Open Letter

WCH: Developing a Global Communication Network for Herpetologists

The World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) is an international organisation whose primary goal is: “to promote international interest, collaboration and co-operation in herpetology”. To date this has been achieved by successfully hosting seven world congresses in locations around the world (fig. 1). The 8th WCH will be hosted in Hangzhou, China and will complete the location of these meetings in all zoogeographic regions of the world.

In addition to providing this important role, we are now inviting herpetologists around the world to join an exciting new WCH initiative to develop a global communication network for herpetologists. The objective is to provide a global framework linking individual herpetologists, with local, national, and regional herpetological societies around the world, using an integrated email, www sites, and social media network.

The WCH Global Communication Network for Herpetologists has been initiated to provide a rapid form of communication among herpetologists around the world, linking students, professors, and professional herpetological organisations through the World Congress of Herpetology (fig. 2).

Affiliated organisations form an important role within the WCH constitution (fig. 3) and can facilitate opportunities to connect individual herpetologists around the globe. To promote regional participation in WCH activities, affiliated organisations are encouraged to nominate a member to represent their organization and region on the WCH International Herpetological Committee.

The global WCH communication network will disseminate information about:
- Local and national herpetology labs, and organizations, located within each region;
- Local, national, regional, and WCH conferences and workshops in herpetology;
- Studentships, scholarships, and volunteer opportunities for students in herpetology;
- Career opportunities such as postgraduate scholarships, postdoctoral positions, jobs for herpetologists;
- Research activities that have an international perspectives and global participation.

The WCH communication network will engage with affiliated individuals and organizations using all opportunities available. Current media include:

1. Active links between websites, including both organizations and individual labs organized within regions, via an interactive global map on the WCH website (WCH URL: http://www.worldcongressofherpetology.org/);
2. Reciprocal sharing of logos on our respective websites;
Figure 1. Years and regional locations of the WCH congresses hosted between 1989 and 2012. The 8th WCH congress will be held in Hangzhou, China between the 16-21 August in 2016. This figure is published in colour in the online version.

Figure 2. A conceptual model for developing the WCH Global Communication Network for herpetologists. Individuals can link directly via Facebook and other social media, and organisations can share web pages and email list servers. This figure is published in colour in the online version.

Figure 3. An extract from the WCH constitution outlining the role of “Affiliated Organizations”. This figure is published in colour in the online version.


4. Actively disseminate information using social media networks (e.g. WCH Twitter hashtag: #WCHerpetol);

5. Provide email notifications to individual herpetologists around the world, distributing through individual, local and regional email list-servers.

In my role as WCH Secretary General, I would like to personally invite individuals and organizations to join this network, and where possible, encourage your local organisation to...
Figure 4. First advertisement for the 8th World Congress of Herpetology to be held in Hangzhou, China between 15th and 21nd of August 2016. This figure is published in colour in the online version.

become “Affiliated” with the World Congress of Herpetology.

If your organisation joins this exciting new initiative, I would also invite your organization to appoint a “WCH Representative” to provide an active link between WCH and your organisation. The primary role of the nominated WCH Representative would be to share and pass on information from your society membership to the WCH and vice-versa (through a regional hub). The WCH Representative will be a direct link for communication and will mediate the flow of information to the broader community, and ensure that only relevant professional information is transmitted in either direction. The WCH Representative would organise and nominate regional candidates for other WCH initiatives such as the “WCH awards in Herpetology, and the WCH Hall of Fame”. WCH Representatives would also be encouraged to nominate for positions on the WCH committees and attend WCH meetings (fig. 4).

Please consider this invitation as an inclusive opportunity to internationalize and strengthen herpetology. I look forward to engaging with individuals and organization representatives to develop a WCH communication network linking herpetologists around the world.

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