

President's report 2020

President's report Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) over 2020

In 2020, the board of the Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) was formed by Prof.dr. Marcel Visser (president), Prof.dr. Jacintha Ellers (liaison NLSEB meeting committee), Dr. Sander van Doorn (Secretary), Dr. Rutger Hermsen (Treasurer), Dr. Koen Verhoeven (ESEB liaison), Prof.dr. Arjan de Visser (board member) and Dr.ir. Liedewij Laan (board member). There were no changes in the board in 2020; the foreseen changes have been postponed by a year until the NLSEB 2021 meeting, because the NLSEB 2020 meeting was cancelled twice (in April and in September) due to the covid pandemic.

The board met five times in between the General Assemblies of 2020 and 2021 (23 June, 15 July, 17 August, 21 October & 11 February). These meetings were to a large extent on the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic for the organization of meetings of NLSEB. The board followed-up on the process of streamlining the membership and financial administration, as well as communication to the NLSEB members (NewsFlash, Twitter, etc.). The board also worked on the NLSEB2021 meeting, in particular on the plenary speakers, the general assembly meeting and on the development of a Policy Plan 2021.

At the online 2020 General Assembly of the Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) the policy plan for 2020 was approved, which stated that the society would carry out the following activities in 2020:

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. In 2020 this will be the Third Conference of the Netherlands Society for Evolutionary Biology (NLSEB) in Ede, originally planned for 21 April but due to the corona virus outbreak moved to 24 September.

The Conference also had to be cancelled in September, so eventually NLSEB 2020 did not take place. This was a major disappointment as this is the main annual activity of NLSEB. The board is grateful to the Meetings Committee 2020 who organized two meetings that in the end could not take place: Marian Bemer (chair), Sijmen Schoustra, Casper van der Kooi and on behalf of the board, Jacintha Ellers and Arjan de Visser.

2. Organize an annual PhD and post-doc meeting, aimed to foster interactions between the 'next generation of evolutionary biologists'. In 2020 this meeting will be organized for the first time (but note that the original planning was October/November 2019). The meeting was planned for 20 April but due to the corona virus outbreak moved to 23 September.

Unfortunately, this meeting could also not take place on 23 September because of Covid-19 regulations. Also here, the NLSEB PhD/post-doc meeting organizers had to organize

two meetings which were both cancelled. The board is grateful to Melanie Lindner (chair), Ben Auxier, Astrid Kruitwagen, Kiran Gurung and Kathryn Stewart for their work.

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 location for information on NLSEB is on its website www.nlseb.nl. Three Newsflashes came out between April 2020 and April 2020, all still available on the NLSEB website. NLSEB also has a Twitter account with 165 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. The Prize will be awarded for the first time in the autumn of 2020 (postponed from spring 2020). The call for the 2021 Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Prize will be made at the end of 2020.

The winner of the first Netherlands Evolutionary Biology Prize is Langqing Liu (WUR) – see the NLSEB website for the jury report. Unfortunately, Langqing could not present his work at the NLSEB 2020 meeting as this meeting was cancelled. He will now present at NLSEB 2021, as will the winner of the 2021 prize, who will be announced at the conference. The jury for the 2021 prize was formed by Prof. dr. Paulien Hogeweg, Dr. Marion de Vos and Dr. Koen Verhoeven.

5. Other forms of community building, such as organizing networking opportunities. Examples include lunch meetings and workshops at the annual NLSEB meeting, where lunch and dinner tables are organized around a theme or a call for grants that then can be discussed. For the more junior evolutionary biologists there is also the PhD/post-doc meeting to get to know other researchers. Due to the exceptional circumstances in 2020 no activities will be organized at an international meeting. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic no activities were developed in 2020.

6. Serve as a communication channel to NWO, KNAW, universities and relevant institutions and societies (ESEB, NIBI, Origins Centre, Nationale Wetenschapsagenda, Topsectoren, NERN). In 2020 we have contributed to the organization of LIFE 2020 (this meeting has been cancelled) and NLSEB will remain involved with this congress in the years to come.

We are also involved in the organization of the second symposium of the Origins Centre, which includes presentations on predicting evolution. We will actively approach NWO on a number of matters, including the discussion on the 'sectorbeeld biologie' and the place of evolutionary biology in the classification system of NWO. NLSEB had a stand at the NAEM days 2020, organized by NERN, to bring NLSEB under the attention of evolutionary ecologists. We also aim to establish a more formal connection to ESEB, in addition to the already existing link where one of the NLSEB board members is also the executive vice-president of ESEB (who is always Dutch following the ESEB regulations). One objective is

to discuss with ESEB how we can increase the synergy between ESEB and the national evolutionary biology societies.

Rutger Hermsen represented NLSEB in the Program Committee of NWO LIFE2020, yet another meeting that was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020, the Sectorbeeld Biologie has been developed by a Taskforce. Jacintha Ellers was a member of this Taskforce and reported informally about this process at the NLSEB board meeting. The NLSEB board is very pleased that evolutionary biology has a clear and prominent place in the Sectorbeeld Biologie.

Apart from these activities, no other initiatives were started.

7. Support education and outreach by publishing links to educational resources on evolution on the NLSEB website. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic no activities were developed in 2020. On the 31st of December 2021, NLSEB had 71 paying members. This number is lower than last year due to the cancellation of the NLSEB 2020 meeting, which usually functions as a trigger for members to sign up and pay their annual membership fee.

In 2020, the confidentiality advisors of NLSEB (Bregje Wertheim and Bas Zwaan) did not receive any complaints.

10 April 2021

Marcel E. Visser, president NLSEB