

The 9th World Congress of Herpetology, held in Dunedin (6-10 January 2020), was organised by a great committee largely based at the University of Otago (Phil Bishop, Adria Rae Abigail Eda, Debbie Bishop, Stephanie Godfrey, Fátima Jorge, Jo Monks, Nicola Nelson, James Reardon, Graham Wallis, Sally Wren). It attracted 874 herpetologists from over 57 countries; we had more than 621 presentations in 24 specialised symposia and 59 open contributed sessions; there were up to 8 parallel sessions and during most of the week-long congress there were more than 32 conference talks per hour! We had nine amazing keynote speakers, representing a very good balance of gender and ethnic diversity and an even spread of herpetological specialisation. Keynote details and video podcasts of most of the keynotes’ presentations can be found on the WCH9 website (wchnz.com look on the programme pages, and these will migrate across to the WCH website in the near future). We strongly encouraged our younger members to attend, and through generous sponsorship, we were able to offer 60 student scholarships and had over 240 student delegates. We presented prizes (US$500 and a box of goodies) to 10 of the best student presentations at our closing ceremony.

Many delegates remarked that it was a very enjoyable conference, summed up by an interesting quote from the infamous Rick Shine “*Holy Crap!  You guys sure know how to run a meeting!* *…….. everyone I have talked to says that the Dunedin meeting was one of the best they have ever attended.*” Thanks to the great team at Conference Innovators (conference.nz) this was an extremely well run conference with the main complaint being about the Dunedin weather – with some delegates stating that it would have been nice to have seen the sun.

The WCH Executive Committee felt that the congress was a good opportunity for the World’s herpetologists to make a public statement about an important issue and given the number of presentations that were related to climate change we drafted and circulated the Aotearoa Climate Change Declaration which was ratified by the general assembly at the AGM. This was edited into a press release and has now made its way into various media outlets around the world.

I would like to thank the Organising Committee and the Scientific Committees for all their hard work in organising, reorganising, and then reorganising the reorganisation of an amazing scientific programme. I would also like to thank all our great sponsors (the University of Otago, Oceana Gold, the Gans Collections and Charitable Fund, the Chinese Herpetological Society, and the SSAR) – a very important component of a successful congress.

Judit Vörös started her term as the Secretary General and Phil Bishop was elected as the Secretary General Elect for the World Congress of Herpetology, so please keep a look out for our new WCH newsletter coming out every 6 months to keep you updated about WCH business and the next WCH Congress in Malaysian Borneo (Kuching, Sarawak) in 2024.