

Minutes - ESEB Members' Meeting 2024

Location: virtual meeting

Date: Thursday, 29th August 2024

Time: 14.00 - 15.00 CEST

Attendees:

Tracey Chapmen (President, Chair), Astrid Groot (Past President), Josefa González (Vice-President), Kees van Oers (Executive Vice-President), Rhonda Snook (*EL* Officer), Ellen Decaestecker (Secretary), Nicola Cook (*JEB* Managing Editor), Ute Friedrich (Office Manager)

Apologies: Mike Ritchie (President-Elect), Max Reuter (*JEB* Editor-in-Chief), Toni Gabaldón (Congress Organizer)

Members: 27 members attended.

T. Chapman opened the meeting at 14.00 CEST.

1. Minutes of the last members meeting in 2023

The minutes have been adopted by the Steering Committee and are available at the ESEB website.

2. Secretary's Report

2.1. ESEB Initiatives

E. Decaestecker presented the Initiatives of the Society and upcoming calls. Further detailed information on all initiatives is available at the ESEB website.

➤ Conference Travel Award

Conference Travel Awards support young researchers based in low-GDP countries to attend EMPSEB and the ESEB congress in 2025. The deadline will close on 30 January 2025.

➤ Equal Opportunities Initiative

The initiative organises three grant schemes: the EO Fund to support projects that increase equal opportunities, the ESEB Under-represented ECR Achievement (EUEA) award to distinguished young researchers for their scientific achievements under difficult circumstances, and the Congress Attendance Aid (CAA) grant (CAAG) to support diversity at the ESEB congress and EMPSEB. The next calls will be announced in autumn.

➤ Global Evolutionary Biology Initiative

The initiative supports a broad range of activities to promote evolutionary biology in countries where this field is under-developed. The deadline of the current call will close on 1 September 2024.

➤ Godfrey Hewitt Mobility Award

This scheme supports fieldwork or lab visits of young researchers. The deadline will close on 31 January 2025.

➤ John Maynard Smith (JMS) Prize

The prize is awarded annually to an outstanding young evolutionary biologist. The next call will be announced in autumn.

➤ Outreach Funds Initiative

The initiative supports projects that increase the public knowledge of evolutionary biology globally. The next deadline will close on 15 March 2025.

➤ Special Topic Networks

The initiative supports dynamic and flexible series of small meetings and/or other networking opportunities in focused and currently active research areas.
The next call will be announced in autumn.

2.2. Membership

The ESEB Membership is stable with ups and downs depending on congress and non-congress years and a small increase this year due to the Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology (JCEB) in Montreal. The members are geographically well-distributed, particularly, in Western Europe. All members are encouraged to promote ESEB within their communities.

D. Fisher suggested to promote ESEB in countries such as China and India to broaden the membership.

2.3. Upcoming Congresses

➤ ESEB 2025

The next congress will take place from 17th – 22nd August 2025 in Barcelona. E. Decaestecker reported that preparation for ESEB2025 is going well and the steering committee has been impressed by the venue that they visited in spring this year. All members are encouraged to pre-register for the congress at <https://eseb2025.com/pre-registration/> to facilitate the organisation. The call for symposia suggestions will close on November, 21st, 2024.

ESEB will organise two special lectures: the Presidential Address by M. Ritchie and the Distinguished Fellow talk by Dieter Ebert.

➤ ESEB 2027

The ESEB congress in 2027 will take place from 16th – 20th August in Gothenburg (SE), Istanbul (TR), London (UK), and Munich (DE). The main organiser is A. Tellier (Munich). The preparations are going well. The sessions in the morning will be streamed to all hubs and local sessions will take place in the afternoon.

T. Chapman noted this first hub meeting is an important endeavour for ESEB and has raised interest in other societies. ESEB has established an evaluation team to evaluate the congress and compare it to the traditional meeting format.

➤ Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology 2029

E. Decaestecker reported that she is preparing a proposal to organise a Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology with the North American societies (ASN, SSB, SSE) in Ghent in 2029. The final proposal will be submitted to the steering committee in spring 2025. The local organisers are researchers of KU Leuven, Ghent University, and the Research Network EVENET, the largest network of research groups in evolutionary biology in Flanders. Ghent offers sufficient facilities (venue, accommodation) for a large joint meeting. The symposia format will be mixed with about 40% symposia suggested upfront (ESEB style) and 60% symposia established based on the abstract submissions (Evolution meeting style).

3. Executive Vice-President's Report

K. van Oers presented the financial status at the end of 2022. The annual report is available at the ESEB website. The assets consist of the profit share from the journals, stocks & bonds, and cash money. The liabilities comprising the financial commitments (support for congresses, initiatives, VAT provision) and the equity (congress emergency fund and free capital). The total assets as well as the total liabilities summed up to about 1.275 M €.

K. van Oers pointed out the following details in the report:

- the income from the *Journal of Evolutionary Biology* (*JEB*) decreased in 2023.
- an additional income of *JEB* moving to the new publisher, the signing bonus, has been committed to editorial costs over the next years.

- membership income decreased slightly due to the lower membership numbers in years with no ESEB congress.
- About 110,000 € budgeted for initiatives was not spent in 2023 although this will be spent this year. This and the above-mentioned bonus led to an inflated net result of 2023 that masked the actual deficit of about 131,000 €.

In general, ESEB's finances are healthy but expenses will have to be reduced in the coming years.

On request of T. Chapman, the members approved the presented Annual Accountant Report 2023 with no dissenting votes and granted discharge to the officers in duty. Four members abstained from discharging the officers.

4. Journal of Evolutionary Biology (JEB)

N. Cook presented an update on *JEB*'s transition, status, and promotional activities highlighting the following points:

- In 2023, *JEB* moved successfully to OUP. The first issue produced by OUP came out in January 2024.
- The transition period was labour-intensive but largely positive for the editorial team and OUP is more responsive and engaged in understanding the society's aims than the previous publisher.
- In 2023, *JEB* published 12 issues with more than 50% Open Access articles.
- Two special issues as well as one Target review were published last year, all of them resulting from ESEB initiatives such as Special Topic Networks and Progress Meetings.
- Methods Articles were introduced in 2022 and the first one is performing well as does the first Perspective Article that was published in June this year.
- Submissions continued to decrease as is the general trend at the moment for society journals in evolutionary biology. It seems that many manuscripts are submitted to competitors such as *MDPI* or *Ecology and Evolution*.
- The impact factor remained stable.
- In order to commission content, *JEB*/ESEB was promoted at PopGroup 2024 and the JCEB 2024. In Montreal, the journal was well-represented at a stand organised by N. Cook with support by editors as well as ESEB initiatives committee members.
- Pre- and post-congress, applications for Special Issues were/are encouraged.
- N. Cook welcomed everyone to submit manuscripts to *JEB*, especially reviews and Forum or Perspective Articles, and to encourage colleagues.
- N. Cook provides material to highlight the journal at other conferences on request.

On request, N. Cook confirmed that *JEB* does not cascade rejected papers to *Ecology and Evolution* any longer.

5. Evolution Letters (EL)

R. Snook reported that *EL* is managed by an Oversight Committee (OC) that was recently restructured and its remit defined and approved by ESEB and SSE. The OC consists of 2 representative of SSE, 2 representatives of ESEB and one independent member. The chair rotates every year between ESEB and SSE. Jacintha Eilers (ESEB) stepped down as chair this year and was replaced by Andrew McAdam (SSE). The OC reports to both society's boards on a regular basis.

The journal is managed by Judith Mank, Editor-in-Chief, and a board of Associate Editors (AEs). Three new AEs joined in 2023, but due to the high workload, more might be needed in the future.

The number of submissions as well as publications increased in 2023. The acceptance rate was 35%. The time to first decision settled at 29 days in 2023, including desk rejects of about 40-45%. The impact factor decreased, similarly to those of other evolutionary-content journals.

J. Mank commissioned an artist cover page, the first cover published in the June issue this year. In addition, a first special issue was published in January 2024 and depending on the success more will follow. *EL* was promoted at the JCEB by a stand that was well-received.

R. Snook pointed out that beside publishing in society journals everyone should also remember to cite articles of colleagues that were published in society journals.

D. Fisher suggested to implement a cascading system from *Evolution Letters* to *JEB*. This was paused when *Evolution Letters* was with OUP and *JEB* still with Wiley. However, this cascade has been reinstated now that *JEB* is also with OUP.

6. Other

The next ESEB elections for the President, the Vice-President and Secretary positions will take place in spring 2025. In addition, a new cohort of Council members will be elected. Calls for nominations will open in due course.

T. Chapman closed the meeting at 14.55 CEST.

The minutes have been adopted by the President and Secretary.

23 September 2024



Tracey Chapman, ESEB President



Ellen Decaestecker, ESEB Secretary