



NORTH AMERICAN SECTION

# ***NAS/IUSSI NEWSLETTER***

## ***November 21, 2008***

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### **NAS/IUSSI Officers**

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President: Blaine Cole  
President-elect: John Wenzel  
Past President: Marla Spivak

Secretary-Treasurer: Colin Brent  
Archivist: Chris Starr

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Dear NAS members:

It has been such an eventful few weeks that a second Fall newsletter was necessary. Hopefully, you have finished reading the first by now. Even though my tan (really just a bad sunburn) from the Puerto Rico meeting had only begun to fade, we had another NAS/IUSSI meeting at the Entomological Society of America conference on November 18. Reno was as charming as ever; my heart is always warmed by the sight senior citizens, with walkers in hand, gambling away their meager life savings while chain-smoking in between deep breaths from their oxygen tanks. Thankfully, the dense clouds of tobacco smoke did help to enhance the flavor of the otherwise bland and overpriced food available at the casinos. Delightful.

The big news for our society is the result of the presidential election (the one with slightly lesser impact on the world). You might have noticed that the officer listing above has changed somewhat. John Wenzel won the popular vote and pundits have declared the results a mandate. For what we are not yet sure, but brace yourselves when he takes office a year from now. In the meantime, Blaine Cole has stepped into his role as president and seemed to embrace the gavel with relish. In a wise first action, he used his executive powers to immediately put an end to the business meeting and to usher in the post-meeting covert beer drinking and snack munching. This period of socializing was spent discussing the quite memorable presentation made earlier in the meeting by our outgoing president, Marla Spivak. I would elaborate on the subject of that talk, but there is a chance this letter might be viewed by children. Let's just say the word 'Brazilian' was used frequently. You'll just have to ask Marla for details and be sure to request pictures.

A number of people in recent months have indicated to me that they were not sure when they had last paid their membership dues. In combing through my records, I also noticed that some of the contact information for our society is woefully out of date. This means that many people do not receive the emails being sent out by yours truly, and that is a tragedy. To rectify matters, I will need everyone's help. Along with this newsletter, I have attached an Excel file with every member's name, membership status, the last year for which they paid their dues, and contact information. If you know that any of this information needs to be updated for you or another member, please let me know. And if you have not paid your membership dues lately (for shame), I am also attaching the form for 2009 membership renewal.

There is some additional meeting news to share. First, proceedings from the Puerto Rico meeting are being prepared and will be posted on the NAS/IUSSI website (<http://iussi.bees.net/>) in the next few days. Second, the Call for Symposia for the 2010 meeting in Copenhagen has just gone out. I have put a copy of the announcement at the end of this letter. Members are encouraged to visit the congress web site <http://www.iussi.org/iussi2010/> and email [IUSSI2010@bio.ku.dk](mailto:IUSSI2010@bio.ku.dk) to receive updates about the congress.

Sean O'Donnell has sent a brief description of an upcoming graduate-level specialty course, Neotropical Social Insects, that may be of interest to NAS/IUSSI members.

Organization for Tropical Studies: Neotropical Social Insects

Dates: March 15-23, 2009

This is a field/lecture course that will combine lectures, natural history exploration, and hands-on field experience with the diverse social insect fauna of the Neotropics. The course will emphasize behavioral and ecological approaches to the study of insect sociobiology.

The group will work in two distinct habitats in Costa Rica: lowland Caribbean rain forest (the OTS La Selva biological station), and premontane forest (the OTS Las Cruces station), with possible side trips to other habitats.

Faculty: Coordinator Dr. Sean O'Donnell, University of Washington Dr. Paul Hanson, University of Costa Rica Dr. William Wcislo, Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute Dr. Adam Smith, University of California, Berkeley

Dates: March 15-23, 2009

Application Deadline: November 20, 2008 followed by rolling admission.  
Tuition: OTS consortium members - \$1,600; non-members \$2,200

Student audience: graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and other interested professionals

For applications & More information: consult the OTS website at [www.ots.duke.edu](http://www.ots.duke.edu) or contact [academic@ots.ac.cr](mailto:academic@ots.ac.cr)

**Minutes of the NAS-IUSSI Business Meeting  
Reno, NV  
November 18, 2008**

Attendance: ≈45

Call to order: 7:35 PM, by Marla Spivak

**I. ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Thanks to Tugrul Giray and Bert Rivera-Marchand for organizing the meeting.
- Congratulations offered to Adrian Smith and Brendon Mott for their outstanding presentations at the Puerto Rico meeting.
- Request for people to start thinking of new locations to propose for the next breakout meeting in 2012.

**II. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

**INFLOWS**

Membership Dues	\$3146.00
Donations	707.50
Revenue from 2008 NAS-IUSSI Conference	11400.00

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**TOTAL INFLOWS                    \$15253.50**

**OUTFLOWS**

IUSSI International (Capitation fees)	1460.00
Award plaque (2007 Nutting Award)	59.79
Award Plaque	53.26
Conference Costs	12050.00
Student Travel Awards (36 @ \$100)	3600.00

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**TOTAL OUTFLOWS                    \$17223.05**

Net Income/Loss	- \$1969.55
Balance Forward	\$7678.00

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**REMAINING BALANCE                    \$ 5708.45**

**2007 Memberships**

**2008 Memberships**

Total Regular members:	107	Total Regular members:	112	+5%
Total Student members:	21	Total Student members:	68	+224%
Household members:	4	Household members:	7	+75%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>132</b>		<b>187</b>	<b>+42%</b>

### **III. NEW BUSINESS**

#### ***Discussion points for the Nutting Award***

As of October 31, 2008, the Nutting Fund contained \$18,069.77. This includes a recent infusion of \$5,870 in American Capital Ltd. Stock on July 23, 2008. At the beginning of the year the fund had \$19,302.50. Thus the fund has declined nearly 30% since the first of the year. The money is distributed in a money market fund, a stock, a corporate bond, a mutual fund, and a CD at about 20% in each category. This distribution is probably responsible for keeping the losses at a minimum. These funds have come primarily from an old friend of Bill and Ruth Nutting, with some additional small contributions from others. This friend would naturally like to be assured that the integrity of the Nutting Award endowment be protected now and into the future.

Here is a summary of the main issues.

- 1) Our generous donor has promised sizable (\$5,000.00 or about the same as previous years) annual donations so that the endowment for the Nutting Award or Research Grant can build to something meaningful. The aim of his contributions from this point forward is to increase the principal of, and income from, the endowment for the Nutting Award to enable larger grants to be made so that they can represent significant research support rather than just supplemental funding or recognition.
- 2) His further contributions are dependent upon his satisfaction that the funds and the awards will be overseen by isopterists. This means that the committee must be independent and be made up of isopterists, with an additional representative of the Executive Committee or Awards Committee of the NAS/IUSI.
- 3) His continued contributions are further dependent upon an investment policy aimed at increasing the income from the endowment, and that safety now play a secondary role, as a minimum yearly grant of \$1,000 is now assured. If the endowment for the Nutting Award can be increased each year, it may soon be able to significantly support the research of a graduate student or young professional. Probably the income would have to rise to about \$5,000 to be effective in this way.

Michael I. Haverty, Chair  
2008 Nutting Award Committee

#### ***George C. Eickwort Student Research Award***

This award is given in memory of George Eickwort and is designed to recognize exceptional research and scholarly activity by students in the field of social insect biology. The award consists of a certificate, an honorarium, and a one-year subscription to *Insectes Sociaux*. The Eickwort Award Committee consists of Phil Starks, Bryan Danforth, Ulrich Mueller, Andy Saurez and myself (Kenna MacKenzie). A special thanks to Phil for his assistance this year.

#### ***General Statement***

This year, as always, the nominees for the Eickwort Student Award were of excellent quality making coming to a decision very difficult. However, one individual stood out. The North

American Section of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects is proud to announce that **Christopher Smith, PhD (2008), the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign** was selected as the recipient of the **2008 Eickwort Student Award**. While Christopher's research has advanced our understanding of the evolution and ecology of social adaptations of ants, he is also recognized as an excellent teacher and very active in service to academia and his community.

For his doctoral studies, **Christopher Smith** was a student of Andrew Saurez at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign. His PhD research examined the evolution of worker size variation in *Pogonomyrmex* seed harvester ants. Through the use of multiple techniques including microstatellite and stable isotope analyses, he was able to evaluate the relative contributions of genetics and nutrition in determining size and caste in this ant genus. As this work was completely independent of that of his major professor, he needed to and was successful in locating funding to carry out this work. He published his first paper as an undergraduate and has since published ten more in good journals (for all of these except one he is either first or co-first author). In addition, Christopher is noted as an excellent teacher and mentor. During his tenure at the University of Illinois, he supervised four undergraduate projects – one which resulted in a publication. Perhaps the words of his references “a scientist who thinks carefully about the real lives of his real subjects and asks questions that are basic and important”, “knows more about ant biology than most professors I know”, and “Chris understands that mystery exists, is real, and drives the best science” best describe the attributes of this young social insect researcher. Christopher is currently working with Drs. Gadau and Hölldobler as a Post-Doctoral Associate Research Scientist in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. The Award Committee is very pleased to announce that Christopher Smith is the recipient of the 2008 Eickwort Student Award.

### ***William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award***

This award is named in honor of the late Bill Nutting, an outstanding termite biologist who made major contributions to termite biology, both through his own research and mentoring of students, and in honor of Ruth Nutting for her support of Bill's work and continued interest in termite biology. It is given to the NAS/IUSSI student member who shows the most distinguished record of research in the area of basic termite biology. The award consists of a plaque and a research grant of \$1,000. This year's Selection Committee consisted of Michael Haverty (chair), Edward Vargo, Colin Brent, Brian Forschler, and Kenna MacKenzie.

#### ***General Statement***

There were two nominees for the Nutting Award this year; one individual stood out. The North American Section of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects is proud to announce that **Hou-Feng Li** was selected as the recipient of the **2008 William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award**. Mr. Li's Masters research focused on foraging gallery construction by subterranean termites. He demonstrated that subterranean termites excavate foraging galleries without depositing soil above ground, thus disproving the long-held assumption that termites compact soil. Mr. Li used creative techniques, such as multicolored soil particles, digital microphotography and mathematical analysis of the resulting color pixels, to test the hypothesis of soil compaction by termites. He has five (four as first author) research publications in excellent journals, and has demonstrated outreach to the scientific, pest control industry and greater entomological community. He is involved with basic research, as well as serving as a

site manager for a study to evaluate modifications to a bait system for control of subterranean termites.

**Hou-Feng Li** is a student of Nan-Yao Su at the University of Florida in Fort Lauderdale. His Ph.D. research involves the phylogenetic relationships of populations of *Coptotermes formosanus* and *C. gestroi*. Of the many termite pest species, these two are the most destructive and wide-spread. Florida and Mr. Li's native Taiwan are the only two known places in the world where these two "supposedly" allopatric species co-exist. The distributions, population genetics, and inter-specific competition between these two species will be the topics of his Ph.D. research program.

His references write of Mr. Li: "... he has authored or co-authored refereed papers related to termite biology and has been actively participating in many scientific meetings and won several student competition awards. These are remarkable achievements for a non-native speaker of English, and are excellent examples of his motivation and diligence in his academic interests." "Hou-Feng has been infected with the same sense of wonder that Bill Nutting had for his beloved and mysterious termites of the Sonoran Desert." "Mr. Li is one of my most reliable and enthusiastic research cooperators in our study of termite baits, which is being conducted with eight researchers throughout the southeastern US. In my experience, it is very unusual to find a researcher, like Mr. Li, who is equally excellent and interested in conducting both basic and applied research." For these reasons, the Award Committee is very pleased to announce that Hou-Feng Li is the recipient of the 2008 William L. and Ruth D. Nutting Award.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:30 pm  
Socializing Commenced: 9:31 pm

Please, let me know if you have any announcements you would like disseminated.

Cheers.

Colin

Colin Brent  
Secretary and Treasurer  
NAS-IUSSI  
Office: 520-316-6337  
Fax: 520-316-6330  
email: colin.brent@ars.usda.gov



## Call for Symposia

We would like to invite proposals for symposia for IUSSI2010 (the XVI international congress of the International Union for the Study of Social Insects), to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, 8-14 August 2010.

Symposia will be selected to cover broadly all relevant subfields of social insect research, as is customary for international IUSSI conferences. However, high priority will be given to proposals that take a novel approach, for example, by combining proximate and ultimate aspects of the study of sociality, by developing an interface between multiple subfields, or by addressing a relevant topic that has not been addressed at an IUSSI congress before.

Symposium proposals that have at least one invited speaker from outside the classic social insect community are especially welcome.

Proposals for symposia should provide the following information:

1. Title of the symposium (max 100 characters)
2. Description of the symposium (up to 200 words)
3. Names and contact information of the organizers
4. Names and affiliations of two invited speakers that will adequately cover the topic of the symposium and put it in a wider perspective
5. Up to 100 words of text explaining why the proposal is timely and likely to attract interest from others in the IUSSI community

The congress registration fee will be waived for invited speakers. Contributions to the other expenses of invited speakers will be considered at a later date, depending on our success in obtaining external funds. A note should be added to the proposal if an invited speaker is particularly likely to need more funding to be able to attend.

In principle, our policy is that a symposium will only make a commitment in advance to its two invited speakers, and that all other slots will be open for abstract submission. In the final program, there will also be one or two open sessions to allow topics outside the selected symposia to be covered.

Symposium proposals should be submitted to [IUSSI2010@bio.ku.dk](mailto:IUSSI2010@bio.ku.dk) no later than 31 March 2009.

Symposium proposals will be reviewed by the Organizing and Program Committees and decisions on acceptance can be expected in May-June 2009.

The IUSSI2010 [organizing committee](#)