

## **President's report Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) 2023**

In 2023, the board of the Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) consisted of Bregje Wertheim (president), Koen Verhoeven (secretary), Eric Schranz (treasurer), Vasilis Kokkoris (PR officer & NLSEB Jr. Board liaison), Kees van Oers (ESEB liaison) and Barbara Gravendeel (board member). Board members Arjan de Visser and Rutger Hermsen stepped down and Eric Schranz and Kees van Oers joined the board in 2023.

The board met five times in between the General Assemblies of 2023 and 2024 (14 June, 20 September, 23 November, 22 January & 20 March). During these meetings, the organization of activities announced in the policy plan was discussed and planned, as well as *ad hoc* issues relevant for the functioning of NLSEB, such as a new website, changes in the NLSEB board and committees and in the junior board. All meetings were held online.

At the 2023 NLSEB General Assembly on May 16, the policy plan for 2023 was approved, which stated that the society would carry out the following activities:

1. Organize an annual scientific meeting, with scientific presentations on evolutionary processes, in any field of science, and with other activities aimed at community building, such as networking meetings and round-table discussions.

The annual NLSEB meeting in 2023 took place in Ackoesticum (Ede) on 16 May 2023. The conference had a good attendance of 118 participants, and was much appreciated, judged by the positive comments of participants. The conference included plenary lectures by Felicity Jones and Franjo Weissing, as well as by the winner of the Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Prize 2022 (see below), 4 parallel sessions with 20 presentations selected from the abstracts, a poster session, the General Assembly and a *cultural intermezzo* by the dramaturg Wessel Padberg. The board is grateful to the committee, that organized NLSEB2023: Renske Onstein, Vasilis Kokkoris, Anne Kupczok, Sijmen Schoustra and Marjon de Vos.

2. Organize an annual PhD and post-doc meeting, aimed to foster interactions between the 'next generation of evolutionary biologists'.

In 2023, this meeting was organized for the third time. It took place on 15 May 2023 with 45 participants. The meeting involved pitch presentations by participants, and two parallel workshops on early career small grant writing, where Dr. Kelley Leung detailed the process of writing a successful application, and included special considerations on ethics and collaboration building and on how to improv(e) your science, and where Dr. Aniek Ivens demonstrated techniques from improvisation theater and storytelling to improve science communication. The Jr. NLSEB also invited panelists Kelley Leung, Kim Ferguson, Justin Stewart, and Sergio González-Mollinedo to discuss challenges and positive outlooks on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in academia. The board is grateful to the NLSEB junior board who organized the PhD/postdoc meeting: Jana Riederer (chair), Victoria Terry (secretary), Malin Klein (treasurer), Sam von der Dunk, Nicky Faber and Yannick Woudstra.

3. Inform members about upcoming meetings, funding opportunities and community news relevant to the society via Twitter, Facebook, the NLSEB website and newsflashes.

The main platform for information on NLSEB is its website [www.nlseb.nl](http://www.nlseb.nl). Five Newsflashes came out between May 2022 and March 2024, all still available on the NLSEB website. NLSEB also has an X (former Twitter) account with 373 followers.

4. Annually, award an outstanding evolutionary biologist with the Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Prize for the best peer-reviewed publication in the previous year as either first or last author, which consists of a financial award of 500 euros. The prize-winner delivers the Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Lecture during the NLSEB conference.

At NLSEB2023, the Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Prize winner of 2022, Julian Vosseberg (UU), was announced and given the opportunity to present their prize-winning work in a plenary lecture. The jury members were Duur Aanen, Liedewij Laan and Koen Verhoeven.

5. Other forms of community building, such as organizing networking opportunities.

In 2023, the NLSEB Junior Board underwent substantial changes, with Jana Riederer, Sam von der Dunk and Yannick Woudstra stepping down and four new members joining. The current Junior Board consists of Nicky Faber - chair (WUR), Victoria Terry - secretary (VU Amsterdam), Malin Klein - treasurer (VU Amsterdam & UVA), Felicia Wolters (WUR), Cathleen Broersma (Leiden University), Annabelle de Vries (Naturalis) and Luiz Jardim de Queiroz (Naturalis). The Junior Board represents the community of PhD students and postdocs working in evolutionary biology in the Netherlands, and advises the NLSEB board on related issues. Their activities include the organization of the annual PhD/postdoc meeting and on 4 September 2023 the second of a series of lab visits was organized at A-LIFE at the VU in Amsterdam with about 20-25 participants.

In addition, NLSEB and the Centre for Urban Ecology and Evolution (CUE2) co-organized a symposium on Evolving Urban communities (24 January 2024, VU Amsterdam) with two keynote speakers (Caroline Isaksson – Lund University, Norway; Chris Thomas – University of York, UK), seven contributed talks, and 39 participants (organizers: Barbara Gravendeel, Wouter Halfwerk and Koen Verhoeven).



Attendees of CUE2-NLSEB symposium 'Evolving Urban Communities' that took place on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 in Amsterdam

Furthermore, we aim to develop knowledge clips that support existing courses in evolutionary biology and will be made available through the NLSEB website (organized by Jelle Zandveld & Hilje Doekes).

On the 31st of December 2023, NLSEB had 124 members. In 2023, 30 new members were welcomed.

6. Serve as a communication channel to NWO, KNAW, universities and relevant institutions and societies (ESEB, NIBI, Origins Centre, Nationale Wetenschapsagenda, Topsectoren, NERN).

Board members maintain links with ESEB (ESEB-liaison Kees van Oers), NIBI, the Origins Center (Bregje Wertheim is member of the Steering Committee of the OC), the Centre for Urban Ecology and Evolution (Barbara Gravendeel, Koen Verhoeven) and NERN. Former NLSEB board member Arjan de Visser is in the Programme Committee of the NWO Life conferences (2023, 2024). We are pleased that 'evolution' received a prominent place in the 'Sector Plan Biologie', which details new investments in biological research in the Netherlands. Founding NLSEB board member Jacintha Ellers is currently chair of the Biology Council, who played a coordinating role in the development of the Sector Plan.

7. Support education and outreach by publishing links to educational resources on evolution on the NLSEB website.

In 2022/2023, two workshops have been organized to initiate the development of knowledge clips aimed at filling knowledge gaps in current evolutionary biology courses at Dutch universities (see above). In 2023, new content and various resources for education have been added to our website that may be useful for teaching and outreach activities involving evolution. The new additions included a set of instructions for computer or wet-lab practicals using *Nasonia* parasitoids.

In 2023, the confidentiality advisors of NLSEB (Hannah Dugdale and Bas Zwaan) did not receive any complaints. Together with the confidentiality advisors, the code of conduct was updated and a complaint procedure added to warrant ethical standards and social safety & inclusivity during NLSEB-sponsored activities.

12 April 2024

Bregje Wertheim, president NLSEB