THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF PARASITOLOGISTS Vol 48, No 2 | Fall 2026

NEWSLETTER

Edited by Kelly Weinersmith | Layout by Joanna Cielocha

The President's Corner

President - Kelly Weinersmith

Hello! I'm honored to be serving as ASP President this year. Thank you for trusting me with this position! For those who don't know me, I'm a behavioral ecologist who became kind of obsessed with how parasites impact host behavior - particularly when those parasites are manipulating their hosts. These days I am an adjunct at Rice University, where I am a Fellow with The Center for Science Communication and Public Engagement. I live in Charlottesville, Virginia (yes, Rice is in Texas - it's a weird arrangement) where I support myself mostly through science communication work. Feel free to reach out at any time if you want to talk about parasites and behavior, science communication, ASP-related stuff, or anything else! You can find me at KLW5@Rice.edu.

Here are some things going on behind the scenes at ASP:

- Sara Brant has agreed to serve as ASP's new archivist! Thank you, Sara!
- Please see below for the Call for Proposals for this year's Bernard Fried Student Research Grants. (Thank you to Joanna Cielocha for chairing this committee!)
- Mike Moser (chair of the Membership Committee) works tirelessly to brainstorm ways to connect the global community of parasitologists, and add value to an ASP membership. He recommended that we create a series of video interviews about jobs in parasitology. I think this is a great idea. Student Symposiums in past years have centered around this topic, so there seems to be a lot of interest. The Education Committee is in charge of keeping the "Careers" section of our website up to date, so I'm collaborating with this committee (chaired by Graham Goodman) to make these videos and update this part of our website. The Public Relations Committee (of which I am chair), is going to help get the word out after the videos are done.
- Tami Cook, our tireless Secretary-Treasurer, has been looking through our meeting-related finances. In the past few years we have spent more money on our meetings than we have recouped in registration expenses and donations, so we are looking into ways to make our meetings more sustainable.
- The Lectureship for this year is the Bueding and von Brand Lectureship. Eligibility for this lectureship is that the "recipient must have made major research contributions to the field of biochemistry and/or pharmacology of parasitic helminths". The recipient does not need to be an ASP member. Please consider nominating someone for this lectureship. Julián Hilyer is chair of the Lectureship Committee. Keep your eyes open for more information about nominations later in the year.
- The Nominating and Tellers Committee is chaired by Sarah Bush. In addition to the usual positions they need to fill, they will also be looking for nominations for people to serve in the Secretary-Treasurer position and the Membership and Meeting Officers position. The Membership and Meeting Officer would be a new position, and will become official if the by-laws changes are approved. John Hawdon has been working behind the scenes to do the tasks that this new Officer will take on. Tami and John are available to answer your questions about what the Secretary-Treasurer and Membership and Meetings Officer positions entail, respectively. Please consider nominating yourself or a colleague for an ASP leadership position.
- I have convened an ad hoc committee on Meeting Planning to create a handbook for future Local Organizing Committees. Thank you to Christina Anaya for chairing this committee!
- Continuing the tradition started by past President Sara Brant, Council will hold three virtual meetings in addition to our annual in-person meeting. Topics for our first virtual meeting include revisiting the financial value of the honorariums associated with our awards, discussing whether or not we want an external ombuds to attend our annual meeting, and whether or not ASP should be signing public letters related to issues concerning science collections, funding, or policy.

Thank you to everyone volunteering to serve ASP! I am looking forward to seeing y'all in Auburn, Alabama July 11-15 for our 2027 meeting! Thank you to Brett Warren for organizing the meeting! (See the Member Spotlight below to learn more about Brett.)



Kelly receiving the gavel from Immediate Past President, Anindo Choudhury. Thanks to Anindo for his service to the Society and his support as IPP!

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ASP News

The Obama Presidential Center (OPC) opened recently, and two parasites described by our members are featured! ASP Members have named two parasites after Barack Obama, and these parasites are featured prominently on the walls of the Center. The parasites are *Paragordius obamai* (Hanelt, Bolek, and Schimdt-Rhaesa 2012) and *Baracktrema obamai* (Roberts, Platt and Bullard 2016).

See below for a write-up by Thomas Platt, and photos from the OPC!

Congratulations to our members on this exciting honor!

OBAMA PRESIDENTIAL CENTER

Student Rep's Corner

Student Representative - Katherine Hanselman



Hello Parasitologists! My name is Katherine Hanselman and I am so excited to introduce myself as the new ASP Student Representative to Council. I am currently a PhD student in Dr. Kirsten Jensen's Lab at the University of Kansas (KU) and the KU Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum. My work focuses on the taxonomy and systematics of tapeworms parasitizing sharks and rays, and I am particularly interested in phylogenetic patterns of morphology and host association.

I was first introduced to the parasitology community when, as an undergraduate student, I attended my first regional meeting (Rocky Mountain Society of Parasitologists, 2019). A few years later, I attended my first annual meeting of the Southwestern Association of Parasitologists (SWAP) in 2022 and my first ASP meeting in Kansas City in 2023, and have continued going to these meetings every year after!

Being a member of these societies, as well as attending and presenting at annual meetings, has been instrumental to my growth as a parasitologist. I have developed a breadth of knowledge across multiple groups and disciplines, built lasting relationships with peers and mentors, and gained confidence in my ability to conduct and present my research.

I am incredibly excited to be participating in ASP in a new way this year through serving as Student Representative. I can't wait to see you all again soon in Auburn next summer!

The Journal of Parasitology



Be sure to check out the *Journal of Parasitology (JP)* website for new papers, and information on how to submit your paper. With the continuous publication model, manuscripts go online as soon as formatting is complete.

Page charges are free for ASP members.
Open Access rates are $1,000 for members, and $1,500 for non-members. Color figures are FREE for ASP members and $75/figure for non-members.

2026 ASP Award Winners



Congratulations to the recipients of ASP's 2026 awards! Ryan Koch was presented with the Ashton Cuckler New Investigator Award, John Barta received the Clark P. Read Mentor Award, the H.B. Ward Medal was bestowed upon Makedonka Mitreva, and Janine Caira was recognized with the Eminent Parasitologists Lectureship. Congratulations!

At the Business Meeting we also presented awards to our student members. Congratulations to our student award winners!
These students won awards for their fantastic oral presentations:

Meritorious - Katherine Hanselman - Fretting over guitarfishes: Exploring patterns of diversity of species of *Polypocephalus* (Cestoda: Lecanicephalidea) parasitizing members of the Rhinopristiformes.

Meritorious - Felix Berrios Ortega - Development of an Open-Access Interactive Key for *Lepeophtheirus* (Copepoda: Caligidae) Based on Original Type Descriptions and CLSM Redescriptions

Outstanding - Kathryn Beebe - The FDA-approved medication sertraline impairs *Toxoplasma gondii* replication and induces cyst formation in infected host cells.



And these students wowed us with their fantastic poster presentations:
Meritorious - Madison Eshleman - The use of zero valent iron to bind coccidian parasites and magnetic attraction to remove oocysts from water

Outstanding - Shruti Gupta - Cholinergic tachyphylaxis – convergence or independence of L-AChR machinery and ER protein?

Outstanding - Molly Kennedy - Whiprays in the genus *Maculabatis* (Elasmobranchii: Urogymnidae) as hosts of new species of *Caulobothrium* (Cestoda: "Tetraphyllidea") sharing a subtle morphological feature

Congratulations as well to the recipients of our Bernard Fried Student Research Grants! (See this year's Call for Proposals for Bernard Fried Student Research Grants below.)

Undergraduate Award Winners
- Elena Green
- Sonja Olson
- Elizabeth Walker
- David Wise

Graduate Award Winners
- Dawood Abbas
- Gabby Commisso
- Connor Goldy
- Mathew Moser
- Jonah Nguyen

An additional award winner was selected for the Robert & Virginia Rausch Research Award with work focusing on Taxonony & Systematics. The award winner was:
- Yanella Colón-Marty



Thanks to Hayden Krause for the lovely photo layouts!

We were thrilled to have many students participating at this year's meeting! These students received ASP's Student Travel Grants.

Alexandria Nelson
Stephanie Martinez-Beltran
Juliette Rodrigue
Emma Ulseth
Beth Cohen
Ema Nagel
Sydney Horan
Felix Berrios Ortega
Chelsea Thorn
Kamila Cajiao-Mora
Rokeya Ahmed
Brooklynn Minton
Irvin Arroyo-Torres
Maggie Young
Lydia Hughes
Caley Chun
Katherine Buschang
Jasmine Groves
Ryne Maness
Lauren Reinfeld
Gideon Schamberger
Santiago Escobar-Alfonso
Briana Zaffiro
Zoe Von Holten
Elise McKean
Shruti Gupta
Connor McCowan
Delaney Long
Julian Garcia
Douglas Stephan
Purvesh Kadam
Molly Kennedy
Allison Bryant
Nathaniel Hornung
Jasmine Silvennoinen
Abigail Arnashus
Daniel Gordillo-González
Tajul Islam Mamun
Sarah Sargent
Jake Lighthall
Miya Moon
Hayden Krause
Jazmyn Greggs
Madison Eshleman
Dominick Ebaugh
Oliver Jensen
Matthew Stutler
Noah Lewis
Alex Bell
Abigail Finch
Erik Hatlestad
Michaela Barnhill
Beka Raya Abagero
Kathryn Beebe
Fernanda Cortazar Penalba
Elliana Euclide
Dawood Abbas
Katherine Hanselman
Eric Jergensen
Sasha Sypher
Molly Deinhart
Isabella Cimino
Chiara Rizzuti
Netanya Williams
Alexia Hilber
Elizabeth Bevis

Call for Proposals: Student Research Grants

Bernard Fried Student Research Grants: The American Society of Parasitologists is pleased to announce the call for proposals for the 2027 Bernie Fried Student Research Grant. Information and application instructions can be found at this link. The application deadline is December 15, 2026. All application materials, including the Mentor Letter of Support must be submitted here by the application deadline to be considered. We anticipate awarding 5 undergraduate and 5 graduate awards for $1,000 each. Award announcements will come in mid-late February.

Robert & Virginia Rausch Research Grant for Taxonomy & Systematics: An additional award will be made for a student proposal which is focused on the field of parasite taxonomy and/or systematics. This award is funded by a generous donor in honor of former ASP members, Robert & Virginia Rausch. There is not a separate application, rather qualified applicants submitting to the Bernard Fried Grant Application above who meet the discipline focus for this award will be considered.

Questions about the process may be directed to the chair of the Bernie Fried Grants Awards Committee, Dr. Joanna Cielocha (Joanna.Cielocha@rockhurst.edu).

Resolutions from the 2026 ASP Meeting in Orlando, FL

By Jimmy Bernot, John Hawdon, Ben Hanelt, and Susan Perkins

Susan - Whereas parasitology students, PI's, and emeriti did gather in the Mickey Mousiest city of the sunshiniest state for the 101st Annual Meeting of the American Society of Parasitologists…
John - And Whereas the daily heat alert and thunderstorm warnings buzzing on our weather apps did not deter us from going to the talks…or the poolside bar…
Jimmy - And whereas the caution tape on the hot tub led us to believe it might be a crime scene - perhaps another case of algal sabotage…
Susan - And whereas the Local Organizing Committee of Christina Anaya, Chris Blanar, Emily Durkin, Gabe Langford, and Kaitlin Gallagher did arrange a lovely meeting complete with a Florida essentials kit and snacks, pasta bars, breadsticks and tacos, a constant soundtrack of 1980's prom music…oh and those donuts were amazing…
John - And whereas the sticker trading game was a new favorite activity this meeting… although we are still looking for that one of the infamous hookworm-infected Florida Man.
Jimmy - And whereas our Program Officers—
John—Directors
Jimmy - Directors… Susan Perkins and Kirsten Jensen, assembled a dynamic program of 139 talks and posters by authors from 15 countries, 35 U.S. states, 4 Canadian Provinces, and 143 different institutions….
John - And whereas Nic Wheeler wrangled a huge stable of talk and poster judges who scrambled from room to room and display board

to display board to provide feedback to our students and perform the difficult task of choosing this year's winners…

Susan - So speaking of talks…we have a tradition of making a poem of couplets from our talk abstracts for the resolution and either Derek Zelmer or Ben Hanelt has written these over the years. Ben stepped in and did a great job this year, but had to leave to catch his flight so … Jimmy…take it away.

Jimmy -

Gut feelings on the broad tapeworm's tale,
worm DNA down a genetic trail,
Copepods gripping and guitarfish gills,
sertraline making the Toxo cysts chill,
Bitter melon kills the hookworm's brood,
snakes with flukes where mouths hold food,
Hairworms stretching well past their prime,
questing millipedes lost their time,
Purple rain baths seed bacteria,
vertebrate guts loaded with *Eimeria*,
Cane toads trading worms in both directions,
Cuban treefrogs shrug off infections,
Ospreys granting no free ride,
hairworms wandering the countryside,
Chagas found in shelter dogs,
half the talks on fish and frogs,
Snake lungs—pentastomes invade,
sneaker males getting laid,
Miracidia telling green from red,
bird microbiomes as they're fed,
Monogram isopods with M-marked tails,
cercaria out their favorite snails,
Wyoming liver flukes flash a sign,
neo-Y chromosomes down the filarial line,
Feral horses host worms out West,
Penner's collections among the best,
"Can I eat this?" the fish surveyed with care,
introspection guiding careers laid bare,
Poison newts, yet parasites thrived,
whipray's tapeworms newly arrived,
Hairworms crawl when pesticide burns…

John - Hairworms again??
Jimmy - Ben wrote these!
John - Oh right.
Jimmy -

Hairworms crawl when pesticide burns,
Observer effects sway who's counting the worms,
Invasive iguanas into Taiwan,
don't lift the sod on your neighbor's new lawn,
Gulf shrimp loaded with the white spot disease,
gopher tortoises free of unease,
Shelter cats screened at intake gates,
Xenopus larvae Toxo awaits,
Fish and drive-by insemination,
nothing's forever, not even castration.
[hold for thunderous applause]

Susan - And Whereas Ballroom D helped President Choudhury feel like he was returning to the climate of the Austrian Alps

Jimmy - And whereas the President's Symposium was not a symposium per se, but rather an interactive feedback session about the Society and our meetings…or was it a 12-step meeting—

Tiff: "Hi My name is Tiffany Weinkopff and this is my first ASP meeting"

All: "Hi Tiffany"

John - Whereas, Wait…No one is answering my Facebook post asking what SNARF means.

Susan - And Whereas that mid 19th century wood carving of the process of Japanese tapeworm removal will be forever etched in our minds…

Jimmy - Whereas we are left wondering if we can retroactively invoice Anindo for his 2 accompanying guests over those 5 ASP conferences when he had his "broad friends" along…

Susan - (And whereas it goes without saying that none of us will ever think about combining chocolate milk and sashimi again.)

John - And Whereas meeting Janine's 3 sisters gave us insight into the enigma that is Janine Caira. As well as her love of wine…

Jimmy - Speaking of wine…

And whereas even the grape stylet nematodes didn't want that …what was that pink wine?

Susan - [Phone alarm goes off - brown fan] Don't worry… it's just an Amber Alert.

Jimmy: too soon?

Susan: It's ok… the kid was found safely.

John - And whereas…if you're going to share a venue with another conference, at least "The Conference of God" was a group that didn't crowd the bar every night…

Jimmy - And whereas Nick Negovetich once again oversaw an exciting auction which was a huge success, raising over $7600 for student travel, and featured the best fake-out bid ever by Anindo Choudhury who literally pretended to be getting a drink to throw his competition off …

Susan - And whereas we applaud our award winners Janine Caira, Makedonka Matreva, John Barta and Ryan Koch – celebrating the achievements of parasitologists in all stages of their careers and remembering none of this work happens alone, that spreading the love of parasites to the next generation is the key to a healthy society, and that we all have the best jobs in the world…

John - And whereas we are excited to be moving to a much more northerly venue next year…Auburn Alabama.

Jimmy - We declare this 101st meeting of the American Society of Parasitologists to be a…

John - Badge jingle-belling
Jimmy - White zinfandelling (!)
Susan - Results so Compelling
John - Worm show-and-telling
Jimmy - (Slightly repelling)
Susan - Pool chlorine smelling
John - Bill-Campbell-selling
Jimmy - Hot as helling
ALL: ….Success!

Parasites and Palettes

Christina Anaya created "Parasites and Palettes" - a celebration of the artistic abilities of ASP members - where our members' parasite-themed artwork is put on display during the poster session at our annual meeting. We continue that celebration here, and welcome future submissions (you can send these to Kelly Weinersmith at KLW5@Rice.edu).



EGGCITED About Parasites!" - 3D Printed Canine Whipworm Egg (left) and Canine Hookworm Egg (right)

Artist: Designed, printed, and photographed by Dr. Deidre Quinn-Gorham, Department of Pathobiology, Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine

About the Artist: "I am a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) with a Masters Degree in Veterinary Parasitology, here at the Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine. I teach a course in Veterinary Parasitology for second-year students and also have formal training in 3D modeling and animation."

About the piece: "I chose to design and make models of *Trichuris vulpis* (Whipworm) and *Ancylostoma caninum* (Hookworm) because they are two common intestinal parasites found in dogs, and the unique shape and contents of their eggs lend themselves to creativity in 3D modeling and reproduction. In addition to looking at the eggs and learning to identify them microscopically through fecal samples, the prints can also give students more of a close-up, three-dimensional perspective of the egg morphology that is safe to touch and feel."



Member Spotlight: Dr. Brett Warren

The Adventure of a Parasitologist
Interview by Kamila Cajiao-Mora, DVM, MSc



Dr. Micah Brett Warren has built a career in parasitology around curiosity and exploration. His work has taken him around the world in search of parasites, leading to important contributions to parasite taxonomy, systematics, and biodiversity through field expeditions across multiple continents. Brett, as he prefers to be called, is known for his work on fish blood flukes and is currently a Research Associate in the Bullard Laboratory at Auburn University. I had the privilege of meeting Brett when I joined the Bullard Lab as a graduate student. His mentorship and friendship have had a profound impact on my view of parasitology and have helped shape both my research interests and career goals. In recognition of his exceptional productivity and promise as an early career parasitologist, he received the 2025 ASP Ashton Cuckler New Investigator Award. Brett, along with me and other members of the Bullard Lab, is also helping organize and host the 2027 ASP Annual Meeting at Auburn University. I am honored to interview him and share a small portion of his experiences and perspectives as a parasitologist.

Q1: You have worked on parasites from many different hosts and regions of the world. Looking back, what field expedition had the biggest impact on your career, and what did it teach you about parasitology that you could not have learned in the laboratory?

In the first few years of my career, I traveled to Peru, Canada, and Vietnam, all remarkable experiences. Taking part in these expeditions gave me the confidence to work abroad and showed me what it looks like to work in international wet markets. The greatest takeaway from these expeditions was learning that parasitology, and specifically the act of looking for parasites, can take place anywhere. Whether it is in a hotel room, at a lab bench, on a boat, or on a floating net pen in a Vietnamese bay, setting up a dissecting microscope using natural sunlight and examining tissues for parasites was a remarkable experience. I thought, "I can do this anywhere," and it truly opened my eyes to the possibilities of a future in collecting parasites.

Q2: Fish blood flukes are fascinating but often overlooked parasites. What discoveries in fish blood fluke research have excited you the most, and what important questions remain unanswered?

This is probably similar for many groups, not just the few I work on, but becoming familiar with a group and understanding their morphology and then starting to predict where you might find new species as you look at different host groups. With blood flukes the big questions are still about understanding how much more diversity is out there. Blood flukes are so much fun because we find new species all the time. They are constantly testing our knowledge of what we think we know.

Q3: You have contributed to research, scientific writing, illustration, and student mentorship throughout your career. What skills do you think were most important for your success, and what advice would you give to students who hope to build a successful career in science.



Dr. Brett Warren holding a red drum during a research tip on the R/V Southern Journey NOAA

Say YES to everything you can. Sometimes new parasitologists are hesitant to say yes to new projects, field expeditions, techniques, or working on different groups. They have a fear of being overloaded. Graduate school is such a short period of time (even though it feels like forever), and it is also the only time you can experiment with the

scientist you want to become. Opportunities don't come often, so say YES to as many as you can.

Q4: As Auburn University prepares to host the upcoming ASP meeting, what are you most excited for attendees to experience, and what do you hope participants will take away from the meeting?

I am excited for the Auburn meeting. In the past, I have always loved ASP meetings taking place on university campuses. It's interesting to see how other parasitologists work, and what better way than to see the campus where that work takes place. Auburn is a small town with a big university, but it can be a very welcoming place. I hope we can give attendees a solid scientific meeting full of good talks and discussions. More than anything, I hope everyone can take away an improved sense of camaraderie among our small group of parasitologists.

Q5: Finally, could you share one memorable or funny story from your research experiences?

Early on in my graduate career, my advisor, Dr. Ash Bullard, told me I should go down to the coast and collect *Donax variabilis*, a common bivalve found along the Alabama coastline, in hopes of finding a larval blood fluke infection. I began preparing for the worst, because life cycle work is a process that doesn't always work out, and I knew my advisor had examined thousands of these bivalves in the past. I collected some 2,000 bivalve specimens and was fully prepared not to find a single infection. Fortunately for me, after examining only four bivalves, the fifth was infected. I was so excited; I can remember my hand shaking, trying not to move the dish. That memory has stuck with me and fueled my own work. No matter how exhausted I may be or how many times I've examined the same species, there are always new things to discover.

AUTHOR'S CORNER

What Happens When We Listen: Student Voices from Jamaica and the Enduring Power of Human Understanding

By Donald W. Duszynski

Thirty-three years ago, I had the privilege of leading a group of eighteen University of New Mexico students on a Tropical Biology field course to Jamaica. The trip was intended to teach them about the tropics. What I did not fully appreciate at the time was that it would also become one of the most profound lessons in humanity my students and I would ever experience.

During that course, I asked each student to write a personal essay about their encounter with Jamaican people. They wrote about conversations with market vendors, bar tenders, children, Rastafarians, a prostitute, and families whose generosity often far exceeded their material possessions. Their essays were honest, thoughtful, and deeply personal. They described moments when stereotypes gave way to understanding, when curiosity replaced assumptions, and when listening became more important than just observing and judging.

For more than three decades, those essays remained tucked away in my file cabinet until I reread them recently. At that moment, I realized their words were more relevant today than ever.

Today, public conversation seems dominated by division, suspicion, fear, and the tendency to reduce people to labels rather than recognize them as individuals. The voices of these students, written in 1993, before social media, AI, and today's political polarization, offer a different perspective. They remind us that genuine understanding begins with something remarkably simple: listening.

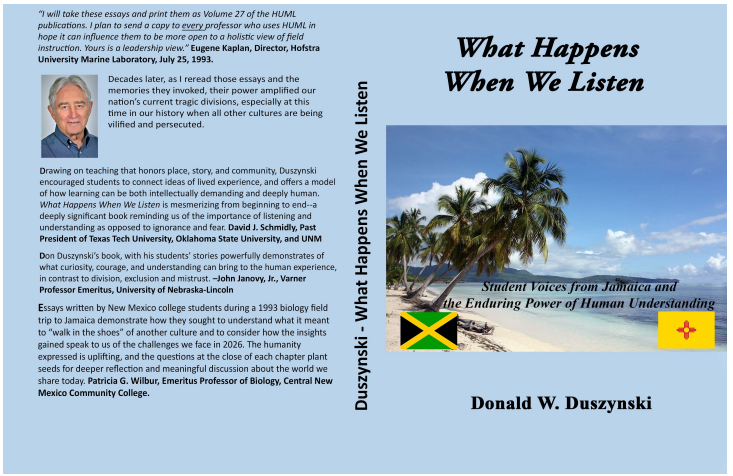
That realization inspired me to publish What Happens When We Listen: Student Voices from Jamaica and the Enduring Power of Human Understanding. The book is not about politics. It is about people. It is about education at its best: learning not only from textbooks and lectures but also from conversations with individuals whose lives differ from our own. Each of these essays argue that empathy and curiosity are antidotes to prejudice and dehumanization.

As a retired professor, I believe one of the greatest gifts higher education can provide is the opportunity to encounter unfamiliar cultures with humility and respect and one way to accomplish this is through field courses. The experiences of each field course continue teaching decades after they end. I hope this book encourages readers to reflect on their own assumptions and to rediscover the value of empathy, curiosity, and open-mindedness.

Although the events described took place in Jamaica, I believe the lessons learned belong everywhere in our democracy. Our multi-cultural communities are enriched when we take the time to hear one another's stories. The students whose essays fill these pages discovered that lesson over thirty years ago. I believe it is a lesson worth sharing today.

I hope readers find inspiration in their words and perhaps be reminded that the simple act of listening can change how we see others and how we see ourselves.

This book is available on Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0BR3MDCPQ

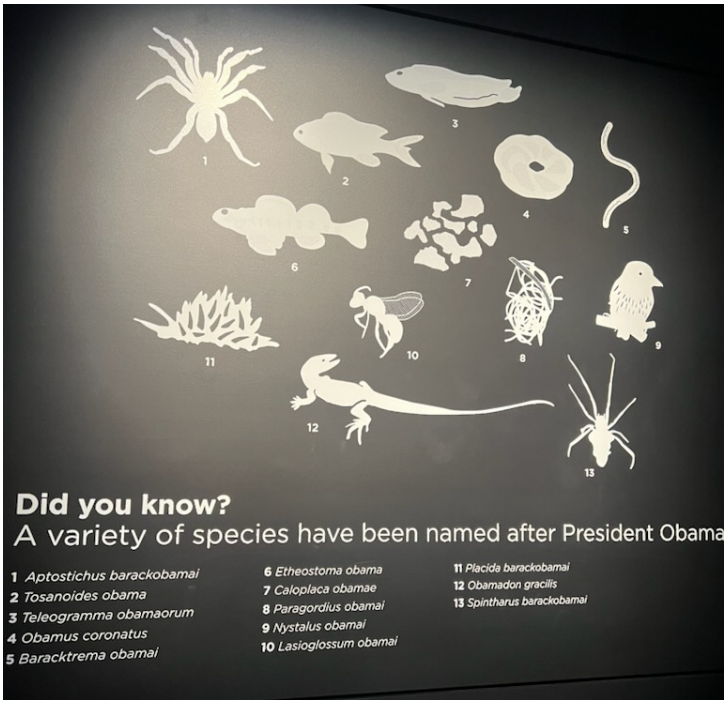


Parasites and the Obama Presidential Center

By Thomas R. Platt

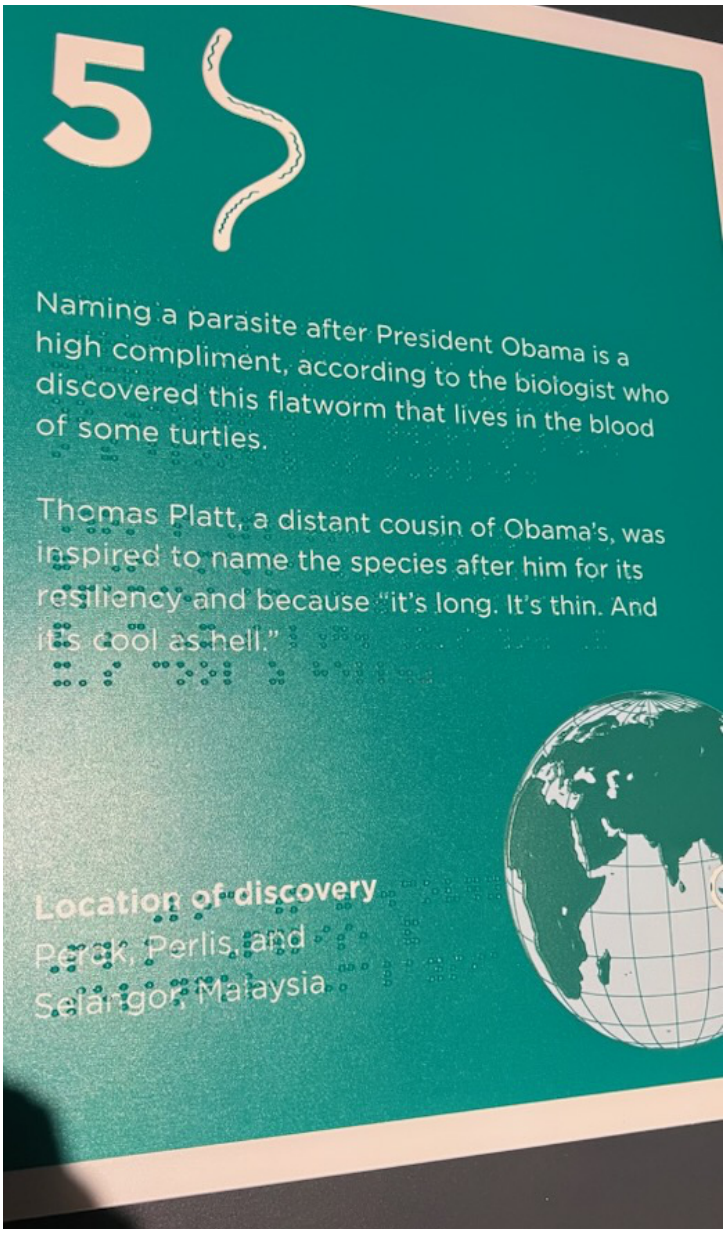
Surprises are, by definition, unexpected. Some surprises are welcome; others not. I received some surprising news a few weeks ago. A friend of my wife, who lives in Chicago, was touring the Obama Presidential Center (OPC) and encountered a display of flora and fauna named in President Obama's honor. There are thirteen: 3 fish, a bird, 2 spiders, a sweat bee, a sea slug, a lichen, and two fossil species (a sessile Ediacaran form and a lizard from the Late Cretaceous).

Then there are the parasites: *Paragordius obamai* Hanelt, Bolek, and Schimdt-Rhaesa 2012[1], and *Baracktrema obamai* Roberts, Platt and Bullard 2016[2]. The display consists of 14 panels. The first (Fig 1.) lists the taxa with a stylized drawing of each one. The remaining panels are devoted to each species. Panel 5 (Fig. 2) is *Baracktrema obamai*. The only one my wife's friend photographed. I was surprised and thrilled to learn that President Obama included these taxonomic works in his presidential center.



Unfortunately, I can't provide any context for the display. My wife and I hope to visit the OPC next spring to see the display in person and get a better sense of how it might fit into the ecological and environmental work Barack and Michelle Obama championed during his presidency, and continue to support.

Naming a new turtle blood fluke after the president was my idea, and did have ramifications in my life beyond the brief brouhaha that followed publication of the name in *The Journal of Parasitology*. The most significant was that it was the impetus for writing my memoir[3], with which some of you are familiar. If you haven't read my book and are interested in learning more about the events surrounding the naming of *Baracktrema obamai*, follow this link (SMALL SCIENCE). The first chapter, titled The Parasite and the President, is available



to read free of charge. And if you decide to purchase a copy of the book, thank you!

References:

1 Hanelt, B. M.G. Bolek, and A. Schmidt-Rhaesa. 2012. Going solo: Discovery of the first parthenogenetic gordiid (Nematomorpha: Gordiida). PLoS ONE 7: e34472. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0034472
2 Roberts, J.R. T.R. Platt, R. Orélis-Ribeiro, and S.A. Bullard. 2016 New genus of blood fluke (Digenea: Schistosomatoidea) From Malaysian freshwater turtles (Geoemydidae) and its phylogenetic position within Schistosomatoidea. Journal of Parasitology 102: 451–462.
3 Platt, T.R. 2021. Small Science: *Baracktrema obamai* and Other Stories of a Life in Parasitology & Higher Education. World Scientific Publishing, 263 p.

When a Free-Living Amoeba Threatens Vision: Lessons from a Severe *Acanthamoeba* Keratitis Case

By Alireza Latifi

When we think about parasitic diseases, we often imagine organisms transmitted through vectors, contaminated food, or tropical environments. However, some of the most fascinating and challenging parasites are already present around us. *Acanthamoeba*, a free-living amoeba found in soil and water, is one such organism that can unexpectedly become a devastating human pathogen.

Recently, we reported a severe case of *Acanthamoeba keratitis* caused by the T4 genotype, the most commonly detected genotype among both environmental and clinical isolates. The patient was a young contact lens wearer who developed progressive eye pain and photophobia. Despite early diagnosis and intensive anti-amoebic therapy, the infection continued to progress, ultimately resulting in irreversible vision loss.

The diagnosis was confirmed through a combination of microbiological and molecular approaches. Corneal samples demonstrated the presence of *Acanthamoeba*, and PCR followed by sequencing identified the isolate as belonging to the T4 genotype. In vivo confocal microscopy revealed characteristic double-walled cysts, providing valuable insight into the presence of the parasite within the corneal tissue.

What makes this case particularly important is that the infection was caused by T4, a genotype generally considered common rather than unusual. However, our experience highlights an important lesson: even prevalent parasite genotypes can occasionally demonstrate aggressive clinical behavior.

One of the greatest challenges in treating *Acanthamoeba* infections is the difference between laboratory observations and clinical outcomes. Although traditional drug susceptibility testing may not always demonstrate resistance, some infections continue to progress despite appropriate treatment. This suggests that parasite biology, cyst formation, host inflammatory responses, and tissue invasion may all contribute to therapeutic failure.

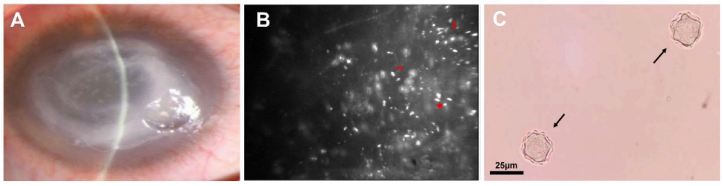
Treatment of refractory *Acanthamoeba* keratitis remains challenging. Available therapies often include combinations of biguanides, diamidines, antifungal agents, and in selected cases, oral miltefosine. However, responses can vary significantly between patients. In our case, despite treatment escalation and surgical interventions, the disease progressed, emphasizing the need for earlier recognition of severe cases and continued development of improved therapeutic strategies.

Beyond this individual patient, this case raises broader questions for the parasite research community. How can we better predict which *Acanthamoeba* isolates will behave aggressively? Are current susceptibility methods sufficient to predict clinical response? Could genomic, transcriptomic, or metabolic approaches reveal parasite characteristics associated with treatment failure?

Free-living amoebae remind us that important parasites are not always transmitted by insects or acquired from distant regions of the world. Some exist silently in our everyday environment and can become serious pathogens under the right circumstances.

Improving awareness, strengthening molecular diagnosis, and exploring new therapeutic approaches will be essential steps toward reducing the burden of these challenging infections.

Clinical and microscopic features of severe Acanthamoeba keratitis.



(A) lit-lamp photograph showing a characteristic ring-shaped stromal infiltrate in the cornea, a typical clinical feature associated with advanced *Acanthamoeba* keratitis.

(B) In vivo confocal microscopy demonstrating characteristic hyperreflective double-walled cysts of *Acanthamoeba* within the corneal tissue.

(C) Light microscopy showing *Acanthamoeba* cysts cultured on non-nutrient agar overlaid with *Escherichia coli*.

These findings illustrate the progression from clinical presentation to microscopic identification of *Acanthamoeba* infection and highlight the diagnostic importance of recognizing characteristic corneal lesions and parasite cyst morphology.

Reference:

Atighehchian M, Latifi A, Kazemirad E, Kasiri M, Zarei-Ghanavati M. Multidrug-resistant *Acanthamoeba* keratitis caused by the T4 genotype: a case report. Parasitology Research. 2026;125:7.doi:10.1007/s00436-025-08617-7.

What could go wrong?

By Mike Kinsella

A few years ago, I told the story of a field trip that Vasyl Tkach and I took to Florida where everything went miraculously right and we collected 3 species of helminths new to science in 3 days. But for every yang, there is a yin and this is a story about one of those times.

In 2003, Dr. Andy Didyk invited Al Canaris and I to the Université de Moncton in New Brunswick to collect migrating shorebirds in the legendary Bay of Fundy. As usual, the trip would come out of our own pockets. We flew from Missoula, Montana to Montreal, where we were caught in the Great Eastern Blackout of '03, when the entire East Coast electric grid failed. In the dark and confused, we forgot that we were supposed to hand carry our bags through customs so we arrived in Moncton in the wee hours of the morning sans luggage. It was a weekend, so we were not to see our bags again for 3 days. Let's just say we became very familiar with the clothes we were wearing.



Andy had also arranged for us to collect birds at the Kent Island Biological Station off the coast of Maine. Unfortunately, we arrived at low tide and had to carry our gear across 100 yards of tidal muck. Had we thought to bring boots? Well…no! We also hadn't brought our dissecting microscopes because you would expect a biological station to have their own. Au contaire, mon frére! (Canada is bilingual). I spent the next day looking in every closet and attic but

there wasn't a dissecting scope on the whole island. We would have to put the birds on ice to take back to Moncton to necropsy.

Of course, that was if there were any birds to necropsy. It turned out that the island's craggy shores and drastic tides made collecting highly problematic (and a little dangerous). After two days, Al and Andy had found none of the ruddy turnstones we had hoped to collect, and we had to settle for 3 spotted sandpipers. After we slunk back to Moncton, we managed to collect enough additional sandpipers to publish this note:



Reference:
Didyk, A. S.., A. G. Canaris, and J. M. Kinsella. 2007. Intestinal helminths of the spotted sandpiper, Actitis macularius, during fall migration in New Brunswick, Canada, with a checklist of helminths reported from this host. Comparative Parasitology 74:359-363.
"The best laid schemes of mice and men aft gang agley" said Robert Burns, and agley they had certainly gang, but the memories of this ill-fated field trip still linger.

Content Submitted by ASP Members

Have something you'd like to share with ASP's membership? Let us know! Email Kelly Weinersmith at KLW5@Rice.edu.

Regional Society Updates

The Helminthological Society of Washington (HelmSoc)
HelmSoc's Fall Anniversary Award Meeting will be held on Saturday, November 7th from 6-10PM. We'll be meeting at Evelyn Rose (111 Church St NW, Vienna, VA 22180), and registration is $50 for regular members and $25 for students. Please register by November 1st: https://hsow.wildapricot.org/event-6847421

At our fall meeting we will be celebrating our Anniversary Award Winner - Dr. Anne Vardo-Zalik! Here is what the nomination committee had to say about why they nominated Anne:

The Helminthological Society of Washington's Anniversary Award Committee (Drs. Florian Reyda, Anna Phillips, and Autumn Smith-Herron) nominate Dr. Anne Vardo-Zalik for the 2026 Anniversary Award. Dr. Vardo-Zalik is an Associate Professor of Biology at The Pennsylvania State University (PSU), now at the campus in Harrisburg, PA after 16 years at the PSU campus in York, PA. She is an expert on the ecology and transmission biology of malaria parasites. She has focused her attention on the natural malaria parasite-host system, the lizard malaria parasite *Plasmodium mexicanum* and its host, the western fence lizard, *Sceloporus occidentalis* in California, including the short- and long-term implications of environmental disturbance, such as wildfires and drought, on this system. She has also studied the effects of vector control programs and drug choice on the infection and transmission dynamics of *Plasmodium falciparum* in the west Kenyan Highlands, including one month of fieldwork. More recently she has expanded her research to study Ranavirus in lizards and parasite-microbiota manipulation experiments using a flour beetle system. Her work has been published in high-impact journals including Parasites & Vectors, Journal of Parasitology, BMC Infectious Diseases, Malaria Journal, Journal of Parasitology, and PeerJ. Several of these publications have been co-authored with undergraduate students. She has received more than $87,000 in grant funding in support of her research and undergraduate participation in research.

While Dr. Vardo-Zalik's research is important and helps advance our discipline, her greatest impact may in fact be on students, given its multiplicative power. Dr. Vardo-Zalik is both an excellent teacher and research mentor. She has received numerous teaching awards, as highlighted in her Curriculum vitae, and has dedicated much of her career to creating research opportunities for undergraduate students. Many of her grants are focused on providing field research opportunities for aspiring biologists. She has mentored no less than 19 undergraduate research students since 2020 including several that have presented their research results as posters or oral presentations at scientific conferences. Several have also been coauthors on peer-reviewed research articles with Dr. Vardo-Zalik.

Dr. Vardo-Zalik also has an outstanding record of service to PSU and the professional societies to which she belongs, including the Helminthological Society of Washington (Helm Soc). Her extensive service to Helm Soc has certainly enhanced its culture; she is a core member of the group. She joined the Society in 2013 and has been a member of the Executive Committee since 2015 in several roles including serving as Vice President from 2018–2022, Recording Secretary from 2023–2025, and Member-At-Large 2015–2017 and 2022 to present. She has notably been a reliable member of the Society's Student Awards Committee each year since she joined.
For her outstanding contributions and service to the field of parasitology and to the Helminthological Society of Washington, the Anniversary Award Committee whole-heartedly nominates Dr. Anne Vardo-Zalik for the 2026 Anniversary Award.

In conjunction with the Anniversary Award Meeting, we will also host a writing retreat for contributors interested in the upcoming Comparative Parasitology special issue on "Parasites of the Mid-Atlantic." The retreat will provide dedicated time for participants to work on manuscripts and collaborate with colleagues on this special issue. The manuscript submission deadline is January 8, 2027.

The writing retreat will be held at the Potomac Science Center in Woodbridge, Virginia from Friday, Nov 6th at 1PM through Sunday, Nov 8th at 4PM. For those who would like to participate in the writing retreat, please email Amy Fowler separately with a commitment to submit a manuscript to the special issue. For the first 10 participants who make this commitment, we will cover hotel accommodations (for Friday, November 6 and Saturday, November 7) and lunch (on Saturday, November 7 and Sunday, November 8).

We hope you will be able to join us for one or both of these events! It will be a great opportunity to celebrate HelmSoc, connect with colleagues, and make progress on what we hope will be an exciting special issue highlighting parasitological research throughout the Mid-Atlantic region.

The Northern California Parasitologists (NCP)
By Mike Moser

NCP held their Spring Meeting on March 7, 2026 at the University of California, Davis. The Keynote speaker was Dr. Shahid Siddique, UC Davis. The title of his presentation was "Peptide Mimicry and Metabolic Exchange in Host–Nematode Interactions". Dr. Siddique studies soil nematodes. It was an excellent presentation on this topic. It was interesting to compare the soil nematode interactions with plants to nematodes that infect animal hosts.

There were three student presentations:
*Stephanie Martinez-Beltran, University of California, Davis, "Parasitophorous Vacuole Membrane Composition Shapes IFNγ-Mediated Restriction of *Toxoplasma gondi*".

** Lilly Raphaelian, San Francisco State University, " "Russian Doll Virus': Using RNAscope in-situ hybridization to reveal host-virus interactions of Matryoshka RNA viruses within Avian Haemosporidian parasites"

Meir Zhang, Santa Clara University, "Anti-*Toxoplasma* Effect of FDA-approved Proteasome Inhibitors".

* Winner of the Balamuth-Horen Award for the Best Student Presentation
** Winner of the Walter Carr Award

The Northern California Parasitologists (NCP) encourages mentors and students to invite their colleagues to attend and participate in our annual meetings. California has a diverse population and is a hub for national and international travel. It is important that the public be protected from local and introduced parasites. We hope to expand our membership to meet this need.

The NCP is also concerned about the future of the NCP and ASP students. We are trying to find ways to create and find career opportunities for our graduates. For example, we have invited the Director of the Monterey County Infectious Disease Laboratory to attend our annual meetings. This will introduce our students to possible public health careers and the Director to possible research collaborations with our students.

We encourage the NCP students to join ASP. We eliminated the dues for NCP student membership as an incentive to join ASP.

Southern California Society of Parasitologists (SCSP)
Submitted by Ralph Appy, Secretary-Treasurer, SCSP.

The Southern California Society of Parasitologists (SCSP) will hold their annual business meeting this fall. Dr. Bruno Passarelli will continue as President until the fall meeting. The SCSP budget is presently $2,706.28. As in previous years, student presentations were done in conjunction with the Southern California Academy of Sciences April 18, 2026. Awards in the amount of $200 each were given to two presentations from students at the University of California at San Diego, Scripps Institution of Oceanography: Estuarine crab loaded with diverse parasites – Sasha Sypher and Food-web exploiting parasites dominate parasitic load and diversity in jackknife clams – Chiara Rizzuti. Fall meeting planning is underway for a collaborative parasite workshop at the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in conjunction with faculty and students from Universidad Autonoma de Baja California (UABC), Ensenada. SCSP members Drs. Juliane Passarelli and Ralph Appy are continuing collaboration with Dr. Milton Love, University of California at Santa Barbara, to update the 1983 “A Checklist of Parasites of California, Oregon, and Washington Marine and Estuarine Fishes”. Special thanks to those ASP members who have agreed to review the draft document.

Current Officers:
President: Dr. Bruno Passarelli, Saddleback College
President-Elect: Vacant
Secretary-Treasurer: Dr. Ralph Appy, Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
Auditor: Dr. Julianne Kalman Passarelli, Cabrillo Marine Aquarium
4 May 2026

Southwestern Association of Parasitologists (SWAP)
Submitted by Joanna Cielocha, Secretary-Treasurer

The Southwestern Association of Parasitologists will hold their 60th annual meeting at the University of Oklahoma Biological Station on April 8-10, 2027. A call for abstracts and student research grants will come out in late January-early February.

Officers for 2026-2027 are:
Kyle Gustafson, President
Brandon Ruehle, President-Elect
Joanna Cielocha, Secretary-Treasurer
Nick Negovetich, ASP Representative.

Resources

The Membership Committee, led by Mike Moser, put together a list of resources that may be helpful to the parasitology community. Enjoy!

1. ASP Home Page has links to programs from some of our past meetings: https://www.amsocparasit.org/past-meetings

2. Despommier’s Parasitic Diseases, 8th ed (Griffin, Gwadz, Hotez, Knirschhttps) can be downloaded for free here: https://parasiteswithoutborders.com/parasites-without-borders-announces-release-of-8th-edition-of-textbook/

3.Parasitic Diseases - Clinical Appendix 7th ed can be downloaded for free here: https://parasiteswithoutborders.com/books/

4. Gerald D. Schmidt and Larry S. Robert’s Foundations in Parasitology 8th ed (Roberts and Janovy) downloaded for free here: https://deevesacb.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/foundations_of_parasitology.pdf

5. Scott Gardner's Manter Lab at the University of Nebraska can be found on social media Facebook at https://facebook.com/manterlab or Instagram at https://www.instagram.com/manter_lab/.
Scott and Sue Gardner's book Concepts in Animal Parasitology can be downloaded for free here, or you can purchase a hard copy using the same link: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/160/

Other books affiliated with the Manter Lab:
Parasites: The inside story: https://press.princeton.edu/ideas/parasites-and-the-interconnected-biosphere

An Evolutionary Pathway for Coping with Emerging Infectious Disease: https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/148/

Parasites: The Inside Scoop (smaller version of the inside story - for teaching): https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeabook/106

Dictionary of Invertebrate Zoology (online or can be printed in Lulu press): https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/onlinedictinvertzoology/

6. Podcasts
This Week In Parasitism (TWIP): https://www.microbe.tv/twip/

Parasites Without Boarders: https://parasiteswithoutborders.com/all-courses/

7. Classes
Cedar Point Biological Station in Nebraska offers summer classes. Find more information here: https://cedarpoint.unl.edu/

If you have additional resources you'd like to share, please email Mike Moser (mmoser@berkeley.edu) to add them to our list. Thanks!

Sponsored Memberships

The ASP has created a Sponsored Membership opportunity where members are able to give a gift of an online membership to a colleague. A Sponsored Membership may be given as an Active, Student/Post Doc, or Associate membership, and can be for one or three years. Sponsored members having had the prescribed dues paid are Members in Good Standing and enjoy all rights, privileges, and responsibilities of Membership.

If you are a Sponsor who desires to establish a Sponsored Membership for someone, you may do so by contacting the ASP Business Office by phone at +1 785-289-2056 (M-F 8:30am-4:30pm Central Time) or email us at asp.ks@kwglobal.com.

When contacting the ASP Business Office to sponsor a membership, please provide the following information for the sponsored member(s):

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