



Australasian Region

# Newsletter

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<http://www.BiometricSociety.org>

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

## From the President, Mario D'Antuono

As we recover from the wonderful regional conference in Kiama (December 2011) and into a New Year, may I wish all members a 'belated' happy and prosperous New Year. Special thanks to Graham Hepworth who has now stepped down as Vice-President and we welcome President-elect David Baird from New Zealand. I would like to thank all of the committee members who helped make the recent regional conference a grand success and also the sponsors who supported us. A report on the meeting by one of our young statisticians, Emma Huang, appears in this newsletter.



At the recent general meeting (as detailed in the minutes of the meeting to members) we announced the inaugural winners (Susan Wilson and Arthur Gilmour) of the ALF award for longtime service to the Biometric community and to biometry in the region. Please see more details below of the 'prestigious event' at the conference dinner.

My sincere thanks to the members on the regional council for being there to help in the running of the region in the last year, and to Duncan Hedderley who has stepped down from his position after many years of service to the Society. We welcome Sally Galbraith who has taken over as the new Bulletin Correspondent and Chair of the student awards. Please do send Sally any news items that you have from our region and check the website NOW for the latest news on student awards for the coming year.

We remind members that IBC2012 is on this year and that Kaye Basford is the Organising President for the conference in Kobe, Japan. We urge all members in the region to support our neighbouring region in times of difficulties and need. Best wishes to Kaye and her team and for her tireless work to the Society in this her final year on the Executive Committee as President/Vice-President. Please check the IBS main website NOW for the latest news! Abstracts are DUE!

This is also a gentle reminder that your annual subscriptions are due in early March. Please attend to this as soon as possible. New members are most welcome and I urge all members to help recruit new members to the Society. See the website for application forms.

The details of the current regional council appear in this newsletter and the region's website which I ask you to check regularly for the latest news, especially on the forthcoming meetings around the region and the IBC conference.

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## Australasian Region - council

In 2012, the regional council comprises:

**President:** Mario D'Antuono (Dept of Agric. & Food, WA)

**Vice-president:** David Baird (VSN NZ)

**Secretary:** Patrick Graham (University of Otago)

**Treasurer:** Warren Müller (CSIRO)

**Newsletter correspondent:** Sally Galbraith (University of New South Wales)

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

**IBS Vice-President:** Kaye Basford (University of Queensland)

**IBS Representative Council Members (new governance)** - Vacancy since David Baird is now President-Elect, Warren Müller (CSIRO), Alan Welsh (Australian National University)

## Biometrics by the Blowholes by Emma Huang, CSIRO, Brisbane

I attended my second IBS Australasian Region conference in December 2011, and I was as impressed in Kiama as I was in Taupo. Many delegates echoed this pleasure throughout the meeting; indeed, the only complaint I heard was about the weather. Even that may have turned out well, though, since it kept people inside to enjoy the talks rather than being distracted by the blowholes. There was a good turnout of about 110 attendees, mostly local (Aus and NZ) but with many delegates from further away as well. This diversity carried over to the keynote speakers, who represented not only various parts of Australia but the USA (via Spain), the UK, Germany and the UK via Kiama itself!



*Emma (left) and the young ones in Kiama 2011!*

There was something for everyone in the sessions, with talks focused on design and methodology, surveys and surveillance, ecology and genomics. Personally my interests lie in the areas of statistical genetics and agricultural informatics, and just those two areas kept me occupied the majority of the time! I particularly

enjoyed the new "Biometrics showcase" initiative by Russell Millar (Chair), which featured (invited) speakers who had recently published in the society's flagship journal.



*Captain Russell Millar (left) with presenters Scott Foster, Shirley Pledger, Chris Lloyd and Rachel Fewster*

To finish off the conference, we all attended the conference dinner at the Mercure resort nearby in Gerringong, where good food, drinks and laughter were present in abundance. After dinner, inaugural ALF awards were presented to Sue Wilson and Arthur Gilmour for their longtime service to the society in particular and the discipline of biometrics in general. The award name refers both to the awardees' status as "Longtime Fellows/Friends" and the region's first vice-president, E.A. 'Alf' Cornish. The speeches by Alan Welsh and Brian Cullis in honour of the recipients provided entertainment as well as well-deserved recognition of their many accomplishments and contributions.

## A night at the ALFs by Mario (Il Presidente!)

The ALF award is a new award that was proposed and approved by Regional Council and supported unanimously by the members at the general meeting on December 7, 2011. At the conference dinner that evening 'like a night at the Oscars!', Susan R Wilson and Arthur R Gilmour were honoured as the first recipients of the award. A gift in the form of a pewter goblet (later engraved) was presented to each of the recipients.

Alan Welsh (Godfather 1) presented the speech of tribute for Sue echoing her many achievements of Sue (including IBS President 1998-1990, overseeing the establishment of the SUSAN group in Africa) and her immense work with students and researchers in teaching and training of Biometry and Applied Statistics, with an eye to introducing new topics to applied fields.

Brian Cullis (Godfather 2) presented a witty resume from Robin Thompson on the easy-going and 'missionary' style of Arthur, whose computational development of the 'ASReml'

software, has improved the fitting of linear mixed models, providing tools to perform 'spatial or weighted adjustment' of trials from researchers in animal and/or plant breeding all over the world.

Congratulations to Sue and Arthur! May your cup overflow-eth with much celebration!



Arthur, Brian, The real Godfather (Il Presidente), Sue and Alan at the 'ALFs' night in Kiama 2011.

## Student awards at the regional conference

At the regional conference in Kiama, the Society provided awards to students giving oral presentations. This year we had a good number of participants (6) and we announced 3 awards, a winner's prize (\$500), plus two runners-up prize (\$250 each). The award was kindly sponsored by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), being our premier sponsor.

Ian Marschner, (Chair of the Programme Committee) presented the award to the winner (Eve Slavich of UNSW) and one of the two runners-up (Ian Renner also of UNSW). The other runner-up was Irene Zeng (University of Auckland) who could not be present at the closing session.

Congratulations to the winners and also to the other students who presented their work. We appreciate each and everyone for your

contribution. Sincere thanks to the chair Ian Marschner and his committee (James Curran, Sally Galbraith and Alan Welsh). GRDC also provided free registrations to Dini Ganesalingam (University of Western Australia) and Simon Diffey (NSW DPI).



Ian, Ian (Chair) and Eve.

## Other news

Members of the region may also be involved and /or interested in some of the other conferences taking place this year:

- i) Australian Statistical Conference 2012, 'Celebrating 50 years of the society!', Adelaide, July 9-12, 2012. <http://www.statsoc.org.au/> [Abstracts due 16 March 2012.]
- ii) IBC2012, Kobe, Japan. August 26-31, 2012. <http://www.BiometricSociety.org>
- iii) New Zealand Statistical Association Conference, November 29 - 30 2012, Dunedin. <http://www.maths.otago.ac.nz/nzsa2012/>
- iv) Australasian Applied Statistics Conference (GenStat/ASReml), Queenstown, NZ, December 4-7, 2012. <http://aasc2012.com>

Best wishes to all involved and for a successful and rewarding conference.

At the Kiama AGM, a motion was passed *that the IBS-AR region explore approaches to support and promote biometry in the Pacific region*. To this end, any contributions from members would be very welcome, such as forwarding names of people or institutions involved now or potentially in biometry, and any other relevant information. Please forward to [hans@biometricsmatters.com](mailto:hans@biometricsmatters.com)

## Acknowledgements

This newsletter was devised by Mario D'Antuono with special contributions from various members. The content was reviewed by members of the council. Thank you to all for your support and revisions.

Special thanks to Hans Hockey and Harold Henderson for the photographs that appeared in this newsletter. More photos from the last conference can be seen from the regional website or directly at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/australasian-biometrics/sets/> which the webmaster (Hans) has kindly uploaded.

## Feedback

All comments and suggestion are most welcome. Please forward any feedback on the newsletter to [Mario D'Antuono](mailto:Mario D'Antuono).

Correction to newsletter: February 23, 2012: I got my numbers mixed up for the student prizes. My apologies. Now corrected in this edition and new version available on the website. MD.