



## WORLD CONGRESS OF HERPETOLOGY

### CODE OF CONDUCT

#### **INTRODUCTION**

World Congress of Herpetology (WCH) is a scientific organisation to connect individuals interested in the discovery, study, and management of amphibians and reptiles. WCH conferences are recognized worldwide as a high-calibre setting for formal scientific exchange, and they aim to provide participants with an opportunity to present research findings, establish/renew collaborations, and learn, teach, and network with an international community of herpetologists. The WCH is committed to maintaining a professional, respectful, safe, and welcoming environment for all participants and volunteers. WCH Executive Committee members, International Herpetological Committee members, and WCH conference attendees (including students, invited speakers, volunteers, guests of participants, exhibitors, service providers, and all other individuals associated with the conference) must abide by the *WCH Code of Conduct* as set forth herein.

Individuals attending a WCH and WCH committee members have a right to a welcoming environment free of discrimination, bullying, inappropriate behaviour, and harassment. These behaviours will not be tolerated at any WCH activities, including social events sponsored by other organizations and/or societies, and those held at public or private facilities (including banquets).

Committee members of the WCH Executive and International Herpetological Committees are voted for two inter-congress terms in order to represent their geographic region and herpetological sub-discipline within WCH, and may be requested to represent WCH at other scientific events. As WCH representatives, they are expected to behave in a professional, respectful and inclusive manner.

#### **EXPECTED BEHAVIOUR:**

- Treating everyone with respect, and consideration;
- Communicate openly and thoughtfully with others, and value a diversity of views and opinions that may differ to your own; being respectful and mindful in your critique of ideas or others' research, particularly during scientific discussions. It is important to critique ideas, and to avoid directed, personal attacks towards other people;
- Being mindful of your surroundings and of your fellow participants' experience;
- Respecting the rules and policies of the conference centre and all venues associated with a WCH; including conference-related social events at off-site locations (for example at bars and hotels), and in WCH-related online communities and social media;
- All the above mentioned behaviour is expected from WCH Officers and Executive and International Herpetological Committee members at all times when interacting with others in a professional capacity.
- Financial transactions from the WCH will all be ratified by the WCH Executive Committee. This includes all funds used to support WCH plenary speakers, student support, and support for WCH Committee members to assist with executing legitimate WCH activities.

**THIS POLICY PROHIBITS THE FOLLOWING CATEGORIES OF MISCONDUCT:**

- Discrimination or harassment based on gender or gender identity or expression, transgender status, sexual orientation, age, creed, colour, disability, pregnancy, marital or parental status, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, ethnicity, military status, genetic information, national origin, or culture;
- Harassment and intimidation, including any verbal, written, or physical conduct designed to threaten, intimidate, or coerce delegates, conference organizers, or volunteers;
- Sexual harassment, including any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours, or other unwanted behaviour or verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature;
- Retaliation, which includes any adverse action against an individual or groups of individuals on the basis of filing a complaint, cooperating with an investigation, or otherwise participating in the procedures under the *WCH Code of Conduct*;
- Intimidation and bullying, such as unwanted and/or aggressive behaviour between parties that involves a real or perceived power imbalance;
- Unacceptable behaviour, including but not limited to physical or verbal abuse of any attendee, speaker, volunteer, exhibitor, service provider or other meeting guest; inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces or in presentations; threatening, shaming, or stalking any WCH participant; disrespectful or purposeful disruption of presentations; inappropriate comments presented in a joking manner;
- Critiques of scientific work are appropriate and important, but presentations, and any critiques of other's work, must be free of offensive, discriminatory or disrespectful elements, including (but not limited to) words and images that are derogatory or demeaning to individuals or groups;
- All WCH financial transactions (either monetary or in-kind) should be transparent, available to, and approved by the WCH Executive Committee;
- Not abiding by the rules and policies of all venues associated with a WCH and the country in which WCH is held; for example, drinking alcohol outside of designated areas, smoking other than in designated areas, consumption of prohibited substances, or assembling for the purpose of committing an unlawful act.

**BROADCASTING POLICY:**

The WCH support the communication of science. Information presented at the WCH (in oral or poster format) may be reported and discussed by attendees and science writers via published materials in scientific journals, newspapers, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, or other formats. However, we require that this be done respectfully and without direct reproduction of visual materials (e.g., no posting photos of slides or posters) unless permission is obtained from the presenter, or if the information is already freely available in an open-source forum. If a presenter does not want information from his/her presentation to be broadcasted, they should make this clear in their talk/poster and we ask that attendees respect this.

**REPORTING UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR:**

Anyone filing a complaint concerning a violation of the *WCH Code of Conduct* must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed. Any allegations made with a malicious intent or knowingly false will be viewed as violation of the *WCH Code of Conduct* (see prohibited categories, i.e., retaliation, of misconduct above).

Violations of the *WCH Code of Conduct* by a WCH participant should be reported by the complainant to the Conference Organizer, The Secretary General and/or The Secretary General Elect (see contact details below). Any unacceptable behaviour by WCH committee members should be reported to the Secretary General and/or the Secretary General Elect. Any unacceptable behaviour by the Secretary General or the Secretary General Elect should be reported to the WCH Executive Committee (see contacts below). Inappropriate use of WCH funds should be reported to the WCH Treasurer (see contact below) and the WCH Executive Committee.

The reported complaint should be made verbally, preferably, immediately after the violation has occurred and then later with a written report. The report should include all the pertinent documentation needed to investigate the violation (including but not limited to date, time, misconduct observed, name of the person accused, and names of others who may have witnessed the misconduct). Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation or to the extent allowed by law. All complaints will be treated seriously and responded to promptly by at least two members of the above mentioned three officers.

No WCH participant that in good faith reports a violation of the *WCH Code of Conduct* shall suffer harassment, retaliation, or adverse consequence from the Conference Organizer, The Secretary General, and/or The Secretary General Elect. It is a violation of the *WCH Code of Conduct* for an alleged offender to harass, retaliate, or adversely act toward a complainant who in good faith reports a potential violation.

## **PROCEDURE FOR CODE VIOLATIONS**

### **During a Meeting**

If you are experiencing or witnessing behaviour that constitutes an immediate or serious threat to your personal safety (i.e. threats of bodily harm), contact venue security and/or local law enforcement immediately. If it is not obvious how to contact venue and/or local law enforcement, contact the Conference Organizer. If this situation arises, please also notify the Conference Organizer, The Secretary General, and/or The Secretary General Elect (see contact details below), as soon as possible, at a time that is safe. If necessary, the WCH Executive Committee, under the direction of either the Secretary General and/or the Secretary General Elect, will determine how best to investigate the violation, determine whether it is necessary to meet with the individual(s) involved to apprise them of the complaint, discuss the situation, and possibly take actions to limit interactions between the individuals involved depending on the severity and nature of the event. For example, actions may include a written or verbal warning against a violation (of which the person warned is expected to immediately comply), expulsion from the conference at any time without a refund, and/or being banned from future WCH events.

If presentations or any critiques of other's work include offensive, discriminatory or disrespectful elements, the Conference Organizer, The Secretary General, The Secretary General Elect, and the members of the Executive Committee reserve the rights to:

- Interrupt the presentation/discussion and ask the offending person to cease engaging in the inappropriate behaviour.

#### After a Meeting or Other Scientific Events

If a violation of the *WCH Code of Conduct* is submitted by email after a meeting, the report will be investigated by the WCH Executive Committee under the direction of either the Secretary General and/or the Secretary General Elect (whichever is most appropriate). The report will be investigated swiftly, impartially, and in a manner appropriate to the allegation, maintaining confidentiality as appropriate, and due process. It is the responsibility of the complainant to notify the local law enforcement if they believe an offense violated the law.

Investigatory and disciplinary action will depend on the nature and severity of the incident, however the WCH Secretary General and/or the Secretary General Elect reserve the right to:

- Provide written correspondence to the person(s) involved in a reported infringement of the WCH code of conduct and request a right of reply to the reported incident. Responses from the person(s) responsible will be considered by the WCH Executive and dealt with in an unbiased, fair and just manner.
- Give a written and/or verbal warning to the person(s) responsible, of which they are expected to comply immediately. Any further violations will be considered with past warnings in mind.
- Expel individuals from a WCH conference without a refund, WCH committee and/or ban individuals from future WCH events.

A report of inappropriate use of WCH funds by committee members will be investigated by the WCH Treasurer in collaboration with the WCH Secretary General and/or the Secretary General Elect. If either the Secretary General or the Secretary General Elect are involved in the inappropriate use of WCH funds, the matter should be referred to the WCH treasurer and the WCH Executive Committee. Use of WCH funds by a committee member that is inappropriate, and/or without the knowledge and approval of the WCH Executive Committee will not be tolerated.

#### CONTACT LIST:

##### Contact list in general:

WCH Secretary General: Dr. Judit Vörös

E-mail: [voros.judit@nhmus.hu](mailto:voros.judit@nhmus.hu)

WCH Secretary General Elect: Prof. Richard Griffiths

E-mail: [R.A.Griffiths@kent.ac.uk](mailto:R.A.Griffiths@kent.ac.uk)

##### Contact for WCH10:

Prof. Indraneil Das

E-mail: [idas@unimas.my](mailto:idas@unimas.my)

Current listing of executives can be found on the WCH website:

<https://www.worldcongressofherpetology.org/executive-committee>