

28 January 2018

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President—per UMass police)

First president-elect: John P. Swaddle, College of William & Mary

Second president-elect: Jennifer Fewell, Arizona State University

Past-president: William Searcy, University of Miami

Secretary: Patricia Brennan, Mount Holyoke College

Treasurer: Gil Rosenthal, Texas A & M University

Program Officer: Jonathan Pruitt, UC Santa Barbara

Program Officer-elect: Alison Bell, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Parliamentarian: Tamra Mendelson, University of Maryland

Historian: Zuleyma Tang-Martinez, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Member-at-large: Emily DuVal, Florida State University

Member-at-large: Melissa Hughes, College of Charleston

Member-at-large: Christopher Templeton, Pacific University

From: Donald Kroodsmas, Ex-Fellow, ABS

Re: The Future of the ABS

Inevitably, it will at some time be asked, “What did they know?” and “When did they know it?”

The answers are easy: *Everything* (as detailed on <http://donaldkroodsmas.com/performance>), and *if not 21 July 2017 or 15 August 2017 (see below), then definitely today, 28 January 2018.*

Silence is complicity. Inaction is complicity. Complicity is collusion and collaboration. Complicity by the elected leadership undermines the credibility of the ABS as a scientific society and undermines the credibility of every ABS member. More broadly, complicity in the matters I raise erodes the public trust in all science and all scientists, *and rightfully so.*

From where in the ABS does leadership come? One would think from its elected leaders, from the top down. On the issues that I raise, perhaps graduate students will be better leaders, demanding change from the bottom up, because the very top is in trouble.

Try exposing your graduate students to the mess that I have uncovered and you will probably receive one of three responses:

- 1) If that is the ABS, and that is how one rises to the top, I want nothing to do with it.
- 2) If that is the ABS, I can do that, and do it even better. Looks like fun to me. I'm all in.
- 3) [Abundant expletives] I'm going to help fix that!

The third choice, of course, is the only healthy response for the ABS.

What is the fix? It's not silence and inaction and complicity. With the integrity of the ABS at stake, what fix is there other than the immediate resignation of Jeff Podos as president, requested unanimously by its (other) elected leaders. Aspiring students will quickly learn that science reigns at the ABS. The longer Podos remains at the top of the Animal Behavior Society, without any apparent concern by its officers, the more extensive and long-lasting will be the damage to the Society (unless you can keep it all covered up, of course).

More explicitly, for flouting the ethical guidelines of the ABS over which he presides, for flagrantly violating NSF demands that NSF-funded research be open and not secretive, for general scientific fraud, and for training students in this culture, President Jeffrey Podos must be asked to resign.

I ask for a professional response from the collective, elected leadership of the ABS by Monday, February 5. If that time frame cannot be managed, please send me your schedule.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsmma

P.S. Having set this letter aside for a few days, I've thought some more about it. The elected leadership of the ABS has been spectacularly silent on this topic after two messages from me in the last half year. Why should I expect anything different on a third attempt? Perhaps including a few graduate students in this communication could lead to some productive discussions on what constitutes science, scientific fraud, ethical misconduct, as well as leadership. In fact, that just might be a worthwhile discussion at this point for every ABS member.

All previous correspondence with the officers of the Animal Behavior Society is provided below:

21 July 2017

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President¹)

From: Donald Kroodsmma, Fellow, ABS

Re: My Resignation as a Fellow of ABS

It is deeply troubling when a scientific society elects to its highest office someone who cannot abide by that society's own ethical guidelines (see "Ethics in Publishing," <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001>), which states the following:

Professional integrity in the conduct and reporting of research is an absolute requirement of publication . . . , as is a willingness to share information with other members of the scientific community.

Equally troubling is the current ABS president's dismissal of NSF's policy on Dissemination and Sharing of Research Results (see <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>):

Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of work under NSF grants. Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing.

Rather than comply with these basic principles, Jeff Podos has threatened me with criminal harassment charges, delivered by the University of Massachusetts Police, if I inquire about how he conducts his research. Such behavior is unacceptable by anyone in the ABS (or in any scientific discipline, of course), but especially unacceptable by its elected leader (someone wondering how these threats arose can read all the evidence in the attached file "Criminal Harassment").ⁱⁱ

As I write in my commentary for Animal Behavior (attached), these kinds of behaviors can persist only as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. I realize that it is no great cost to the ABS to erase me as a Fellow, but resigning as a Fellow is what I as an individual can do, however small the cost imposed. For me, "Business as Usual" is not an option, nor should it be for the Animal Behavior Society, especially given the parallels that are transpiring on the national scene.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

ⁱ Per order of the University of Massachusetts Police, I am not allowed to communicate with Podos, a faculty member in my own Department of Biology at UMass

ⁱⁱ And there's so much more: 1) My attempt at a public dialogue in Biology Letters about Goodwin and Podos (2014), for example, was quashed by a confidential letter from the University to the journal. All I have been able to glean from Biology Letters is that this secret letter was submitted by Podos, from the dean of the graduate school. "Per university rules," wrote the dean, I was not allowed to know the

contents of this letter (in contrast to how I encouraged Biology Letters to forward any of my correspondence with them on to Podos, because I could not do so directly). Although Biology Letters believed that the dean wrote the letter, the dean had “no idea” (quotes from his email to me) who wrote the document, had “no idea” who submitted the document, and had no role (“none”) in preparing or writing the document. (Nor was he interested in finding out.) 2) Or consider how lobbying by Podos et al. (including two former ABS presidents) led a former editor of the Journal to reject my proposed Forum article before it was even submitted. . . . All this effort has been an attempt to suppress an open discussion of the research that I have now addressed in my published Forum (Kroodsma, 2017—see commentary).

July 31, 2017

To: Dr. Donald Kroodsma

Re: Resignation as ABS Fellow

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

We received your letter of July 21st, 2017 requesting that your name be removed as a fellow of the Animal Behavior Society. We have granted your request, and have removed your name from the list of Society fellows.

Best wishes,



Patricia Brennan, PhD.
ABS Secretary
secretary@animalbehaviorsociety.org

15 August 2017

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President)

From: Donald Kroodsma, ex-Fellow, ABS

Re: A few post-resignation thoughts

Erasing my name from the Fellows list was easy. Ignoring the consequences of all that has led to my resignation will not be so easy.

Since being threatened with criminal harassment charges, I have kept detailed notes on everything involving this sorry saga since June 2014, partly to protect myself, but mostly in disbelief (all information is accumulating at http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596). These three years are the story of everything that can go bad in science, and I mean *everything* (the least of which is incompetence), and is destined to become a very public documentary (e.g., just for starters, see <http://andrewgelman.com/2017/08/13/bird-fight/>).

That's inconvenient, to say the least, for those of us who take some pride in calling ourselves scientists, though it may be healthy in the long run for science in general, especially given increasing efforts to identify self-promoting bullshit and root it out. In the short (and, depending on your response, possibly the long) term, it is certainly not good for the Animal Behavior Society, because the primary perpetrator of all this mischief is now your President (not mine!), supported by two past presidents who have been his mentors. How's all this going to play out, especially for the ABS?

I thought I'd ask a senior scientist in another discipline for an opinion. I asked two questions: 1) What's your reaction to all of the documents I have accumulated? 2) If you were an officer of the Animal Behavior Society, what would you do? Here's her response:

Holy shit! Unbelievable. Criminal harassment? You've got to be kidding, but I know you're not clever enough to make this stuff up. I've never seen a field of study so demolished in the way you took on the performance ideas. This kind of thing is unthinkable in my field. Bird song must be so small a field and so ingrown that no one challenges each other, or thinks twice about accepting whatever is published as true. Everyone can't be that stupid, can they? Reminds me of Trump's alternate realities and Fantasyland, given how many groups (though with big conflicts of interest) have dismissed your claims as "just another disagreement of the kind that commonly occurs among scientists," or something like that. It's a pity that your words on marketing and science to Podos weren't heeded over a decade ago; would have saved a lot of people a lot of grief.

That Marc Houser [sic] case intrigues me. Apparently he was exiled from academia for fabricating data, but some defend him because they feel he still got some right conclusions. Podos has obviously cooked everything in lots of other ways, and come up with lots of sexy stories that are probably all wrong. He duped in the process a whole generation of others into believing him. Using federal money for it all, you'd think that would get him into lots of trouble, if not for the research publications themselves then the extreme measures of coverup afterward (think obstruction of justice; maybe the presidents can pardon themselves).

What's worse for science, the Howser or the Podos method? Both are really bad, but if I had to choose one, I'd choose Podos. A Howser in sheep's clothing maybe.

What would I do as an officer of that group? If I thought that nobody would find out, I'd be tempted to keep it quiet, and hope it all passed unnoticed. That's easiest. If it's not kept under wraps, and that seems to be the case, I'd take whatever measures I'd need to protect the members of the society. I'd ask that the president resign. Maybe he'd realize that it would be in the best interest of the society if he resigned. I'd be the "zero tolerance" officer when it comes to the kinds of things you've described that have gone on. That's the message that every graduate student entering this field should hear. Otherwise they should just go into creative writing.

You owe me. Took me a whole morning to read your stuff, though I have to admit that it was captivating. Like a good thriller, I couldn't put it down. Couldn't believe all the ways they tried to shut you down. Hope you've retained movie rights. It's certainly a great teaching device for graduate students entering any field of science (and their advisers).

I quit. I've devoted all too much time over the last three years to this effort of trying to "right the ship." Maybe all the effort was worth it. Maybe not. In a sense, you officers of the Animal Behavior Society get to write the ending to the documentary. If I were an officer, I know what I'd have to do in order to maintain the integrity of research on animal behavior and the reputation of my "scientific society." The ending would have to be one I'd be proud of.

I'm headed out to pasture.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsmā