

**Entomological Society of America
North Central Branch**

Linnaean Games Committee 2019 Activities Report

The NCB/ESA Linnaean Games Committee membership for 2017-2019 listed at the Branch website:

https://www.entsoc.org/sites/default/files/files/2017-2018_NCB_Committees_and_Representatives.pdf

is incorrect! Deane Jorgenson remains Gamesmaster; Dan Young remains committee Chair and Panel Review Member. The remaining committee member should be updated on the website as follows:

Chair: Dan Young
email: young@entomol.ogy.wisc.edu

Gamesmaster: Deane Jorgenson
email: deane.jorgenson@gmail.com

Committee Member: Wayne Ohnesorg
email: wohnesorg2@unl.edu

Student Committee Member: Laura Rosenwald, University of Kentucky
email: laura.rosenwald@uky.edu

[NOTE: The student member may be changing; we will need to check on this.]

OVERVIEW:

The major task of the committee is to provide and vet the question bank with which to challenge our entered teams at the NCB meetings – this year **Sunday, 17 March** (preliminary rounds: 5:00-7:00PM, Hyatt Regency Buckeye AB) and **Monday, 18 March** (finals: 5:30-7:30PM, Hyatt Regency Bluegrass AB), in Cincinnati, Ohio.

It has now become operating practice to invite registered teams to submit question sets in addition to those written by the committee members and submitted to (and vetted by) Chairmen Young.

I first contacted the Linnaean Games Committee membership in November, 2018 and prospective teams were requested to submit question sets in the November NCB-ESA Newsletter. A **Monday, 17 January 2019 deadline** was set for questions to be sent to Chair Young to provide time for screening, vetting, and then forwarding to Gamesmaster Jorgenson (that took place largely on 19 February 2019).

The deadline for signing up Linnaean teams to compete at the 2019 NBC-ESA meetings in Madison was **Monday, 7 January 2019**. For the 2019 meetings, we ended up with an 10 team field/bracket (down slightly from 11 teams in 2018) (attached document), including two entries for the host University of Wisconsin.

BACKGROUND:

Questions and answers for The Games are prepared by the NCB/ESA Linnaean Games Committee. As noted above, we requested teams to also submit question sets for consideration and vetting. [**NOTE:** Having been vetted by Chair Young, questions are sent to Gamesmaster Jorgenson for sorting into rounds. The Gamesmaster is to insure that questions submitted by a given team are not used in their competition round(s).]

Toss-up questions are categorized according to the following sections and subject areas:

PBT (Physiology, Biochemistry & Toxicology)
PIE (Plant-Insect Ecosystems)
MUVE (Medical, Urban & Veterinary Entomology)
SysEB (Systematics, Evolution & Biodiversity)

Subject areas: Apiculture, Biological Control, Ecology, Economic Entomology, Medical and Veterinary Entomology, Physiology and Biochemistry, Taxonomy, and Toxicology.

Bonus questions draw heavily on the areas of history, people, and current entomological news/events. In NCB, we also draw heavily on popular media and current events. On the average, two toss-up questions in each game will come from each subject-area category.

Additional guidelines for question writing:

1. Toss-up questions should test core knowledge at the advanced undergraduate, beginning graduate level (it's fine to have some "easy" questions to build team confidence & audience excitement);
2. Generally we avoid true-false, format is "fill in the blank", short answer kinds of questions;
3. References for answers are encouraged (gives judges and Gamesmaster a source of comfort as we are being heckled - but the most current sources help!);
4. Bonus questions can/should be more difficult.
(*if a scientific term or name is pretty weird, phonetic help is appreciated)

When writing questions, we encourage writers to, where possible, include sources (trying to be current & “cutting edge” - not our Introductory Entomology text from 20+ years ago!) ... and/or photo credits.

OUTCOMES:

As noted above, I requested to have questions submitted to me for a screening and vetting process by not later than **Monday, 17 January 2019** (questions, answers, and sources for all questions to me by that date). The teams were largely responsive, some contributing more questions than requested; questions continued to drag in well beyond the deadline I then screened/vetted them before pushing them along to Deane (on **19 February** – almost a month later* than in 2018) for her to be able to resort them into rounds.

*The delay in forwarding vetted questions to Deane was largely a function of them being sent to me well beyond the deadline and the time I then needed for vetting.

FUTURE CONCERNS:

1) The committee remains quite “lean” (**see committee updates requested, above**). This, however, has not been an issue since we adopted Deane’s suggestion of having registered teams submit questions (and that is about the only role of other committee members, anyway).

2) As I noted in my previous reports (2017, 2018) **it remains important to clarify the position of student member of the NCB Linnaean Games Committee**: (a) do we need a student member of this committee (is that dictated by other Branch rules?); (b) if we need/wish to retain the student member, we need to clarify the role of the student in the process. Currently, the student essentially has no role and this does not promote a healthy relationship. I should note that at both the 2017 and 2018 meetings, Amanda Skidmore (previous student member) was very helpful as a volunteer during the Games.

[Currently, it appears that the student serving on the Student Affairs Committee becomes, *de facto*, the student member of the Linnaean Games Committee, but the charge is not clear.]

3) Over my years chairing the committee, it has been quite challenging to retain committee members who would actually contribute question sets for the games – really their single responsibility as previously noted. The committee has, thus, shrunk to an all-time low number of “long term” positions. Deane’s suggestion to request teams to submit questions has worked out very well. Aside from this innovation, questions have, over the years, fallen almost entirely on the shoulders of the Chair and Gamesmaster.

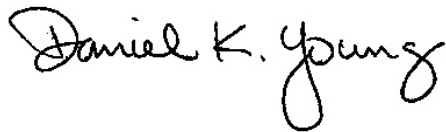
4) During the NCB meetings and games, themselves, we have never adopted a standard (or rigorous) method for **selecting the judging panel during the competition, itself (as I note EVERY YEAR in my committee report)**. Judges are generally selected on site – at the time they can be corralled – and they will not have seen the questions prior to the event. This has, on occasion, led to a few issues of some concern:

- * seating the three judge panel in a timely manner
- * retaining judges from one round to the next
- * finding last minute alternates when there might be conflicts (e.g., judge from same school as one of the participating teams)
- * judges not really familiar with the content of questions and making “on the fly” revisions or differing interpretations

I do not believe these have been serious concerns to the teams or the audience, and the same issues crop up at the Nationals. Nonetheless, it has been the source of some “friendly” needling and light be better addressed ahead of the event.

Respectfully submitted,

(20 February 2019)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Daniel K. Young". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'Y' at the end.

Dr. Daniel K. Young
Chair, NCB-ESA Linnaean Games Committee

Professor of Entomology and
Director, UW Insect Research Collection (WIRC)
445 Russell Laboratories
Department of Entomology
1630 Linden Drive
University of Wisconsin
Madison, WI 53706

ph. 608-262-2078
fax 608-262-3322