

# IBANGS NEWS Summer 2025: Issue 28



## Letter from the President

Dear IBANGS members,

It's an honor to write to you as the new President of IBANGS. I've been fortunate to work closely with previous presidents Megan Mulligan and Karla Kaun over the past year as President-Elect; thanks to them the transition has felt natural. That said, I thought I knew a lot about my favorite scientific society already, but thanks to the other executive committee members Amy Lasek, David Ashbrook, Kristin Scaplen, Francesca Telese, Derek Morris, and of course Anna Delprato, I've learned even more. In the upcoming year and beyond, we hope to come up with ways to make IBANGS even better in its mission to advocate rigorous science, inclusivity, and international collaboration. As our political landscape shifts around us, this is more vital than ever. It's also one of many reasons that I'm excited to welcome **President-Elect Caroline Brennan** (Queen Mary University of London). Caroline is a leader in behavioral genetics with extensive expertise in animal models of psychiatric disease and developmental neurotoxicity. Her experience and international perspective will be invaluable. I'm excited to work with her and our new **treasurer Cheryl Reed** in planning upcoming meetings.

The **Genes, Brain, and Behavior (GBB) meeting in Fiji** last month was a landmark event. It was our first IBANGS meeting in the Asia-Pacific region, and despite the logistical challenges, it was a tremendous success. Thanks to the outstanding efforts of Kelly Clemens and Tim Bredy, along with the rest of the organizing committee for making it look easy. We had excellent



*From left: Margaret McCarthy & Megan Mulligan, Paul Meyer & Hee-Sup Shin, Caroline Ménard, Barry Dickson, Trainee Session (Chaired by Emily Petruccelli & Amanda Barkley-Levenson)*

keynote and award addresses from Margaret McCarthy, Barry Dickson, Caroline Ménard, and Hee-Sup Shin, alongside symposia that showcased cutting-edge research on topics like RNA splicing, individual variation in motivated behavior, and cross-species approaches to early adversity. I also want to thank the Awards Committee (Chair: Helen Kamens) and the Education and Training Committee (Co-Chairs: Amanda Barkley-Levenson and Emily Petruccelli) for organizing the outstanding trainee session this year. See above for pics of the speakers and the training session.

The beachside reception, the fire dance, and the final banquet were enormously entertaining. My face hurt from smiling so much during the conga line and limbo contest (no, I will not be sharing my pictures!). A special shout-out to Alexander S. Hatoum (pictured) for keeping the music going! All of this said, there is always room for improvement, and we would love to hear your feedback! The post-meeting survey is located here: [SURVEY](#). Your feedback helps us continue to improve and ensure that our annual meeting supports your professional goals and fosters a sense of community.



*DJ I. Banga*

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce that the **2026 IBANGS meeting will be hosted in Pittsburgh**, thanks to Sean Farris and Gregg Homanics. I can confirm that Pittsburgh is a great city and that the GBB meeting will be great there. We'll build on this year's successes while incorporating feedback from the survey. We're exploring ways to better integrate poster sessions, ensure awardee talks happen earlier in the program, and offer more opportunities to connect across model systems and levels of seniority. If you have other ideas, please include them in the Fiji meeting survey. I truly value the input from our members.



I'd also like to share the news that, in response to drastic changes in funding priorities in the US and elsewhere, Karla Kaun and co-chair Jeffrey Glennon have formed a new Advocacy and Inclusion Committee, which will serve as a hub for efforts around equity, inclusion, and public-facing science advocacy. As part of this effort, we will be creating a special Advocacy section of the IBANGS website for information and action items, including our responses to NIH's ORIVA initiative and the Bethesda Declaration. See below for its mission statement and a description of its goals. Watch out for an **upcoming short survey on the committee** to share your vision for what this committee should prioritize.

Before I was President, I was on the Membership Committee and realized that engaging global members is challenging, especially during live events where we are coming from different time zones. Last year, our online **ethics panels** and **trainee sessions** were well attended, and we plan to continue offering these events throughout the year to keep the IBANGS community

connected beyond the annual meeting. I would like to learn ways that we can overcome this barrier and offer more activities in between meetings by supporting accessibility (including via hybrid formats), with one goal being to encourage first-time attendees to become returning members.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the serious challenges facing the research community, particularly in the United States. Funding instability, politicization of science, and increasing barriers to open inquiry have made this a difficult time for many. IBANGS remains committed to fostering a diverse, collaborative, and resilient scientific community. Attending meetings, mentoring young scientists, and staying connected, even virtually, are small but powerful acts of solidarity. I hope that we can be there for each other and share our strengths.

With thanks and optimism,

Paul Meyer

### **New Committee**

ExComm has recently approved the formation of a new committee that would integrate the work of the DEI committee with a new mission - science advocacy. The Committee will be chaired by Karla Kaun and Jeffrey Glennon.

### **Science Advocacy-DEI Mission Statement**

The Committee for Advocacy and Inclusion within the International Behaviour and Neural Genetics Society is committed to promoting the value and impact of behavioral and neural genetics research to the public, policymakers, and funding agencies. We aim to foster informed dialogue, and highlight important health and societal implications of behavioral and neural genetics research by amplifying diverse voices, fostering inclusive dialogue, and ensuring that all members feel valued and empowered to contribute. Through strategic communication, advocacy initiatives, and community engagement, we aim to build a more connected and representative society.



*GBB 2026: Sunset on a great meeting. From left: Amy Lasek, Paul Meyer, Kelly Clemens, Megan Mulligan. Farewell Fiji, for now.*



## Committee Opportunities

Volunteering for an IBANGS committee is a great way to contribute to our broader scientific mission and connect with colleagues. If you're interested, please contact IBANGS President, Paul Meyer ([pmeyer@buffalo.edu](mailto:pmeyer@buffalo.edu)).

- Membership Committee
- Nomination & Election Committee
- Publications Committee
- Education and Training Committee
- Inclusion and Diversity Committee

## Call for Annual Meeting Venues

Each year IBANGS organizes a scientific meeting where scientists working in the field of behavior genetics have the opportunity to present new research findings, share ideas and forge collaborations. Meeting venues alternate between the US, Europe and Asia. If you are interested in hosting an IBANGS annual meeting at your institution, please contact the society administrator [Anna Delprato: [administrator@ibangs.org](mailto:administrator@ibangs.org)] for more information.

## Feedback, Ideas, Resources

Please let us know if you have feedback or suggestions for future virtual symposium themes, ideas for member enrichment and/or resources that you would like to contribute to the teaching and research repository.

## Member News

Contributed by Ina Anreiter



Congratulations to Ina Anreiter (Top left) whose lab is one of six cross-disciplinary teams of researchers from the United States and Canada that have won funding in the first year of Scialog: Neurobiology and Changing Ecosystems, a three-year initiative that aims to spark new science exploring neurobiological response to rapid and extensive human-caused environmental changes. The initiative is sponsored by

Research Corporation for Science Advancement, the Paul G. Allen Frontiers Group, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, the Frederick Gardner Cottrell Foundation, and The Kavli Foundation.



<https://rescorp.org/2025/05/six-teams-funded-in-1st-year-of-sciolog-neurobiology-and-changing-ecosystems/>

**Contributed by Amy Lasek**



Congratulations to Luana Carvalho on her new position as Assistant Professor in the Stritch School of Medicine at Loyola University Chicago. Luana will be starting her lab there beginning Aug 1, 2025. (From left to right: Luana, mentor Amy Lasek, and lab mate Jonathas Almeida)

**Contributed by Emmanuel Onaivi**



Emmanuel Onaivi wearing a sulu and enjoying the Fijian traditional Meke performance, a traditional Fijian dance to conjure up legends, spirits, and love stories.

### Contributed by Fred Wolf

Cal Larnerd in the Wolf lab at UC Merced recently published "Memory-like states created by the first ethanol experience are encoded into the Drosophila mushroom body learning and memory circuitry in an ethanol-specific manner" (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgen.1011582>). Dr. Larnerd showed that the first ethanol experienced by flies results in memory-like traces (first discovered in <https://doi.org/10.1523/jneurosci.1348-22.2023>). A short, just sedating dose results in two tolerance traces that behaviorally and genetically mirror classical anesthesia-sensitive and anesthesia-resistant memories. A longer low dose creates a single long-term memory like trace. Dr. Larnerd discovered that each of these three traces use their own neural circuitry. And, despite the same genetics and behavioral characteristics, the circuitries only partially overlap with their respective classical memory traces, including distinct neurons for consolidation. Dr. Larnerd's findings suggest ways that ethanol memory-like states are different, and also provide neural substrates for ethanol and classical memories to interact. This work was funded by grants from the NIAAA to Fred Wolf, R33AA028352 and R21AA029178, and an NSF GRFP to Cal Larnerd.

Cal Larnerd can be reached at [clarnerd@ucmerced.edu](mailto:clarnerd@ucmerced.edu) <mailto:[clarnerd@ucmerced.edu](mailto:clarnerd@ucmerced.edu)>.

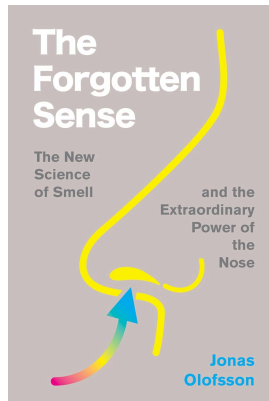
### Contributed by Daniel Dick

#### **Tenured or Tenure-Track Open Rank Faculty Position: Basic/Translational Science in the Rutgers Addiction Research Center/Brain Health Institute**

The Brain Health Institute (BHI; [brainhealthinstitute.rutgers.edu](http://brainhealthinstitute.rutgers.edu)) and Rutgers Addiction Research Center (RARC; [addiction.rutgers.edu](http://addiction.rutgers.edu)) are recruiting a tenured or tenure track faculty member at the senior Assistant/Associate/Professor level to expand our research portfolio in the basic/translational science of substance use disorders, broadly defined to include preclinical or human subjects-based research programs. The successful candidate must have a PhD, MD, or equivalent doctoral degree, and a research program with currently active federal funding addressing key questions regarding addiction. More senior candidates will be considered for an Associate Director role in the RARC, a leadership position overseeing the growth of targeted research areas within the RARC. Research areas can include but are not limited to quantitative approaches to understanding brain circuits, animal behavior, animal or human physiology, psychopharmacology, neuroimaging, biomarker development, and therapeutics (including device-based or pharmacological interventions). Rutgers values a culturally diverse faculty. We strongly encourage applications from female and minority candidates. To become a part of our vibrant research community, applicants should submit a CV, cover letter, and a brief statement of research accomplishments and plans to Drs. Chris Pierce and Anna Konova, Co-Chairs of the search committee, at [rarc@bhi.rutgers.edu](mailto:rarc@bhi.rutgers.edu) with the subject line: *RARC Faculty Position – Basic/Translational Science*. For additional details regarding the position, please see the [full job ad](#) or reach out to RARC Director, Dr. Danielle Dick ([Danielle.m.dick@rutgers.edu](mailto:Danielle.m.dick@rutgers.edu)).

## Summer Reads

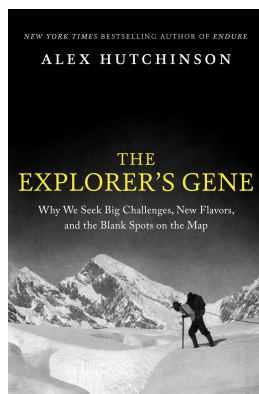
Reprinted from: [https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/205269.Science\\_Published\\_in\\_Year\\_2025](https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/205269.Science_Published_in_Year_2025)



**The Forgotten Sense: The New Science of Smell—and the Extraordinary Power of the Nose. Jonas Olofsson**

Smelling is one of the most natural things we do. We take over 20,000 breaths a day, interacting with a host of scents with each one. Smell is also one of our most sensitive and refined senses; few other mammals surpass our ability to perceive scents in the animal kingdom. Yet, as the millions of people who lost their sense of smell during the COVID-19 pandemic can attest, we too often overlook its role in our overall health.

Now, one of the world's leading researchers on smell Jonas Olofsson reveals the fascinating science behind this forgotten sense. Drawing from cutting-edge original research, Olofsson reveals not only that the human sense of smell is extraordinarily sensitive, but how it engages our brain's full capacity. In fact, olfaction begins not in the nose, but in the brain, even before an odor's molecules reach our smell receptors. Our memories, personalities, preferences, and expectations shape the way we interact with scents, with profound implications for how we perceive the world around us.



**The Explorer's Gene: Why We Seek Big Challenges, New Flavors, and the Blank Spots on the Map. Alex Hutchinson**

New York Times bestselling author of *Endure*, Alex Hutchinson returns with a fresh, invigorating investigation into how exploration, uncertainty, and risk-taking shape our behavior and wellbeing. For fans of *On Trails* and *Range* alike, *The Explorer's Gene* makes the case not just that humans are wired to seek the unknown, but that thriving in the modern world depends on pushing our mental and physical boundaries to new places. Off the beaten path, on unmarked trails, we are wired to explore. More than just a need to get outside, the search for the unknown is a specific, primal urge that has shaped the history of our species and

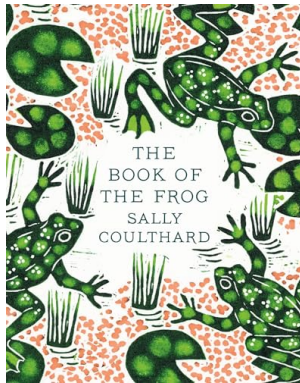
continues to mold our behavior in ways we are just beginning to understand. In fact, the latest neuroscience suggests that exploration is an essential ingredient of human life. Exploration, it turns out, isn't merely a hobby—it's our story.

In this long-awaited follow-up to his New York Times bestseller *Endure*, Alex Hutchinson dives headfirst into a fascinating and provocative new field of research, examining how exploration is a fundamental part of what makes us human and revealing how, even in our fully mapped modern world, the pursuit of the unknown remains an indispensable mindset in all walks of life.



And yet, it has never been easier to live an exploration-free life, without the struggle and uncertainty that true exploration—of places, experiences, and ideas—requires. With the digital world designed to exploit the neural circuitry behind our drive to explore, we receive the illusion of novelty without accompanying growth. This despite mounting evidence that our lives are better—more productive, more satisfying, and more fun—when we ditch the maps on our phones and find our own way.

From paddling the lost rivers of the northern Canadian wilderness to the ocean-spanning voyages of the Polynesians, *The Explorer's Gene* combines riveting stories of exploration with cutting-edge insights from behavioral psychology and neuroscience. The end result offers a singular approach to finding meaning in our past struggles, embracing the possibility of failure in our future, and crucially, recognizing when our present is good enough.



**The Book of the Frog. Sally Coulthard**

Frogs are extraordinary creatures. Unlike most other animals, they have mastered both land and water, and are capable of breathing through their skins and their lungs. Some of them are so poisonous that just one tiny frog harbours enough toxins to kill ten people stone dead, while others have held the key to lifesaving medicines and treatments, including the world's first pregnancy tests and cures for skin cancer. Cultures have loved and loathed frogs in equal measure, hailing them both as symbols of fertility and evil witches' familiars. Packed with beautiful illustrations and brimming with

interesting facts, Sally Coulthard presents how frogs have successfully colonised some of the most challenging terrains on the planet. From the frozen Arctic to the parched South African desert, adopting bizarre and miraculous breeding strategies in the gastric-brooding frogs raise offspring in their stomachs, while in another species the froglets erupt from their mother's skin rather than growing from tadpoles. In *The Book of the Frog*, Sally Coulthard leaps into the cultural and natural history of frogs. Covering both familiar native British species and exotic rarities, she shares her fascination for these much-admired but often little understood creatures, many of which face threats and conservation challenges. From frogspawn and froglets to eating habits and hibernation, *The Book of the Frog* serves as the perfect jumping off point for anyone who loves amphibians.