grants and Awards committee. He was replaced by Tim Littlewood in August. It was noted that the deadline for the next grant round was 31<sup>st</sup> December 2001.

Neale Monks, having moved on after editing the Newsletter for 4 years has been replaced by Paul Wilkin of RBG, Kew.

### **The Secretary's reports**

#### **3.1 Zoological Secretary's Report.**

The previous year saw three successful meetings. In April there was the Trilobite Symposium organised by Drs R. Fortey and D. Silvester, held in Oxford. In September the Association held its 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial meeting at Imperial College, London, which attracted 174 delegates, and which comprised 93 papers and 25 posters. It was reported that three Association volumes were likely to be published as a result. The best student paper and poster were awarded prizes courtesy of Taylor & Francis. Finally, in December, another Young Systematists Forum was held at The Natural History Museum (organised by Drs D. Horner and R. Hirt). It was reported that three meetings were planned for 2002.

### **Membership Secretary's report**

It was reported that membership currently stood at 588 members, 441 of whom were fully paid up. The year had seen 74 withdrawals comprising 2 deaths, 32 who joined at the Glasgow Biennial meeting, and remainder due to non-payment of

dues. The current year had seen 100 new members joining the association, 75 of these as a result of the London Biennial meeting. The secretary thanked those who had paid their subscriptions and who have encouraged students to join.

## **Treasurer's Annual Report**

It was reported that the Association's accounts were basically in good shape. The apparent £8K drop was due to pre-payment to Imperial College re the Biennial conference which appeared in the figures for the previous financial year. Royalties were up again after a short dip to approximately £8K. Over the past two years 87% of the Association's expenditure went towards supporting systematics research.

The Charity Commission's desire that the Association has a reserve in order to weather any storm is met by the Association's National savings account.

The Biennial meeting appeared at this stage to have made a small but reasonable profit that will be used to support student bursaries and advertising for the next Biennial meeting. It was reported that the Dublin account might have to be a Euro account and that this might have other benefits.

The accounts (see pages 7/8) were accepted and signed by the President.

## **Editor in Chief's Annual Report**

The report was presented by Dr D. Williams in the absence of Dr Warren.

It was reported that it had been an extremely active year with the production of 4 volumes in the Special Volumes series, with two more volumes going into production and with two further new titles being approved by the publishers.

Books published since the previous AGM were: *Volume 60. Interrelationships of the Platyhelminthes*; *Volume 61. Major Events in Early Vertebrate Evolution*, *Volume 62. The Changing Wildlife of Great Britain and Ireland and Brachiopods: past and present*.

It was reported that at the Council meeting in October 2001, general approval was given for the production of electronic versions ('E-books') of all future SA volumes, unless editors/authors raise specific objections. These will be produced alongside the traditional paper versions. With the agreement of editors, consent was given for the production of electronic versions of 4 (out of 6) volumes already published in traditional format by Taylor & Francis.

It was also reported that in January 2001 the Taylor & Francis 'Life Sciences Arena' web site ([www.lifesciencearena.com](http://www.lifesciencearena.com)) went live. This includes a special page dedicated to Systematics Association volumes and a direct link to the Association's web site.

Thanks were given to all the editors, contributors, and the members of the publications sub-committee.

## **Election of Officers**

There were no elections to report. The floor approved continuation.

## **Election of Council Members**

It was reported that there were vacancies for 14 members of council, 9 due to retirement of current members. There were 9 new members to be welcomed: Dr DTJ Littlewood, Dr BSC Leadbeater, Dr R Tangney, Dr R Scotland, Dr C Hughes, Dr P Rudall, Dr M Telford, Dr S Waldren and Dr T Pennington. The following were co-opted onto Council for the year 2001-2: Dr J Hawkins, Dr W Baker and Dr R Wilson.

## **Other Business**

There was no other business.

At 6.10 Dr Norman I. Platnick delivered the annual address "From Cladograms to Classification: The Road to DePhylocode".

## **Systematics Association Grant: Award Recipient – Follow up report.**

### **Biogeography of the herpetofauna of the Eastern Arc Mountains**

In late April 2002, I conducted fieldwork in Tanzania thanks in part to a grant awarded by the Systematics Association. The aim of the fieldwork was to collect specimens and tissues of amphibians and reptiles from the Eastern Arc Mountains, which would contribute along with previous collections to understanding the biogeography of the area. Parts of the mountain chain are

reasonably well collected in, but certain mountains are relatively unknown herpetologically. It was to these poorly collected sites that I visited. My fieldwork itinerary included trips to the North and South Pare Mountains, Ukaguru Mountains, Bagamoyo (just outside Dar es Salaam) and the Nguu Mountains (refer to map). At all these sites material of caecilians, frogs and some snakes were collected.

From just over four weeks in the field, most of which was spent on the road plus a couple of days in Dar recovering from a bout of *Giardia*, 171 herpetological specimens were collected. Many of the specimens collected represent range extensions, while others almost certainly represent new species. It was also pleasing to find species which had not been found since the first main herpetological collections in the 1930s by Arthur Loveridge, many of these species had been considered as endangered or possibly extinct. Some important finds included the blind snake endemic to the Uluguru Mountains *Typhlops uluguruensis*, and the caecilian *Schistometopum gregorii*.

Work is now underway to collate the information gathered from this field trip and collections held in museums. The material is being used to investigate the evolution of this unique fauna, using both morphometric and molecular techniques and looking at both low level taxonomy and phylogeny. The award given has been vital for providing support to sample remote areas in the Eastern Arc, and hence have a better empirical basis for understanding the biogeography of the region. Previously, an explanation of the available data was hampered by uneven survey effort. It is now hoped that I can begin to assess which factors were important in the evolution of species inhabiting the Eastern Arc Mountains.

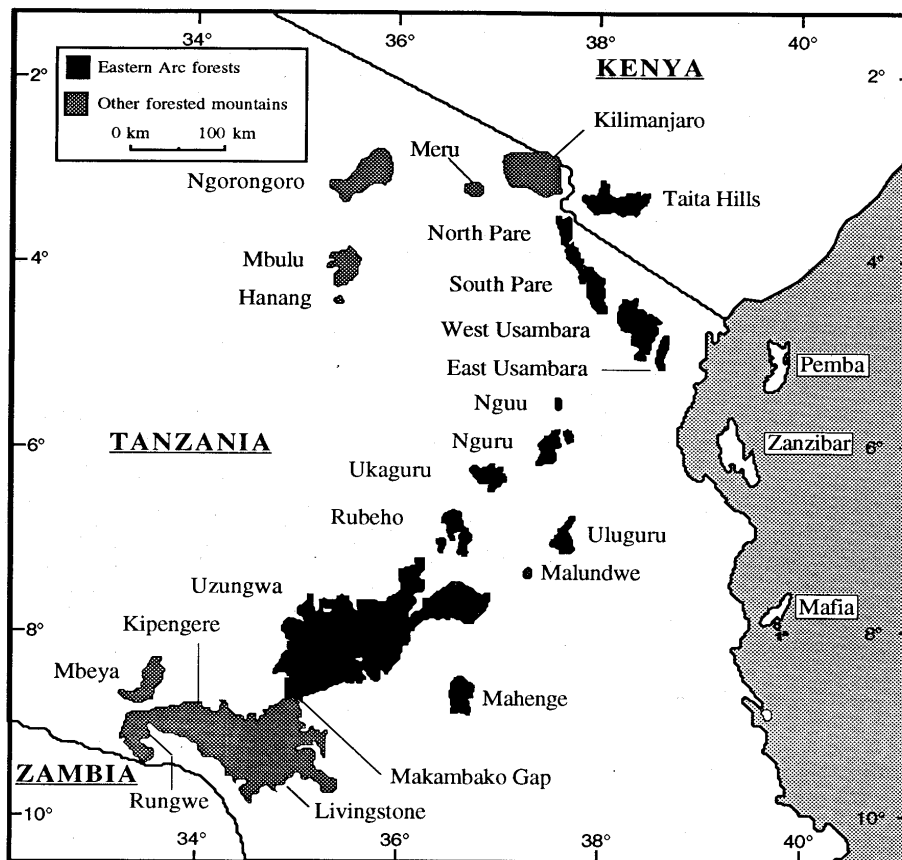


Fig.1.- Mountains of eastern Tanzania and south eastern Kenya supporting moist forest. Eastern Arc mountain forests are shown in black (kindly reproduced from Wasser and Lovett, 1993)

Simon P Loader, Department of Zoology, Natural History Museum, London SW7 5BD & Department of Molecular Genetics, University of Glasgow, Glasgow G11 6NU

## Small Grants – deadline 31 December 2002

If you need money to kick start, continue or finish off a systematics project, now is the time to log on to the website and download an application form (<http://www.systass.org/awards/awards.html>). Limited funds are available for fieldwork, subsistence, lab-work, equipment, consumables, publishing costs and a range of other needs (except attendance at conferences). The form is simple (see detachable hard copy on p. 5/6) and only a single page (one-side) outlining the proposal is required. Funds up to, but absolutely no way exceeding £1000, are available regardless of your nationality or status. Providing more than 1 page of text as an application and requesting more than the maximum amount is guaranteed to annoy the judges. Applications will be judged on their merit and expected contribution to systematics. Results will be announced in March 2003 and successful applicants will be expected to write something for the Association's newsletter and website.

## SYSTEMATICS ASSOCIATION RESEARCH GRANTS

### APPLICATION FORM

1. Name of principal applicant \_\_\_\_\_
2. Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_
3. Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **Daytime phone number** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Fax number** \_\_\_\_\_  
**e-mail address** \_\_\_\_\_
5. Present position or employment \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Academic and other relevant qualifications (please give institution and year)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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7. Name(s) and institution(s) of any co-workers involved in the proposed project

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8. Please give the names and addresses of two potential reviewers well qualified to comment on the scientific content of your proposal

**Name**

**Address**

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**Fax**

**e-mail**

9. How did you first learn of the SA Research Grants?

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10. Title of proposed project (maximum 15 words)

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11. Objectives and methodology of the project. We strongly recommend that you describe your project on **one side of A4 paper (\*)**, emphasising its broader scientific significance, and staple the sheet to the back of this form. Where appropriate, please give (a) starting and completion dates of specific activities, and (b) details and costs of equipment and/or facilities to be funded using the Systematics Association grant

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12. Amount requested (maximum £1000, **typically** £500–£700): £

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13. *Please give details (including dates and amounts) of any financial support sought for, or awarded to, this project from other funding bodies*

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14. Have you previously received a research grant from the Systematics Association? If so, please give details, including resulting publications

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15. Please add any further comments in support of your proposal

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16. Signature of applicant ..... 17. Date .....

**\* NOTE: please do *not* exceed the A4 maximum. Applicants may be penalised for requiring excessive space to make their case.**

Applications must be received by the chair of the Grants and Awards SubCommittee by **December 31st** for awards announced in April of the following year:

Dr Tim Littlewood, Department of Zoology, The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K.



[ACCOUNTS TO 30 APR 2002 – HARD COPY ONLY]