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2<sup>nd</sup> June 2019

Reference: Mr. Christian Laurent

To Whom it May Concern

It gives me great pleasure to offer this reference on behalf of Chris Laurent. I first met him at an SICB meeting in San Francisco in January 2018. We corresponded on and off throughout 2018 and I spent a full week working with him at the University of Southampton in early Spring, 2019. On the basis of time spent in his company I am in a position to compare his professional capabilities and general character with numerous American, “millennial” graduate students and post-docs I have interacted with since my retirement.

Chris is a most personable young man and it is soon apparent on meeting him that he is exceptionally quick-thinking and literate. He picks up on ideas very quickly and draws on his very varied educational and life experiences in pursuit of a topic of conversation. These are traits that are rare in younger workers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Chris and I share an interest in avian feathers. When I first met him I told him that I had problems with workers who used “advanced scanning techniques” for the analysis of feather structure and function – the techniques were rarely described in terms that zoologists (especially ornithologists) could follow. I expressed the view that there was a great need for careful and precise inter-disciplinary communication. In my week spent with him recently I found that he could both explain his techniques and present them in elegant written form: we are in the process of completing our first collaborative work. As we worked together, I was particularly struck by the way he pursued any unfamiliar word or technical concept (usually related to developmental issues – my own expertise). Playing his computer keyboard like a piano, “Googled” topics were pursued, noted and indexed in seconds. Chris is clearly a true modern scholar!

I would rank Chris Laurent in the top 5% of students I have interacted with at national and international meetings and in correspondence. He already has as an impressive list of publications that attest to his broad interests and scholarly capabilities. While I recognize that the future “structure” of the Academy in the English speaking world is as yet unclear -- and the immediate political scene is particularly uncertain – I hope that he will decide to pursue an Academic career in the future, I can see him as an outstanding teacher,

If I can offer any further specific information I can be contacted at the addresses given above.

Paul F A Maderson

PFAM file: 060219refLAURENT