



Forming Bridges in a Changing World

The Society of Nematologists and Soil Ecology Society Conference

UVM Davis Center, Burlington, Vermont
July 12-15, 2009



SYNOPSIS OF THE 12TH BIENNIAL SOIL ECOLOGY SOCIETY CONFERENCE

The 12th biennial meeting of the Soil Ecology Society – and our first joint meeting with the Society of Nematologists – was held against the beautiful backdrop of lush, rolling Green Mountains surrounding the UVM campus in Burlington, VT. Program organizers Russell Ingham, Sherri Morris, Deb Neher, and the organizing committee planned a diverse, lively program that included a wide variety of keynote speakers, workshops, symposia, and oral and poster sessions. The meeting drew over 350 soil ecologists and nematologists from around the world, continued our tradition of supporting student research, and presented new opportunities for collaboration as well as new ideas and challenges for SES.

Three keynote speakers opened our meeting with provocative and compelling talks: Tom Wessels from Antioch University New England, George Bird from Michigan State University, and Serita Frey from the University of New Hampshire. Tom Wessels urged us to work for sustainable communities with an eye toward the limits of complex natural systems. George Bird discussed the importance of building ecological sustainability by protecting biodiversity, and Serita Frey addressed global change and aboveground-belowground dynamics in northeastern forests. The three talks tied together nicely, encouraging us to integrate mindful choices and deep understanding of sustainability, resilience, and our stories (cultural and scientific) to preserve the self-organizing biodiversity of soil systems. Several field trips throughout northern VT included an interpretive hike with Tom Wessels in a rare old growth forest in the region, a Lake Champlain cruise on the Spirit of Ethan Allen III, a visit to the award-winning environmental education center and farm at Shelburne Farms and Museum, and a geology trip to Vermont's own Chazy Reef, the oldest marine coral reef in the world.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

SES Community,

Thank you for a wonderful meeting. The location, while wonderful, does not make the meeting the people do. The contributions were outstanding. The interactions at the social events and the poster sessions were just great. It was an amazing opportunity to get to know the folks that make SES such a success year after year.

A heartfelt thank you to Deb Neher and her group. The local arrangements were exceptional. The outings, the lunches, the room arrangements were well suited to our

needs and they were on top of everything. I know that Josef Gorres, Anne Marie Resnik, and Rachel Thiet all contributed greatly to the success of the meeting and they all deserve a resounding clap on the back for a job well done.

I also want to thank the members of the 2007-2009 board for their help with the meeting, input on the program and theme, and the great discussion at the board meeting. The discussion focused on ideas for moving SES forward. These ideas were helpful for generating discussion at the business meeting that followed. The business meeting was well attended. We discussed the future venues for SES meetings. We also developed some fund raising ideas and identified the need for a more useful web presence. We have had some energetic folks volunteer to tackle some of these society needs. The discussion should help to focus our group on progressive steps that will increase the presence of SES in the coming years.

While meeting attendance overall was good we know that we were missing some of the strongest proponents of SES. We reviewed the results of our post meeting survey that was open to those that attended and those that did not attend the meeting. While we know that we cannot make everyone happy, we will be addressing as many of the concerns possible so that we can create meetings that appeal to the needs of our members. Hopefully the meetings will continue to provide a forum for discourse that those involved in Soil Ecology find useful.

It has been a pleasure serving as President of the Soil Ecology Society. It is my greatest hope that this group continues to provide a platform for interactions across the great span that is soil ecology. I hope that we continue to draw the large numbers of students into our group and give them a place to interact with scientists across the breadth of science, culture and experience that the SES brings to the table as a society. I also hope to see you all at the next meeting. We will look to the leadership of John Klironomos to direct those proceedings. I have great faith that our next meeting will be even better than the last.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sherri'.

Sherri Morris
President
Soil Ecology Society



The 2009 SES group shot, UVM Davis Center, Burlington, VT (Harjit Dhaliwal photo)

Student travel and research awards

Student involvement in SES continues to be strong. This year SES awarded 10 students with Parkinson's Student Travel Grants to attend the meeting: [Anita Antoninka](#), [Carly Benefer](#), [Samantha Colby](#), [Felicity Crotty](#), [Steven Fonte](#), [Mao Teng Lin](#), [Adi Oren](#), [Benjamin Sikes](#), [Megan Steinweg](#), and [Zachary Sylvain](#). Congratulations to our Parkinson Travel Award winners!

As every year, seasoned SES members evaluated student oral presentations and posters to establish our annual research awards. Student posters and oral presentations continue to be exceedingly professional in creativity, presentation, and scientific content, and all the judges were very impressed with the work they observed. The high quality of student research made selecting winners very difficult, as student research is increasingly notable each successive meeting. Being tasked with selecting the best of the best, the judges' final selections for 2009 are below:

Student awards for oral presentations

[Rachel Jones](#) from Villanova University won first prize for best oral presentation for "Is Biodiversity Really a Barrier to Ecosystem Invasion?: An Analysis of the Mechanisms of Plant Invasion."



*Rachel Jones
hanging out in
Pennsylvania.
(Courtesy photo)*

Steven Fonte from UC Davis won second prize for his oral presentation “Earthworms and Litter Inputs Drive Soil Organic Matter Stabilization, Nutrient Dynamics, and Plant Nutrient Uptake in the Quesungual Agroforestry System of Western Honduras.”



*Steve Fonte
collecting soil at
one of his field
sites in Honduras.
(Courtesy photo)*

Student awards for poster presentations

Mark Dempsey from Miami University of Ohio won best student poster for “Effects of Exotic Earthworms on Soil Microbial Community Composition in a Northern Hardwood Forest.”



Mark Dempsey (in blue) at one of his earthworm plots in central New York. (Courtesy photo)

Caley Gasch Salava from The University of Wyoming won second place for her poster, “Plant and Soil Microbial Community Structure Associated with Native and Exotic Annual Brome Dominated Rangeland in Wyoming.”



Caley Gasch Salava at one of her field sites in the Nowater area of Big Horn Basin, Wyoming. (Courtesy photo)

Meeting highlights

SES continues to respond to members' creative ideas for broadening the scope of our meetings and our approach to thinking about and advocating for the field of soil ecology. Several workshops at the 2009 meeting offered meeting participants opportunities for learning new skills and for thinking about various facets of our field. Workshops at the 2009 meeting included techniques-based workshops such as "Assessing Diversity of Microbiota through Ultra-sequencing" and "Integrating Soil Observing and Sensor Networks in Soil Ecological Studies," and an education workshop, "Toward Learner-centered Soil Ecology Education: Integrating Research and Experiential Activities into Teaching." Meeting symposia addressed a broad range of compelling topics such as "Managing the Health of Natural and Managed Soil Ecosystems through Integrated Understanding of their Biophysical, Physiochemical, and Biological Properties," "Urban Ecology," and "Natural Disturbances and Soil Ecology: Fire, Flood, and Hurricane." SES dedicated the symposium, "An holistic view of soil ecology: a tribute to the late John Lussenhop," to John, a long-time, beloved, and respected SES member who passed away in 2009.

The Board and future meeting organizers remain committed to retaining and expanding the breadth of content and various approaches to information sharing of our meetings, and hopes in 2011 to continue to increase our opportunities for discussion, ideas exploration, and collaboration.

Professional Achievement Award

The Professional Achievement Award committee was presented with many strong nominations for the 2009 award. Two nominees were so deserving that the committee couldn't choose between them! Thus, Dr. **Ralph Boerner** and Dr. **Walt Whitford** were both awarded the 2009 Professional Achievement Award for their service to teaching, research, and mentorship in soil ecology. For decades, Ralph's work has deepened our understanding of aboveground-belowground ecosystem ecology in forested landscapes throughout the mid-eastern US, and Walt's seminal work in desert ecology and desert soil science has guided many generations of desert ecologists. Both Ralph and Walt have mentored countless students who have grown into leaders in our field, and both have generously and broadly served the SES and other professional societies. The Professional Achievement Award is a symbol of the Society's profound gratitude for Ralph's and Walt's deep and long-standing contributions to student mentorship, collegiality, and advancing the field of soil ecology.



Dr. Ralph E.J. Boerner and Dr. Walt Whitford with their 2009 Soil Ecology Society Professional Achievement Awards. (R. Thiet photo)

2009 meeting committees

SES thanks the following members for their committee work, which helped make this meeting such a success... thank you!

Election committee: John Klironomos, Nancy Johnson, Matthias Rillig

Parkinson Student Travel Award committee: Sina Adl, Jeff Smith, Julie Whitbeck

Professional Achievement Award committee: Edie Allen, Nancy Johnson, Mike Miller, Eldor Paul, Rachel Thiet, Diana Wall

Student Presentation Award committee: John Dighton, and the many seasoned SES members who volunteered as judges for this committee.

Salient points from our 2009 Business and Board meetings

At the 2009 Board and Business meetings, the Board and Society members discussed at length the international reach of our Society and accessibility (e.g., cost and locations) of our meetings. Specifically, since the 2009 meeting was significantly more expensive than prior meetings, the Board expressed a strong desire to keep 2011 meeting costs down and to increase Society membership. Meeting attendees also discussed at length the location of our meetings; all meeting attendees wish to optimize the geographic accessibility of meetings, particularly for graduate students. Many Society members wish to hold an international meeting to attract more Canadian, European, Latin American, and African ecologists and students, and to increase opportunities for international collaboration; however, concern was expressed about added expenses for US students and potential VISA

issues for international students studying in the US. For now, the Business meeting attendees voted to continue holding our biennial meetings in North America (to include Canada), and to explore the possibility of having a meeting during an SES-meeting “off year” in Europe sometime in the next five years (2012 or 2014; see Business meeting minutes below). The Board will explore the possibility of holding an international meeting, and the issue will be discussed again at the 2011 meeting.

New SES logo design contest!

At the 2009 meeting, the SES board and other members discussed various fundraising ideas and opportunities. As one avenue for revenue generation, John Dighton and Ralph Boerner are currently heading up a competition within SES for a logo design for T-shirts and baseball hats to sell at our 2011 meeting. The designer of the winning logo will get free SES membership for a year! Please send designs to both Ralph Boerner (boerner(at)osu.edu) and John Dighton (Dighton(at)camden.rutgers.edu) as jpeg or tiff documents by November 30, 2010!

Society dues

Society dues for 2010 are now being accepted. Regular member dues are \$20 and student members are \$10. A motion was made and passed at the 2009 meeting to raise dues to \$50 for regular members and \$25 for student members covering a 2-year period starting in 2011. With this change, dues will only be due with registration during the meeting year; if you do not plan to attend the meeting, please mail your dues directly to Jeff Smith at the address below. A second motion was made and passed to offer a lifetime membership for \$500 effective immediately; members who have already paid dues for 2010 and who wish to become lifetime members may pay \$480 for this lifetime membership. Please consider becoming a lifetime member! The Business Manager has offered to accept payments on lifetime memberships purchased this year and paid for this year (minimum \$50 per month for 2010).

Membership dues should be sent to:

Jeff Smith
Soil Ecology Society
PO Box 1313
Pullman, WA 99163

New SES website update

Rachel Thiet is currently working with IT at Antioch University New England to decide on the best web software to support a new SES website. She will start developing the website during summer, 2010. Updates about this exciting initiative to follow!

Student travel grants – please donate!

We can all keep student participation in our meetings strong by donating to the Student Travel Fund! For every fourth SES member who donates just \$100 to the Student Travel Fund, a student flies to the meeting for free. Any level of donation to the fund is welcome. *Send donations to Jeff Smith at the address above*, and note “Student Travel Fund” on your check.



2011 SES meeting update

Using input from an electronic survey distributed to Society members after the 2009 meeting, the SES Board is currently discussing the location for our 2011 meeting. Since John Klironomos is our standing President, and since the 2009 meeting was held on the East Coast of the US, the Board is currently finalizing the 2011 meeting location and giving serious consideration to Kelowna, British Columbia. John Klironomos is in the process of convening an organizing committee, and the final location will be announced as soon as possible. Holding a meeting in western Canada has the advantages of balancing our meeting locations geographically in North America, and thus drawing more meeting attendees from the western US and Canada. In planning the meeting, the Board is looking at ways to increase meeting attendance and Society membership in 2011, by lowering registration costs, keeping the meeting location accessible, optimizing student participation, mitigating VISA issues for international participants, and returning to our usual May meeting dates to prevent conflicts with fieldwork and other professional meetings. The Board is also considering structuring the meeting to include more opportunities for discussion and interaction. An e-mail update will be sent to the entire Society as soon as the Board works through the details.

SES Officers for 2010-2012

New elected SES officers for the 2010-2012 term include John Dighton: President-Elect; Serita Frey: Secretary; Rachel Thiet: Newsletter Editor/Webmistress; Jeffrey Smith: Business Manager/Treasurer, and; Board Members At Large: Valerie Behan-Pelletier, Noah Fierer, and Heikki Setälä. John Klironomos is the standing SES President and Sherri Morris is the Immediate Past-President.

In memoriam

Sadly, in 2009, SES lost two beloved and long-time members of our community – Dr. John Lussenhop and Dr. Dennis Parkinson. Dr. [John Lussenhop](#), Professor in the Department of

Biological Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, passed away on March 13, 2009; the excerpt below is reprinted from March 18, 2009, issue of *The Bend Bulletin*.

John Lussenhop
July 23, 1941 - March 13, 2009



John Lussenhop passed away at his home in Sisters, Oregon during the early morning hours of March 13th after a long illness. He was born in Oak Park, Illinois and lived there for most of his life until moving to Central Oregon in 2005. He spent his entire career as a professor of ecology and evolution at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Before he died, John chose these words to describe his life: "John was an ecologist who did research on how fungi, minute soil animals, and roots interacted in soil. John believed in research, in making research not only his profession, but his hobby and his aesthetic enjoyment as well. For this reason, he delighted in friends who also devoted their lives to research. John taught ecology for thirty-four years; hopefully he taught his many students well."

Dr. **Dennis Parkinson**, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Biology at the University of Calgary, passed away on December 29, 2009, following a brief illness. The tribute below was written by Dr. Jeff Goldberg, Head of the Biology Department at the University of Calgary.

Dennis Parkinson
1927 - 2009



It is with tremendous sadness that I must announce that Dennis Parkinson passed away on December 29, 2009. Dennis was one of the earliest members of the Department of Biology, and served as Department Head for more than two terms, between 1969 and 1981. Remarkably, Dennis was still running his lab up until last year, and he was present in the Department on almost a daily basis up until recently. The Department of Biological Sciences has lost perhaps its greatest builder, and a truly exceptional scholar.

The enormous contributions that John and Dennis made to our field and our personal and professional lives will be preserved indefinitely in their research, and in the many, many students and colleagues they mentored and inspired throughout their careers. Dennis Parkinson's memory will also be preserved in the support provided to the many graduate student researchers awarded Parkinson Student Travel Grants.

Newsletter written and edited by Rachel Thiet (rthiet(at)antioch.edu), SES Newsletter Editor/Webmistress, 2010-2012.

April 15, 2010

2009 BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES

SES 2009 BUSINESS MEETING

JULY 14, 2009, 4 - 6 PM

MINUTES

NOTES TAKEN AND COMPILED BY RACHEL THIENT, 2008-2010 SES SECRETARY/NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The meeting began with Jeff Smith presenting society revenue balance and generation. A discussion was held about ideas for generating more income through membership dues and meeting fees, because SES didn't generate sufficient income at this meeting through membership dues to cover money outflow for student travel and research awards.

Concerns were expressed about the cost of this year's meeting, as well as the way the registration fee was decoupled from the SES membership dues.

As a way to generate more revenue for SES, Tony Trofymow made a **motion** and Ralph Boerner **seconded** the motion to increase membership dues to \$50 for regular membership and \$25 for student membership for two years, starting in 2011. The group voted to pass the motion.

A discussion was held about reinstating the option for lifetime membership to generate more and more immediate revenue for SES. Ralph Boerner commented that he and Dave Coleman were currently the only lifetime members.

Jayne Belnap made a **motion** and Ralph Boerner **seconded** the motion to offer a lifetime membership for \$500 effective immediately. The group voted to pass the motion.

Other fundraising ideas were discussed:

Fundraising ideas discussed include SES t-shirts, meeting t-shirts, and hats. The main idea is to design the shirts and hats so people are compelled to buy them each year.

A discussion was held about the 2011 meeting location. Jayne Belnap raised concerns at the Board meeting and again at the business meeting about international students and faculty getting back into the U.S. after traveling abroad for the meeting, as many international students and faculty have single-entry VISAs. Arguments were also presented in favor of international meetings, as international meetings will draw students and scientists from other countries to the meeting even if U.S. graduate students might be discouraged from attending a meeting held overseas.

A discussion was held about holding the 2011 meeting in Vancouver, B.C., hosted by new SES President John Klironomos. Jeff Smith has also offered to host the 2011 meeting in Richmond, WA. Disagreement about the next meeting location continued. Jayne Belnap expressed discomfort about having the small number of people at the business meeting decide where the next meeting would be held, and suggested the Board send an e-mail survey (also see Board meeting minutes above) to the entire SES membership so they can provide feedback about having the next meeting in Vancouver, B.C.

A discussion was held about other international societies that meet on various continents each biannual meeting. Edie Allen suggested that if we don't have meetings overseas, we come to accept that we're more of a North American society, rather than an international society. Others noted that soil meetings regularly take place on other continents (e.g., Europe and the UK); this led to discussion about potential SES collaboration with European and Latin American soil groups to hold an international meeting in years between our regular bi-annual SES meetings. Jeff Smith suggested that we try having a meeting in another country to see how it works.

Jayne Belnap suggested we hold a meeting abroad every four years; i.e., have our bi-annual SES meetings alternate between North America and somewhere abroad.

Diana Wall reminded us that ESA has a Soil Ecology Section that meets every year.

Bill Landesman suggested greater use of technology to connect and communicate with one another.

A discussion continued about the relative advantages and disadvantages of holding a meeting abroad.

Yossi Steinberger suggested we plan one international meeting in upcoming years but that we retain our bi-annual SES meeting in North America/U.S.

Ralph Boerner **moved** that our Board be charged with developing a plan to hold an international meeting to be held 3 **or** 5 years from now. Tony Trofymow **seconded** the motion. The group voted in favor of the motion. Thus, SES will retain our bi-annual meetings in North America, and will explore the possibility of having an international meeting in 2012 or 2014.

Sherri Morris announced the Board decision to improve our web presence in coming years, and that this improved web presence may facilitate international collaborations and meeting planning.

Sherri Morris announced the Board decision to add a student representative to the SES Board. At the next meeting we will have nominees for Student Representative on the Board election ballot.

Elizabeth Brewer suggested generating an e-mail list for graduate students to facilitate communication among SES graduate students.

Sherri Morris announced that the Board is revisiting our Applied Soil Ecology subscriptions tied to SES membership. She solicited ideas for collaboration on a themed issue for an upcoming issue of Applied Soil Ecology.

Announcements:

Bill Landesman announced that he is organizing a symposium at 2009 ESA titled, "What can Soil Microbial Ecology tell us about the Sustainability of Soils?" and solicited input and contributions to the symposium.

Jeff Smith announced that the International Society of Microbial Ecology will be held in Seattle in August, 2010. This is only the second time the meeting will be held in the U.S.

Ben Sykes re-opened the discussion about how well it worked to have a joint meeting.

Jayne Belnap reiterated that one disadvantage of the joint meeting was that registration fees were much higher as a result. Also, since we signed a "no profit, no loss" agreement with SON, we could not generate money from the meeting, and we had to decouple

membership dues from registration fees. However, she also noted that she has enjoyed interacting with worm people.

Sherri Morris noted that one advantage was that SES was able to benefit from SON's strong organizational structure in planning this joint meeting.

Yossi Steinberger and Sherri Morris suggested we need to wait to determine how well the joint meeting worked after we have some time for reflection; she suggested we send out a survey to 2009 SES meeting participants to evaluate their perceptions about how well the joint meeting worked.

--- End of Business meeting discussion ---
