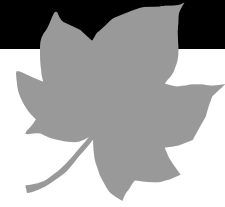


EDITORIAL



The International Biogeography Society and the inaugural Alfred Russel Wallace Award

Alfred Russel Wallace is properly regarded as the father of modern biogeography. Although best known today as the co-founder of the theory of natural selection, his writings were as interdisciplinary as is today's biogeography – incorporating evolution, ecology, geology and glaciology into the grand task of explaining the geographical distribution and diversification of taxa and biotas on a dynamic earth [for a compilation of highlights of his work, I can highly recommend Berry's (2002) anthology]. Wallace developed many of the major principles still in use in biogeography (summarized in box 2.1 in Lomolino *et al.*, in press), and his thoughts on threats to – and strategies to protect – biodiversity would fit remarkably well within the emerging field of conservation biogeography (Whittaker *et al.*, 2005).

The International Biogeography Society (IBS) was formed in 2000 with the goals of (1) fostering communication and collaboration between biogeographers in disparate academic fields, (2) increasing both the awareness and interests of the scientific community and the lay public in the contributions of biogeographers, and (3) promoting the training and education of biogeographers so that they may develop sound strategies for studying and conserving the world's biota (see full mission statement at <http://www.biogeography.org>). In 2004, the IBS Board of Directors established the Alfred Russel Wallace Award to be presented every 2 years to a distinguished scholar for a lifetime of achievement in biogeography.

It is particularly appropriate that the first Award was presented to Dr John (Jack) C. Briggs at the second biennial IBS Conference this past January. Much as for Wallace, one of the defining geographical centres of Jack's career has been the Indo-Australian (or Malay) Archipelago – one of the truly remarkable biodiversity hotspots

on Earth. Wallace, of course, concentrated on terrestrial diversity, hopping from island to island across what became known as Wallace's Line, making vast collections of vertebrates and invertebrates alike, and penning his two most inspired theoretical works (the 'Sarawak Law' and 'Ternate' papers) during his stay in the region. Jack, however, has focused his attention on the marine realm and most notably has used a variety of evidence – including geographical gradients of species richness across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, molecular systematics and reconstructions of Earth history – to develop and defend a variety of hypotheses that involve speciation engines in centres of origin, with subsequent dispersal outwards. The centre he discusses in the following paper (Briggs, 2005) is the so-called East Indies Triangle (Wallacea). His career-long, unwavering adherence to dispersal as an important and analytical process in biogeography might strike some historical biogeographers as a return to the *ad hoc* scenario building of Matthew, Simpson and Darlington. However, Jack has always been careful to frame his work as testable hypotheses and to offer clear discussions of the sorts of evidence that would either support or refute them. The great influence of his creative thinking on marine biogeography was summarized by Brian Bowen in his tribute to Jack in the Spring 2005 IBS newsletter:

The premier modern synthesis of marine species distributions arrived with Brigg's 1974 classic *Marine Zoogeography*...Most of [the issues currently being addressed by molecular biogeography and phylogeography] are explicitly formulated in *Marine Zoogeography*, and the number of phylogeographic studies that cite Briggs (1974) is beyond counting.

In other words, it took about three decades for the science of biogeography to mature to the point that it could rigorously address the issues that Jack presented in 1974!

Much of Wallace's work and his contributions to Victorian Age science have until

recently been relatively unknown and underappreciated. Thanks to a handful of enthusiastic historians, his genius – and more importantly, his identity apart from Darwin – is beginning to emerge and crystallize. We owe a great deal of credit for this rediscovery of Wallace to Dr Charles H. Smith. Charles maintains a website (<http://www.wku.edu/~smithch/home.htm>) devoted to things Wallacean, and Berry (2002, p. xvii) remarks that his web site 'should serve as a model for all web-based archival projects. Smith's site is an essential port of call for anyone interested in Wallace'. But more than being just an indexer and bibliographer, Charles is a biogeographer (e.g. see Smith, 1986) and – as he demonstrates in the paper he presented at the second biennial IBS Conference as a prelude to presentation of the Wallace Award to Jack Briggs, and published in this issue (Smith, 2005) – offers a very interesting interpretation of what he believes to be fundamental differences between what Wallace and what Darwin had in mind regarding the role of natural selection in evolution.

The IBS is a young society but has already made important contributions to the growth and coalescence of modern biogeography into a more synthetic and integrative discipline [e.g. two enthusiastically received conferences and two IBS-sponsored publications: *Foundations of biogeography* (Lomolino *et al.*, 2004), *Frontiers of biogeography: new directions in the geography of nature* (Lomolino & Heaney, 2004)]. We will be sponsoring a meeting tentatively titled 'Palaeogeography and Palaeobiogeography: Biodiversity in Space and Time', being planned by organizers at the University of Cambridge for Spring 2006. Finally, we are beginning to organize our third biennial conference for January 2007, in the Canary Islands, at which time the second Wallace Award will be presented to Dr Jared Diamond. I invite any and all biogeographers to become members of IBS – membership forms and other information about IBS can be found at <http://>

www.biogeography.org. Join today and help us build on the vision of a new scientific society devoted to facilitating the development of an ever better and more relevant science of biogeography!

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Brett R. Riddle is the President of the International Biogeography Society, 2005 and 2006.