



Australasian Region

# Newsletter

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<http://www.BiometricSociety.org.au>

## From the President's desk, David Baird



The New Year is well underway, and I hope you all had a good break over Christmas and New Year. I had a lovely holiday in Vietnam, and the people were very friendly and the scenery lovely, apart from the bad air pollution which seemed to be everywhere, from the Sapa mountains to out at sea in Halong Bay. This makes me appreciate the work that those involved in environmental statistics do to improve our environment, and I'm glad there was a strong environmental theme at the Mandurah conference. The two workshops at the conference were well attended and I would like to thank Thomas Yee and Noel Cressie for running these.

Many of those who attended the conference expressed how much they enjoyed it. I have a couple of reports on the conference from young statisticians in the following pages. I was privileged to be able to take 20 young statisticians out for a very enjoyable meal during the conference. The student contributions at the conference were of a high standard and I was pleased to be able to award the student prizes there (see later), and would also like to thank the judges for their help. We have the next IBS-AR scholarships and an IBC travel award being advertised at present, and it's good that we continue to encourage students to join the society.

I would like to thank again Mario and his LOC (Hans, Warren, Kevin, Rebecca, Karyn, Jane and Katia) and SPC (Brenton, Renate) for all the hard work that made the conference so enjoyable. Mario and Angela went out of their way to be hospitable, inviting all those in Perth on Saturday for pizza at their home. I have included some photos from the conference at the end of the newsletter, but all the photos from the conference, courtesy of Harold Henderson and Hans Hockey, are available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/australasian-biometrics/sets/>.

At the AGM Ross Darnell was elected as Vice-President (incoming president for next year), Katya (Kathy) Ruggiero as secretary and Vanessa Cave as regional correspondent, with other exec members continuing. I also want to congratulate Kathy on her election to the International Society's representative council. I would like to thank Patrick Graham and Sally Galbraith, who leave the executive, for all their valuable contributions over the last two years.

At the conference we awarded two ALFs to Jeff Woods and Ian James; both have made considerable contributions to biometry and the society over their careers and it was good to acknowledge this. There are brief biographies on Jeff and Ian later in the newsletter. The next applied statistic conference in our region is at Port Lincoln in December 2014, and if you enjoyed the Mandurah Conference, then that will be very similar in size and content.

David.

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## Australasian Region - council

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In 2014, the regional council comprises:

**President:** David Baird (VSN NZ)

**Vice-president:** Ross Darnell (CSIRO)

**Past-president:** Mario D'Antuono (Department of Agriculture and Food, WA)

**Secretary:** Katya Ruggiero (University of Auckland)

**Treasurer:** Warren Müller (Retired)

**Newsletter correspondent:** Vanessa Cave (AgResearch)

**Regional website manager:** Hans Hockey (Biometrics Matters)

**IBS Executive Board:** Alan Welsh (Australian National University)

Kerrie Mengersen (Queensland University of Technology)

**IBS Representative Council Members:** David Baird (VSN NZ), Ken Russell (Charles Sturt University) and Katya Ruggiero (University of Auckland).

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## Upcoming Conferences

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### International Biometric Conference

Members of the region may be interested in the next International Biometric Conference coming up: International Biometric Conference (IBC 2014) 6-11 July, 2014, Florence, Italy: [www.ibs-italy.info](http://www.ibs-italy.info)

### Australasian Applied Statistics Conference

The next AASC is being held at Port Lincoln, South Australia, 1-5 December 2014: <http://aasc.org.au>. Contact Olena Kravchuk for more information at [olena.kravchuk@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:olena.kravchuk@adelaide.edu.au)

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## 2014 Scholarships for Honours and Masters Students & IBC Travel Award

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These have been advertised and further details can be found at <http://www.biometricsociety.org.au/studentprizes.html>.

Please send any applications for these to Kathy at [k.ruggiero@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:k.ruggiero@auckland.ac.nz).

## Mandurah Student Awards

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### Presentations

1<sup>st</sup> Daniel Ahfock, University of Queensland

2<sup>nd</sup> = Daniel Fernandez, Victoria,  
University of Wellington

2<sup>nd</sup> = Francis Hui, University of New South Wales

Poster: Jennifer Wilcock, University of Auckland.



Daniel and Francis receiving their prizes from Renate Meyer

## Reports from Mandurah Conference

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### From Ian Renner

After attending my first IBS conference in Kiama two years ago, I knew it would not be my last. Having set quite a high standard, I'm happy to report that the conference in Mandurah did not disappoint! There are many reasons why the conference was an outstanding success. First and foremost, the talks I had the pleasure of attending were all of a very high standard and their breadth illustrates how far-reaching the field of biometrics has become. While I



Ian speaking at the conference

enjoyed the presentations that fell within my comfort zone of ecological statistics, I was also drawn to and excited by numerous presentations covering topics ranging from genetics to agricultural research. The plenary speakers were amazing as expected and highlighted different corners of biometrics in vivid detail. The split sessions were well-organised, making recurring themes easily apparent and leaving a more potent impact. The posters were of the highest standard I have yet seen at a conference, and the format of a two minute oral preview prior to general viewing was well-executed.

The social program was likewise wonderful. David Baird was kind enough to let me and a few other post-docs join in the student dinner, providing me with a great opportunity to meet with other young researchers to discuss our work and life as students or new post-docs and make connections that will hopefully lead to working collaborations down the road. The dolphin-spotting canal cruise provided a relaxing excursion of sightseeing and scone tasting in addition to further opportunities to socialise. Finally, the Conference dinner capped everything off very well, with great food combined with now-familiar company making for an outstanding evening. The presentations of the ALF awards proved to be quite inspiring windows to where a young researcher such as myself can hope to aspire someday - the personal tributes from the nominees were moving and the recipients were clearly well-deserving of the honour.

A final point is that the size of the conference played its own role in the great success. At just over 100 attendees ranging from new PhD students to highly accomplished leaders of the field, there were ample opportunities to engage in conversation with just about everyone present and feel part of a close-knit community.

## Reports from Mandurah Conference

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Simply put, this conference further raised the already lofty bar set in Kiama, and it is a testament to the great amount of work and organisation put forth by all of those in charge. A warm thank you goes out to David Baird, Brenton Clarke, Nick de Klerk, Hans Hockey, Renate Meyer, Warren Muller, Kevin Murray, Rebecca O'Leary, Karyn Reeves, Jane Speijers, Katia Stefanova, and especially Mario D'Antuono for making this conference so enriching and enjoyable. I'm ready to register for the IBS conference in 2015 already!

### From Daniel Fernandez

I think that one of the main goals of undertaking a PhD entails discovering who I would like to be as a researcher and what type of researcher I would like to become in the future. I believe that attending conferences is an essential part of the journey to that discovery. I felt privileged to attend and to give a talk in the IBS-AR 2013 Mandurah conference as it was an exceptional opportunity to meet international experts on biometrics. There were quite a few positive things in the conference but the easy interaction among students and researchers was what I enjoyed the most. The experts were always very accessible to exchange ideas and know-how with the students and the conference committee always encouraged this interaction.



Daniel receiving his prize from Renate Meyer

The talks had a wide range of interesting topics, and therefore it was easy to find among them the ones who were working in areas close to my research topic. Furthermore, the talks from the plenary speakers were of a high quality in which the speakers generally made their talks understandable to all the delegates.

The atmosphere was great. The conference committee organized some interesting social events during the conference period. Particularly, the conference dinner and the short trips were a good opportunity to chat with other delegates in an informal way. Those social events were essential to relax after a long day of talks.

I do not want to forget the conference committee who had the deference to invite all the students to an Italian restaurant. The evening dinner was excellent and helped to get to know the other students attending the conference better. Finally, I would like to highly recommend this conference to the current postgraduate students and hope I will be able to repeat my attendance in the following one.

## ALF Awardees 2013

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### Ian James

Ian James has held research/consulting and academic positions with CSIRO, The University of Western Australia and Murdoch University in a career spanning 40 years. Following 5 years as a Research Scientist with CSIRO in Adelaide and Melbourne, he joined the academic staff of the University of Western Australia



in 1978, an appointment which included 4 years as Director of the UWA Statistical Consulting Group. This provided opportunity to develop a number of strong collaborations, particularly in the medical field. He was appointed Professor and Senior Academic in Mathematics and Statistics at Murdoch University in 1990, a year which also saw the beginning of a long-term collaboration with Clinical Immunologist Professor Simon Mallal and colleagues at Royal Perth Hospital. The success of this ongoing collaborative research was recognised and formalised by the establishment in 2000 of the Centre for Clinical Immunology & Biomedical Statistics (CCIBS) at Murdoch as a University Research Centre in partnership with RPH. The Centre now forms part of the broader Institute for Immunology & Infectious Diseases where Ian holds a Research Professorship and is Director of Biostatistics, with ongoing projects mainly in the areas of HIV, Hepatitis C and multiple sclerosis and related diseases. His methodological research has focussed particularly on censored data problems, and more recently on immuno-genetic issues in host-viral interactions.

Other links to Western Australian medical research include appointments as an Honorary Research Fellow within the Women and Infants Research Foundation in 1996 and as an Honorary Member of the Demyelinating Diseases Centre, Australian Neuromuscular Research Institute in 2009. He was invited to membership of the international Type 1 Diabetes Genetics Consortium MHC Fine Mapping Working Group in 2006.

Ian has been a longstanding member of IBS and served on Council 1984-7. He has held a variety of administrative positions within the Statistical Society of Australia, and was national President 1999-2001. He served as Editor of the Australian Journal of Statistics for 7 years, and in 2002 was awarded Honorary Life Membership of SSAI in recognition of his services to the Society and profession.

## ALF Awardees 2013

### Jeff Wood

Jeff Wood has worked as an applied statistician for nearly 50 years, and has been a member of IBS for almost as long. He started at the National Vegetable Research Station in the U.K. in 1966 originally under John Nelder and then under Geoff Freeman, both former presidents of IBS. He moved to Australia in 1973 and worked for the CSIRO for 28 years. Since 2001 he has been working at the Australian National University. His applied work has been in a wide variety of areas, but mostly in ecology, agriculture and horticulture. It has led to many co-authorships and he has published over 120 papers.



He has served the IBS in many capacities, as Council Member from 1986-1993, as member or chair of the Finance Committee from 1987-1998, as Treasurer from 1999-2006, and as a member of the Awards and Education Committee from 1982-1984. More locally he was President of the Australasian Region from 1982-1983.

He has also been involved with other statistical societies. He was on the Committee of the Birmingham Local Group of the Royal Statistical Society from 1969-1973. He was Treasurer of the Canberra branch of the Statistical Society of Australia Inc. from 1987-1988 and President from 1991-1992. He was the national Treasurer from 1989-1992.



Robyn and Ian James with Jeff and Jenny Wood  
at the ALF presentations

## Feedback

This newsletter was written by David Baird with contributions from various members. Thank you to all for your support. All comments and suggestion are most welcome. Please forward any feedback on the newsletter to [David Baird](#).

## Photos from Mandurah Conference



