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## A Common Love of Science: The One-Hundredth Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists

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## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

### A Common Love of Science: The One-Hundredth Meeting of the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists

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*We were united by a common love of science, which we thought sufficient to bring together persons of all distinctions. . .*

—Joseph Priestley, *Experiments on the Generation of Air from Water*, 1793: ii

ONE of the most important functions of an academic society such as the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (ASIH) is to host conferences for colleagues to directly share and debate ideas and data. Academic society meetings have a long history that grew from social meetings of the privileged in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries during which scientific topics were discussed. Scientific meetings of any nature can provide a stimulating environment to discuss and argue points (Unglow, 2002), as alluded to by Joseph Priestley (1733–1804) in the epigraph, which was written with fond memory of the Lunar Society meetings while he was in political exile (Priestley, 1793). In 1812, a gathering of local scientists formally established The Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia (ANSP), a society “to occupy their leisure, in each other’s company, on subjects of natural science” for “the advancement and diffusion of useful, liberal human knowledge.” The founders agreed that the ANSP would be “perpetually exclusive of political, religious and national partialities, antipathies, preventions and prejudices” to avoid potential conflicts with “the interests of science” (Stroud, 1997: 227). With the rise and specialization of academic societies, a concomitant specialization of scientific gatherings followed. Narrowly focused meetings have an important role in advancing the field specific to their topic, but regular (i.e., annual) discipline-wide conferences are important for both the tangible (e.g., presentation of fact) and intangible (e.g., inspiration of new avenues of study) effects they have on the attendees. Conferences also allow attendees the oppor-

tunity to conduct Society business through board and committee meetings. In 2021, the ASIH held its 100<sup>th</sup> in-person meeting, the third and final centennial to be celebrated by this Society (2013 was the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the Society’s journal, *Copeia*, now *Ichthyology & Herpetology*, Smith and Mitchell, 2013; 2016 was the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the ASIH’s founding, Hilton and Crump, 2016). This paper celebrates this milestone of the ASIH, and reflects upon the history of the ASIH conferences.

The first meeting of the ASIH was held in 1916 at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Fifty-one individuals attended the inaugural meeting based on the number of dues paid that day (Fig. 1; Hilton and Crump, 2016). Since that time, nine U.S. states have hosted five or more meetings of the ASIH, with New York having hosted the most (10 meetings in four cities or boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Albany, and Rochester); the others are California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Texas. New York City (inclusive of Brooklyn) leads as the most frequent host, with seven meetings. Two cities have hosted six meetings each (Washington, D.C. and New Orleans) and Philadelphia, Ann Arbor, Austin, and Chicago are the next most frequent host cities, with four meetings each. The first meeting west of the Mississippi River was held in 1938 in Berkeley, California, and was the direct result of the members of the Western Division of the ASIH petitioning to have a meeting more proximate to this portion of the general ASIH membership (the Western Division offered a mechanism for members from western states to more easily participate in conferences at a time in the Society’s history during which transcontinental travel was not efficient). In 1955, the ASIH President Edward C. Raney pointed out that “by meeting in different areas each year a number of new members are gained for the Society” (*Copeia*, 1955: 320). In 2005, there was an attempt to formalize this

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New York, February 8th, 1916.

There will be a meeting of persons interested in the study of Fishes, Amphibians, and Reptiles at the *American Museum of Natural History*, 77th Street and Central Park West, on Wednesday, *March 8th, 1916*, beginning at 9:30 A. M.

The following persons have already signified their intention of reading papers :

Mr. James P. Chapin	Mr. Francis Harper
Mr. Richard F. Deckert	Mr. Clarence R. Halter
Dr. Charles R. Eastman	Dr. Louis Hussakof
Mr. George P. Engelhardt	Mr. Herbert Lang
Mr. Dwight Franklin	Mr. Robert C. Murphy
Dr. W. K. Gregory	Mr. J. T. Nichols

It is hoped that you will attend, and if possible present a paper. Kindly send titles to Mr. J. T. Nichols, American Museum of Natural History, New York City, stating the amount of time desired and whether lantern slides will accompany your paper.

**Fig. 1.** Announcement of the first meeting of the ASIH (1916).

rotation, and beginning in 2009, the meetings were to move from the Pacific Coast to the East Coast, then to the Midwest, Southwest, and finally the Southeast. Although there has been a goal of moving the meetings around to different regions for most of the Society's history, it is surprising that 23 states have not yet hosted the meetings: Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. Although the choice of meeting site is currently independent of any strict rotation, we hope that this list spurs colleagues from these states to volunteer to host the ASIH and other societies of the Joint Meeting of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists (JMIH; for discussion of the JMIH, see below) in the next 100 years.

The "American" in the name ASIH has come to be inclusive of all of North and South America. Although most frequently the ASIH meets in the contiguous 48 states of the United States of America, on occasion the Society meets elsewhere in the Americas. Of the 100 meetings, 11 have been held in countries other than the U.S. The most frequent host country is Canada (eight meetings), with three meetings in both Ontario (1940, 1974, 1998) and British Columbia (1963, 1986, 2012), as well as in the provinces of Alberta (1995) and Quebec (2008). The first meeting outside of the U.S. was held in 1940 in Toronto, Ontario (Canada). The first and only meeting in Mexico was held in La Paz in 2000. Only two meetings have been held outside of the U.S., Mexico, and Canada: San José, Costa Rica (1973) and Manaus, Brazil (2003). In 1976, the question of the practicality of such "far away" meetings was raised, and the general sense was that these meetings are cost prohibitive for the majority of the membership. Indeed, then-Secretary Bruce Collette noted

that he received several complaints about the cost of the meetings in Costa Rica (1973) and Alaska (1976). Although we acknowledge that participant cost and other logistical constraints may limit the possible venues, we encourage the ASIH (and the JMIH) to continue to explore the possibilities of bringing the meetings to other countries throughout the Americas.

Although the number of attendees is unknown for many meetings, this number has increased substantially in recent decades (e.g., while not including all participants, compare the group photos from 1935 and 2013; Fig. 2). Since 2003, there has been an average of just over 1,000 persons registered at each annual meeting, with 45–50% of all registered being students (Hayes et al., 2016). The number of oral presentations made at the annual meetings has naturally grown with the size of the ASIH. For the first ten meetings for which presentation data are available (1917–1932), an average of just 15.8 presentations were made at each meeting. This is compared to an average of 147.3 presentations at meeting numbers 45–55, and 574.4 presentations for the most recent ten years (Fig. 3). Poster presentations were introduced to the program in 1979, and for the first ten years, only 26.1 posters were presented on average each year. Over the last ten years, this average increased to 582.8. With the increase in size of the meetings, noticeable changes have also taken place. Over the past 25 years, there has been a concerted effort for "greener" meetings, with their environmental impact becoming a consideration for the organizing committees (e.g., elimination of abstract books, replaced by CDs and now online abstracts). This effort formally began at the 1997 ASIH Business Meeting with a resolution acknowledging that assemblages of over 1,000 members "cannot help but have certain detrimental effects on the environment" and calling upon the Society to mitigate negative impacts during the planning stages of future meetings (*Copeia*, 1997: 939).

In the early meeting summaries published in *Copeia*, the number of attendees was often followed by the number of "wives and children," with the expectation that the principal participant was male. Participation by women in meetings, as well as in leadership roles of ASIH, has since increased (Parenti and Wake, 2016). Through concerted effort by the ASIH leadership and individual members, the ASIH and the JMIH are slowly becoming more inclusive. For example, in 2008 M. Rockwell Parker developed an informal LGBTQ group of faculty and students (Hayes et al., 2016). However, the 2020 ASIH Diversity Report ([https://asih.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Diversity\\_Survey\\_Report\\_2020.pdf](https://asih.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/Diversity_Survey_Report_2020.pdf)) clearly demonstrates that much progress remains in terms of both increasing the diversity of the ASIH membership and addressing shortfalls of the JMIH on issues of diversity and accessibility at the meetings. It is heartening to see a shift in focus to address these issues, and we look forward to a more diverse and inclusive JMIH.

## THE EARLY YEARS

The first meeting of the ASIH was held on March 8, 1916 in the Academy Room at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, hosted by John T. Nichols (1883–1958), Henry W. Fowler (1878–1965), and G. Dwight Franklin (1888–1971). There is little known about the 1916 meeting with regard to how many individuals gave talks and



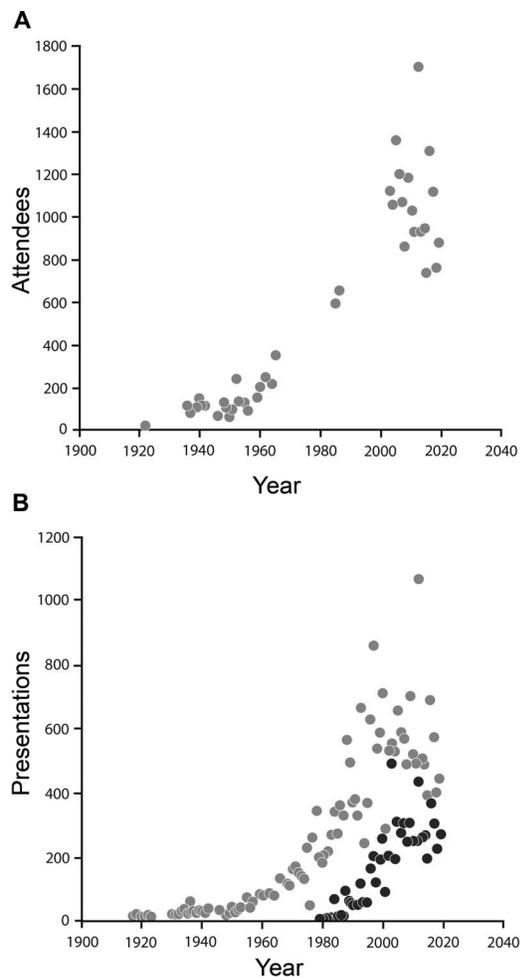
**Fig. 2.** Group photos from two ends of the history of ASIH. (A) 1935 meeting (Pittsburg, PA). Front row (left to right): W. H. Stickel, L. Brodie, A. H. Wright, J. Netting (née Smith), M. G. Netting, A. M. Dunn (née Taylor), L. H. Rivero, M. R. Myers (née Frisinger), G. S. Myers, H. T. Gaige, W. M. Clay. Middle row (left to right): T. L. Hankinson, K. P. Schmidt, O. M. Orsinger (née Sullivan), L. C. Stuart, E. R. Dunn, W. S. Cramer, C. Goin, C. C. Goff, W. Clanton. Back row (left to right): A. M. Greenball, F. N. Blanchard, F. G. Orsinger, A. W. Henn, I. D. George, H. G. M. Jopson, C. F. Walker, N. Hartweg, E. H. Taylor. (B) JMIH 2013 (Albuquerque, NM).

the subjects that were discussed. Twelve names were listed as having “already signified their intention of reading papers” (Fig. 1), though this is undoubtedly an underestimate, as more than 50 people are reported to have been in attendance (Hilton and Crump, 2016). The following year, 1917, was unique because two meetings were held. The first was on March 8, a year to the day from the first meeting, in Philadelphia, hosted by Fowler, and one on November 16, 1917 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at the Museum of Comparative Zoology, hosted by Thomas Barbour, who would become an important financial backer for the nascent ASIH (Savage, 2015; Hilton and Crump, 2016).

The first 20 years of the ASIH meetings came at a time in U.S. history marked by difficult circumstances, including World War I (1914–1918) and the Great Depression (1929–1933). As a Society, the ASIH fared better than others. “The Secretary reported that the Society was weathering the depression in gratifying fashion for the net loss in members and subscriptions during the year was only 14, or 3% of the total roll, whereas other scientific societies sustained losses

ranging from 10% up” (*Copeia*, 1933: 112–113). This positive outlook translated to the meeting attendance as well: “in spite of adverse conditions, the total number in attendance at the two [concurrent] sessions reached gratifying figures, varying from fifty to sixty” (*Copeia*, 1933: 112).

Despite the difficult times, the reports of the early ASIH meetings read as if they were wonderful events that celebrated science and discovery and fostered collegiality during a golden era of ichthyology and herpetology. Take for example the descriptions of the events of the 1930 meeting that were coupled to the scientific sessions: “The splendid entertainment by the New York Zoological Society at the evening smoker in the New York Aquarium; the luncheons provided by the American Museum; the annual dinner; and three fine sets of motion pictures—Gilbert C. Klingel’s ‘Rhinoceros Iguana Studies,’ Grace Olive Wiley’s ‘Reptile Studies,’ and a special selection of Raymond L. Ditmar’s recent motion pictures of reptiles,” among other special events that included a presentation by the Antivenin



**Fig. 3.** Graphs showing changes in (A) number of registrants and (B) number of presentations (light gray dots are oral presentations; dark gray dots are poster presentations) at annual meetings of ASIH. Data taken from published meeting summaries and/or program books.

Institute of America and exhibits put together by the New York Aquarium (*Copeia*, 1930: 57–59).

### YEARS WITH NO MEETINGS

Although the first ASIH meeting was held in 1916, there were seven years with no meetings (1919, 1925–26, 1943–45, and 2020) and one year (1917) with two meetings, which is why this centennial is taking place in 2021, and not 2015. In 1917, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> meetings took place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (spring), and Cambridge, Massachusetts (fall), respectively. The fourth meeting was held at the Brooklyn Museum on November 15, 1918 during the height of the deadly second wave of the 1918 influenza pandemic. The reason for the lack of a meeting in 1919 is unclear. The influenza pandemic, which persisted until 1920, may very well have been a factor in the decision to cancel the meeting for that year. Alternatively, because the fifth meeting was held in Washington, D.C. on May 14, 1920, the 18-month gap spanning 1919 was perhaps intended as a way of settling on a single springtime meeting each year. Similarly, the reason for not having a meeting of ASIH in 1925 is unknown. In 1926, an informal dinner was held in Philadelphia in lieu of a full, formal meeting of the ASIH. Again, the reasoning

behind and details of this event remain obscure (e.g., who was in attendance or how the guest list was developed).

During World War II, the United States, and indeed countries all around the world were reeling from the economic and social effects of global conflict. When the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, the country found itself in the position of needing to recruit, train, and equip a military to support and fight two fronts in Europe and the Pacific. It was a time of severe economic austerity, with all efforts and resources going to support the war. This had a tremendous impact on all aspects of life, including the operations of scientific organizations. For example, at the 1941 meeting (April 3–5, Gainesville), invitations for future meetings were entertained, including New York, New Orleans, and Havana, Cuba. For 1942, the ASIH decided to meet in New York in conjunction with the American Society of Mammologists. Dr. Luis Howell Rivero (Universidad de la Habana) invited the ASIH to meet in Havana in 1943. “After considerable discussion, it was decided that the invitation of this institution should be accepted with the understanding that, international conditions permitting, the meeting will be held in Havana during the summer or early autumn of 1943. In the event that a Cuban meeting is not feasible, New Orleans is to be considered as an alternative location.” (*Copeia*, 1941: 188).

At the 1942 meeting, “After lengthy discussion, it was voted that war conditions dictated cancellation of the previously scheduled Habana meeting in 1943” (*Copeia*, 1942: 196), and that New Orleans would be the site for the 1943 meetings. However, as the war intensified, ASIH polled its membership about postponing the 1943 meeting, with most members deferring to the decision of the Society officers. Before a decision was made, the ASIH leadership, received “a letter from Joseph B. Eastman, Director of the Office of Defense Transportation, requesting cancellation of scientific meetings in 1943” sent at the request of the National Research Council. As a result, the ASIH officers “agreed that the annual meeting should be postponed until the war is over or until transportation facilities improve” (*Copeia*, 1943: 66). Prior to this notification, the membership of the Western Division of the ASIH also overwhelmingly (81%) favored canceling its meeting in 1943, which was scheduled for Corvallis, Oregon; 76% of respondents favored no meeting until after the war. As it would turn out, the ASIH suspended its annual meetings for three years in a row (1943, 1944, and 1945), reflecting the country’s focus on the war effort. During the war years, the ASIH provided updates in *Copeia* on Society members who served in the military, including lists of those on active duty, solemn notes on the deaths of members, and the status and news from foreign members who were in war-affected countries.

The 2020 JMIH was to be held in Norfolk, Virginia, and this was to be the 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ASIH. Planning for the meeting was advanced, with preparations made by the ASIH, Local Committee, the Meeting Management and Planning Committee, and Burk & Associates, Inc., the company contracted for handling the logistics for the JMIH. Abstracts were submitted in mid-March, despite the growing concern regarding the developing COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, it was uncertain what the ramifications of this emerging pandemic would be, although several academic societies had already decided to cancel their summertime conferences (e.g., Society for the Study of Evolution). The JMIH

committees and the presidents and officers of the four societies discussed the future of JMIH 2020 extensively, and on March 27, 2020, the unanimous decision to cancel the 2020 meeting was announced to the societies' memberships. In the end, this was prudent, as COVID continued to surge with devastating effects. Thankfully, Burk & Associates, Inc. negotiated with the conference center in Norfolk to minimize cancellation fees and reschedule the JMIH for Norfolk in 2023. The 2021 meeting was held in Phoenix, Arizona in July 2021, but also included an exclusively online component the following week.

### THE EVOLUTION OF THE JOINT MEETING OF ICHTHYOLOGISTS AND HERPETOLOGISTS

The idea of a joint meeting that combines forces with other professional organizations is commonplace for attendees of the ASIH meetings. Today's concept of the JMIH (see below) continues a tradition of the ASIH that was started soon after its first meeting. In 1918, the fourth meeting of the ASIH was held in conjunction with that of the American Ornithological Union; these two societies would go on to meet together again in 1921 and 1922. Other than the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles (SSAR), the Herpetologists' League (HL), and the American Elasmobranch Society (AES), the other professional organization that the ASIH has convened meetings with most frequently is the American Society of Mammologists, with which it has met a total of nine times, although not for nearly 70 years (1931–32, 1934–35, 1937–38, 1946–47, and 1951). Other societies with which the ASIH has met include various divisions of the American Fisheries Society (AFS; 1936 and 1940), American Association for the Advancement of Science (1950, 1959), American Institute of Biological Sciences (1954), the Early Life History Section of the AFS (ELHS; 1988, 1993, 1997, 2009), the Society for the History of Natural History (1990), as well as smaller regional societies (e.g., Southeast Fishes Council in 1990 and 1996 and Gilbert Ichthyological Society in 1997). The Neotropical Ichthyology Association (NIA) began to meet with the ASIH fairly regularly in 1994 (1996, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2009–2011), and has met with the JMIH every year since 2013. In fact, the NIA was formed at the 1989 meeting of the ASIH in San Francisco, California.

Joint meetings sometimes took advantage of proximity of venues. For instance, in 1936, the ASIH met in Ann Arbor from August 31 to September 2 and was continuous with the AFS meeting held in nearby Grand Rapids, Michigan, with attendees able to move easily from one to the other. Although not a joint meeting, it was promoted that "the members of the two societies are invited to attend both gatherings" (*Copeia*, 1936: 131). In discussing the location of the 1940 meeting, "It was recommended that the Society attempt to meet in alternate years with this organization [AFS] and the American Society of Mammologists, and thus alternate spring and autumn dates as well" (*Copeia*, 1939: 241). Such a schedule did not come to fruition, but the idea of joint meetings did not cease. In some years, the ASIH met with other societies that were more regional or otherwise representative of the meeting site. For instance, in 1959, at the meeting in Austin, Texas, nearly 25% of all registrants indicated the Texas Herpetology Society as their society affiliation. Other examples of joint meetings outside the now typical JMIH include the 2003 meeting in Manaus, Brazil,

during which the ASIH and other JMIH societies (AES, HL, NIA, SSAR) met with Brazilian societies for the study of fishes (SBI), herps (SBH), and elasmobranchs (SBEEL). In 2012, the JMIH met in Vancouver, British Columbia in association with the 7<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Herpetology, which also served as the meeting of the Canadian Association of Herpetologists, Canadian Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Network, Herpetological Conservation and Biology, the International Society for the History and Bibliography of Herpetology, Orianne Society–Viper Specialist Group, and the IUCN/SSC Anoline Lizard Specialist Group. This was also the largest recorded attendance for a JMIH meeting (1,705, though only 542 registrants indicated their primary membership to be ASIH).

In 1959, the HL met jointly for the first time with the ASIH in San Diego, California. It would be almost 20 years (1978) until the two societies would next meet jointly, this time also with the SSAR. This was the first time that all three U.S. herpetological societies met together. In 1984, the ASIH Board of Governors discussed whether the three societies should try and meet jointly every third or fourth year. In 1985, the newly formed AES held its first meeting in conjunction with the ASIH; the AES has met with the ASIH nearly every year since. At the Annual ASIH Business Meeting in 1991, it was announced that the HL would meet with the ASIH the following year to "afford an opportunity to bring the largely academic membership of ASIH and HL together" and parallel "the trend among ichthyologists to welcome additional societies to meet jointly with ASIH" (*Copeia*, 1991: 1199). It was further noted that the "climate of cooperation [between the herpetological societies] . . . was warmest in recent years." Efforts to attract the SSAR to also meet jointly were largely rebuffed (e.g., "SSAR continues to take a more guarded view of joint meetings with the ASIH"; *Copeia*, 1994: 1097).

The safety in numbers approach to annual meetings has served the ASIH and its partner societies well by fostering an exchange of ideas and interactions among societies. But, larger meetings demand diligent planning and naturally incur more risks. Since the ASIH had been taking on the financial liability of the joint meetings, it became important to codify how joint meetings should be held to distribute those risks. Discussions of how to formalize the JMIH meeting management committee took place at the 2008 ASIH Board of Governors meeting, and officers from the four primary societies met at the annual meeting in 2009. In 2010, the four societies signed a memorandum of understanding that outlined their share of risks, thereby creating the JMIH. Effective through 2028, that agreement helps sustain the comradery and impact that the joint meeting has come to embrace.

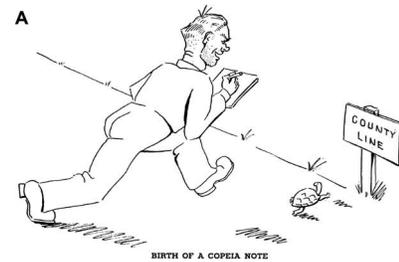
Although part of an alliance, each JMIH society has its own history. The HL was founded in 1946 and is the oldest international society for herpetology and, like the ASIH, is unusual in that its flagship journal, *Herpetologica*, predates the formation of the Society itself (Smith, 1986). The SSAR was founded in 1958 as the Ohio Herpetological Society, but it grew rapidly and is now the largest international society for herpetology (Moriarty and Bartholomew, 2007; Adler, 2016). The AES was founded in 1985 as the primary professional organization dedicated to the study of elasmobranch fishes. Each of these societies has developed along their own trajectories, although the synergy that is achieved by joint

meetings cannot be overstated. Perhaps foreshadowing the JMIH, at its 1988 banquet the ASIH offered a tongue-in-cheek resolution to “the other societies” (referring to itself as “the nuclear society”) that concludes, “Therefore be it resolved. . . ASIH expresses its sincerest thanks to [SSAR, HL, AES, ELHS of, God help us, the AFS] for meeting with us and making this meeting all the better attended, more successful, and more enjoyable for all concerned.” (*Copeia*, 1988: 1153). Indeed, each society brings its own traditions and strengths to the annual JMIH meeting and the sum is, in many respects, greater than its parts.

## MILESTONES

Here we list some important (and some not-so-important, but noteworthy nonetheless!) milestones of the ASIH from over the last 100 meetings. See also the chronology of the ASIH published by Berra (1984: 1–7).

- 1916 First meeting of the ASIH (New York, New York).
- 1917 The first time that abstracts and titles from an ASIH meeting were listed in *Copeia* (from the second meeting of the ASIH; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; *Copeia*, no. 42).
- 1917 The only year with two meetings of the ASIH (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Cambridge, Massachusetts).
- 1918 The first business meeting reports published in *Copeia* (from the 1917 Cambridge, Massachusetts meeting; *Copeia*, no. 53).
- 1919 The first year with no ASIH meeting.
- 1920 The first year an international herpetologist was in attendance (Washington, D.C.; C. Patch, Canada).
- 1929 The first meeting of the Western Division of the ASIH, held on June 20 at the University of California, Berkeley (Bowman, 2008).
- 1930 The first symposium held at an ASIH meeting (New York, New York): The Flight of Fishes (three presenters included C. L. Hubbs, C. M. Breder, Jr., and J. T. Nichols, with discussion).
- 1933 The first concurrent sessions at an ASIH meeting, with talks divided between ichthyological and herpetological sessions (Cambridge, Massachusetts).
- 1934 The first time that the prior year's business meeting minutes were not read for approval, as these had been published in *Copeia* already (“to save time”; New York, New York).
- 1934 “Dr. Gudger moved that in the future each speaker on the program be limited to 15 minutes with the chairman empowered to ring a warning bell at the end of ten minutes and to force the speaker to discontinue at the end of 15 minutes. After considerable discussion, this motion was voted down, but it was suggested that the matter be considered by the Local Committee for the 1935 meetings.” (*Copeia*, 1934: 101; New York, New York).
- 1938 The first meeting held west of the Mississippi River (Berkeley, California).
- 1939 The first parody journal, *Ichtherps*, was distributed (Chicago, Illinois).
- 1939 The first Stoye Awards presented for best student oral presentations in ichthyology and herpetology (Chicago, Illinois).



## B ICHTHYOLOGICAL CREDO

H. Fouler Weed

In scientific papers  
I roam the world around,  
I cut such graceful capers  
As to hardly touch the ground.  
A new genus from Angola,  
Two new species from Kashmir,  
A new form from Pensacola  
With distinctions not quite clear.  
Through time's relentless passage  
This guiding star I've had,  
That by the laws of average  
My names can't all be bad.  
I'll look into the future  
And not to days of yore,  
Lest I might, by chance, the  
nature  
Of my own past works deplore.  
More treatments monographic  
Composed from old card files,  
New synonyms harmonic  
I'll publish yet in piles.  
One day I'll pass to slumbers  
In some quiet little niche,  
But my names live on for others  
To discover which is which.

**Fig. 4.** Content from Urp-Hicks Slips from 1948. (A) A cartoon depicting “The birth of a Copeia note.” (B) A light-hearted poem lampooning one of ASIH’s founders, Henry W. Fowler.

- 1939 The office of Historian for the Society established, and W. K. Necker elected to the position (Chicago, Illinois).
- 1940 The first meeting held outside of the U.S. (Toronto, Ontario, Canada).
- 1948 The first and only issue of *Urp-Hicks Slips*, a humorous tabloid news sheet, was sold at annual smoker (New Orleans, Louisiana; Fig. 4).
- 1949 The first year that a registration fee was charged: \$1 (Washington, D.C.).
- 1953 The Southeastern Division of the ASIH established (New York, New York).
- 1955 The first time more than 50 presentations were made at an ASIH meeting (San Francisco, California).
- 1957 The only time that a pre-Board of Governor's Meeting cocktail hour was officially held at the local host's home; President Edward Taylor encouraged the general membership to attend the Board of Governor's meeting: “This procedure was most desirable for it provided the general membership an opportunity to become more intimately acquainted with the problems facing the Society” (*Copeia*, 1957: 318; New Orleans, Louisiana).

- 1961 The first time that titles of all papers delivered were not included in the published summary of the meetings (Austin, Texas).
- 1966 The first time more than 100 presentations were given at an ASIH meeting (Miami, Florida).
- 1973 The first ASIH meeting held outside of the U.S., Mexico, or Canada (San José, Costa Rica), and the only ASIH meeting with a session entirely in Spanish.
- 1974 The first ASIH meeting with papers (2) presented in French (Ottawa, Ontario, Canada).
- 1977 Ichthyologist and Herpetologist group photos taken separately (Gainesville, Florida).
- 1978 The first time that all three U.S.-based herpetological societies (SSAR, HL, ASIH) met jointly (Tempe, Arizona).
- 1979 The first time that posters were presented at an ASIH meeting (11 posters; Orono, Maine).
- 1988 The first time there were more than 500 oral presentations made at an ASIH meeting (Ann Arbor, Michigan).
- 1988 The first time a cladistic inspired rock opera was performed at an ASIH meeting (or anywhere, as far as is known): *ROMMY (The Phylogenetic Analysis of Allozyme and Isozyme [Electrophoretic] Data)* (Ann Arbor, Michigan).
- 1988 The first Storer Awards presented for best student poster presentation (Ann Arbor, Michigan).
- 1993 The first (and only) time 53 kegs of beer and over one-half ton of meat were consumed at one ASIH social event (Austin, Texas).
- 1995 The last ASIH meeting for which titles for all presentations were published in the meeting summary in *Copeia* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada).
- 1998 *ROMMY II: What's It Really All About* performed, featuring music by Ten Years On and songs such as "Starch Gel Wizard," "Willi Hennig Superstar," and "Clado Babble" (Guelph, Ontario, Canada).
- 2010 Memorandum of understanding signed to codify JMIH (Providence, Rhode Island).
- 2011 Voting took place among attendees for the JMIH logo (Minneapolis, Minnesota).
- 2012 The position of a JMIH program officer created (Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada).
- 2013 The last annual banquet to be held at an ASIH meeting and the 100<sup>th</sup> year of the Society's journal (Albuquerque, New Mexico; Smith and Mitchell, 2013).
- 2016 The 100<sup>th</sup> celebration of the ASIH's founding (New Orleans, Louisiana).
- 2018 The last Society-sponsored closing event to be held at an ASIH meeting; the "closing event" was the descendent of the so-called smokers and the annual banquets that took place since the earliest meetings of the ASIH (Rochester, New York).
- 2019 The first Cashner Student Awards supported students from historically and currently underrepresented groups in the sciences to attend the JMIH (Snowbird, Utah).
- 2020 The first time the ASIH convened for a virtual Board of Governors meeting in August and a virtual Business and Awards Meeting in December after the in-person meeting planned for Norfolk, Virginia, was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 2021 The first dual in-person (in Phoenix, Arizona) and online meeting and 100<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASIH.

#### WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Since the first in 1916, the meetings of the ASIH have grown in size and complexity but their main purpose remains the same: to communicate the results of observations and experiments on the biology of fishes, amphibians, and reptiles. This core purpose has and will continue to endure. It is through this communication that participants derive inspiration for their own studies, new ideas are generated, and new hypotheses are born. A recurring theme of many of the presentations that were made during the centennial of ASIH reflected on the feeling that ASIH was a family (Hilton and Crump, 2016). This is partly due to the connections that are made at a personal level between colleagues—our professional compatriots often become personal friends. It is also that ASIH strives to be a fun meeting. Apart from the scientific presentations, ASIH meetings have long included both formal and informal events centered on food, drink, live music, and local culture. Artistic logos are prepared for each meeting, celebrating the diversity of fishes, reptiles, and amphibians in proximity to the meeting location (Fig. 5), and meetings have long been followed by field trips led by local hosts to nearby destinations of rich natural beauty, especially among fishes and herps. Furthermore, the meetings often provided a venue for members to showcase their creativity, sense of humor and other talents and skills transcendent of scholarly pursuits. A prime example is the 1988 evening performance of the cladistics-inspired rock opera, *ROMMY (The Phylogenetic Analysis of Allozyme and Isozyme [Electrophoretic] Data)*, written by Robert W. Murphy and Leslie A. Lowcock as a parody of systematic biology, in the style of The Who's 1969 rock opera, *Tommy* (Anthony, 2008). *ROMMY II* followed a decade later and featured songs such as "Starch Gel Wizard," "Willi Hennig Superstar," and "Cladobabble." Murphy recalls, "Whereas *ROMMY I* was about data analysis (using frequencies as characters), *II* was about attitude vs. tolerance and acceptance of different perspectives." Most importantly, such aspects of the ASIH meetings reinforce that ichthyologists and herpetologists are a wonderfully creative group of biologists.

At a time when remote contact is easily facilitated by digital means of communication, one may question the need for in-person scientific conferences. There is no doubt that virtual connections, including the potential for distributing scientific conferences, have a vital role in what we do as scientists. However, this cannot replace the value of face-to-face connections, chance conversations at coffee breaks, and unexpected moments of inspiration (Sohn, 2018). Humans are social animals, and the need for direct interaction with one another is fundamental to all aspects of our existence. Science is no exception, and we expect that the annual meetings of ASIH will continue well into the future to serve as a bedrock for the advancement of the understanding of reptiles, amphibians, and fishes.

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This manuscript was drafted initially in 2019–2020 by the History of the Society Committee for ASIH (EJH, AMB, KEB, DGS, GJW-C), with anticipation that the 2020 JMIH meeting would be the 100<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ASIH. Upon cancellation of



**Fig. 5.** Logos from meetings of the ASIH. (A) The first logo for a meeting that was not the ASIH logo to be reproduced on t-shirts (image drawn by and courtesy of B. Mundy). (B) Cover of the program book including the meeting logo from the 1985 meeting (illustration by G. Dinkins). (C) Logo from the 1997 meeting (image drawn by and courtesy of R. Troll). (D) Logo from the 2014 meeting (image drawn by and courtesy of D. Neeley).

the 2020 meeting, the completion of the manuscript was delayed. In the spring of 2021, the committee invited MHS (ASIH Secretary) to collaborate and complete the manuscript. Authors following EJH are listed alphabetically. We thank Inci A. Bowman for comments on the manuscript and her assistance and enthusiasm for the ASIH History Committee. This is contribution number 4033 of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, William & Mary.

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