

Fighting Despair, Chasing Hope: Conserving Wildlife in India

India is home to more than a billion people and half a billion livestock; every fifth human and tenth farm animal on the planet is Indian. Over two-thirds of India's people reside in rural areas and depend significantly on natural resources for their living. At the same time, urban engines of India's growth, with an expanding footprint over natural resources, have catapulted the country's economy among the world's fastest growing. Countrywide, natural habitats are in retreat and even India's national animal, the tiger, is in precipitous decline. If conservation were the goal, this would hardly seem a scenario that inspired much hope.

While the challenges to conservation in India are many, so too are the opportunities. The largest global populations of several wild species, such as the Asian elephant, and significant stretches of many important

ecosystems lie within India. There is also considerable cultural space for conservation in the ethos of its people: to most Indians, the rights of non-human species to exist are simply self-evident. A mature and stable polity founded on a democratic constitution, India considers conservation a fundamental duty of every citizen. It has enacted strong conservation laws and become a signatory to many global conservation conventions, based on which nearly 600 parks have been created across varied biogeographic zones. On critical issues such as logging, encroachment, and destruction of forests by industry, the judiciary effectively has upheld India's constitutional commitment to conservation. Across the country, there is growing involvement of civil society groups in conservation issues.

Yet such vast potential alone cannot win the day for Indian conservation; we need

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ANNUAL MEETING UPDATES

SCB's 2006 annual meeting, *Conservation Without Borders*, will be held 24–28 June in San Jose, California, USA.

The early registration deadline is 14 May, with late rates thereafter. After 9 June, individuals must register on site. One-day registration is available in advance or on site. For complete information see www.conbio.org/2006.

To learn about a few of the meeting's special events, please see pages 2 and 3. We look forward to welcoming you to San Jose.

Becoming Ordinary

Although I've been awake for the hour it takes me to drive to work, I really don't start to think clearly until I hear the pilot's voice through the headset: "Seven eight four, four hotel hotel." A women's voice replies, "Four hotel hotel, go ahead." "Heading west from the Beard Center to 80 47 20, 25, 20 34, three souls on board, two hours of fuel." The women's voice echoes the numbers and falls silent. The words condition me to expect the 80 knot wind that now blows past, for we fly without doors on the helicopter and before sunrise, it's cold. I lean in, away from the draft. Below, colors are muted. The pine trees are dark green, the prairies are dark buff, and an imperceptible breeze rumples the thin white mist that lies over them. "Number 40"—Sonny Bass's voice is equally terse—"Four zero," I reply. We land and I stand with my feet in the mist and head above it. The helicopter leaves and I take off my flight helmet and Nomex gloves. In the distance, there's a faint "buzz," and "1" goes onto my clipboard

see **Pimm** page 12

CONSERVATION SOCIAL SCIENCE: What's in the Black Box?

Editor's note: Social science is gaining increasing prominence within SCB, but "conservation social science" may be a mysterious "black box" to some conservation scientists and practitioners. In preparation for SCB's 2006 annual meeting, where social science will be represented strongly, SCB's Social Science Working Group offered to develop a primer on conservation social science: definitions, scope, and conservation relevance.

Conservation social science is the study of the conservation-relevant aspects of human society, including the relationships among humans and between humans and their environment. Since successful conservation inevitably requires changes in human behavior, drawing upon decades of social science research to better understand what people do, and why, provides valuable insights for conservation policy and practice. Economic research regarding the role of information in decision-making, for example, represents the social scientific basis for market-based conservation strategies like Marine Stewardship Council ecolabeling and Forest Stewardship Council certification. Similarly, psychological research on learning and behavior change forms the scientific underpinnings of social marketing campaigns like those developed by RARE, which have catalyzed popular support for biodiversity conservation in St. Lucia, Indonesia, Mexico, and elsewhere.

see **Social Science**, page 11

The 20th annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology, *Conservation Without Borders*, will be held 24–28 June 2006 in San Jose, California, USA.

Advance registration is available until 9 June, after which individuals must register on site. Detailed information about all aspects of the meeting program, including but not limited to plenary, oral, and poster sessions; SCB member meetings; travel;

field trips; and social events is available at the meeting Web site, www.ConservationBiology.org/2006. Here, we describe a sample of the meeting's special events and features.

SCIENTIFIC "SPEED DATING"

A new experiment in presentation formats for scientific meetings • developed by Mac Hunter, Kent Redford, Nora Bynum, and Nick Salafsky

"I didn't have time to write you a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead." – attributed to Blaise Pascal and / or Mark Twain

Dear participants in SCB's 2006 annual meeting:

Are you

- Tired of attending a presentation of a paper that you expected to be exciting, discovering in the first two minutes that it doesn't interest you, and then suffering through the entire 15 minute talk because you are too polite to leave and trapped in a middle seat?
- Looking for opportunities to engage in detailed conversation with presenters whose work appealed to you, but who disappear immediately after their session?
- Frustrated because you cannot attend as many presentations as you would like during concurrent sessions?
- Jittery because modern life has left you with a really short attention span and insufficient time to digest all of the journal articles you should be reading?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, never fear, speed presentations are here! You may have heard of "speed dating," spending five minutes each with a dozen prospective dates. In honor of our 20th anniversary meeting, SCB is going to adapt this concept to conduct an exciting experiment in alternative formats for meeting presentations.

At the 2006 annual meeting, in addition to the traditional formats for contributed oral and poster presentations, we will offer an experimental "speed presentation" option. We will have two speed presentation sessions. The first, from 4:00–6:00 P.M. on Sunday, 25 June, will include biologically-oriented papers. The second, from 10:00–12:00 A.M. on Wednesday, 28 June, will include social science and adaptive management-oriented papers. In the first hour of each session, 15 presenters will be given three minutes each to present their key ideas and results. In the second hour, presenters will station themselves at separate tables where they can interact with people who are interested in learning more about their work.

We look forward to seeing you at the sessions. Together, we will evaluate the outcome of this experiment to determine whether speed presentations should become a regular feature of our annual meetings. Help us discover what happens when MTV meets SCB.

BRIDGING THE WORLDS OF SCIENCE AND JOURNALISM: A "How-To" Workshop

Tuesday 27 June, 1:30–3:30 P.M. Learn to be a powerful communicator of your science. Whether talking to a journalist about a conservation debate, writing an op-ed for a local paper, or providing testimony for a government official, scientists are increasingly called upon to explain their work to public audiences. This hands-on session will provide you with practical tools and tips for translating your science to audiences outside of academia. You'll have a chance to practice these new skills and learn "do's and don'ts" of a successful media interview. A team of trainers including a journalist, Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellows, and a science outreach specialist from SeaWeb / COMPASS (Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea) will share their insights and provide individual feedback on how to strengthen your message so that it resonates with your audience.

STUDENT AWARDS

Each year, SCB administers a Student Awards program, with prizes that include cash and books. The 12 finalists for the 2006 Student Awards will present their papers in a special dedicated session on the afternoon of **Monday, 26 June**. In addition to presentations by student award finalists, the session will feature presentations by two recipients of SCB's 2006 Distinguished Service awards, Dee Boersma and Javier Simonetti. At 3:00 P.M., Dee, who also is Past President of SCB, will present *What we learn from natural history of penguins*. At 5:30 P.M., Javier, who also is Past President of the Austral and Neotropical America Section of SCB, will present *Cats? No way! Can we conserve biodiversity in rural landscapes?* These sessions will be moderated by SCB Past Presidents Mac Hunter and Deborah Jensen. Awards will be announced before Jack Dangermond's plenary presentation on the morning of **Wednesday, 28 June**.

NETWORK OF CONSERVATION EDUCATORS AND PRACTITIONERS WORKSHOP

At the last four annual meetings, the Network of Conservation Educators and Practitioners (NCEP) has organized workshops on teaching conservation at the university level. These sessions have been important in terms of generating feedback for the NCEP project, but also generated significant discussion among faculty and students on how to develop suitable resources for teaching biodiversity conservation.

This year, NCEP again will be holding a workshop immediately after SCB's annual meeting. The purpose of this workshop is for a group of faculty members experienced in using NCEP modules to provide mentoring to faculty members new to the modules and project. In addition, workshop attendees will participate in the review and refinement of draft evaluation tools designed to measure student learning outcomes from using the NCEP modules. The dynamic is active and participatory; faculty members who have used the modules in their classroom will share how they were able to fit the module components into their syllabi, emphasizing both successes and challenges in terms of content integration and the use of active-teaching techniques. Professors with previous experience working with NCEP modules will be paired with novice faculty to work directly with the materials. New and experienced users will then develop and share specific plans for NCEP module use in current or planned future courses. The second day of the workshop will focus on student assessment of learning gains through discussion and revision of draft evaluation instruments designed to measure student mastery of key concepts for several modules.

The workshop should be of interest to those who have participated in the NCEP project to date (module developers and faculty testers), academics and practitioners who wish to enhance biodiversity conservation training in their institutions, and all those interested in the process of classroom evaluation.

We are particularly interested in new candidates from minority-serving institutions, but as always the most important characteristic is interest and enthusiasm in teaching about conservation. We have some funds to support participant travel, but also welcome participants already traveling to SCB with institutional support.

If you are interested in this workshop, or would like more information about the project, please contact Christine Engels (cengels@amnh.org) or visit <http://ncep.amnh.org/>.

PLENARY AND KEYNOTE SESSIONS

Please join us for the presentations by the following distinguished guests. All sessions will be held in the San Jose Civic Auditorium.

Sunday, 25 June, 8:30 A.M. Steven Sanderson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Wildlife Conservation Society.

Sunday, 25 June, 8:00 P.M. Bruce Babbitt, former Secretary of the Interior and Governor of Arizona.

Monday, 26 June, 8:00 A.M. *Bridging the Worlds of Science*

and Journalism. This plenary panel, moderated by Nancy Baron, Science Outreach Director, COMPASS / SeaWeb, will bring together leading science journalists to provide a behind-the-scenes look at how scientific research is covered in the press, the realities of reporting on conservation issues, elements of a successful science story, and what it takes to get your message across.

Tuesday, 27 June, 8:30 A.M. James Estes, U.S. Geological Survey and University of California, Santa Cruz.

Wednesday, 28 June, 8:00 A.M. Jack Dangermond, founder and president, Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. Preceded by presentation of student awards.

CONCURRENT MEETING WITH SCGIS

The ninth annual international conference of the Society for Conservation GIS will be held concurrent with SCB's annual meeting. The two societies share the goal of creating an international community of conservation professionals and GIS practitioners to build conservation capacity and promote geospatial technologies at local, regional, and global levels. Individuals registering for either meeting will be allowed to attend all events of both societies at no additional cost.

SPONSORS

We gratefully acknowledge the growing number of sponsors who have, as of 7 April, committed their time and resources to supporting SCB's 2006 annual meeting.

Major support for *Conservation Without Borders* is provided by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation, The Christensen Fund, and The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

We also thank

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Red Latinoamericana de Botánica

San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory

Santa Clara Valley Water District

The Irvine Company

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

U.S. Geological Survey

University of California, Berkeley College of Natural Resources

Universidad de Chile, Programa Interdisciplinario de Estudios en Biodiversidad

Woods Institute for the Environment, Stanford University

Zoological Society of San Diego

The 21st annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology will be hosted by the Terrestrial Ecology Research Unit at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Port Elizabeth, South Africa from 1–5 July 2007, with support from SCB's Africa Section. The theme of the meeting, *One World, One Conservation, One Partnership*, emphasizes the need to move away from national, regional, and disciplinary territoriality in support of a joint effort to conserve the world's biodiversity by uniting towards a common goal.

Port Elizabeth and two neighboring towns, Uitenhage and Despatch, form a large metropolitan area, Nelson Mandela Bay. The Bay provides an outstanding ecological context for the meeting. It is surrounded by spectacular marine and terrestrial ecosystems, including fynbos vegetation. South Africa is renowned for its "big five" game reserves and there are a number of such reserves within an hour's drive from the venue. For more information, contact Graham Kerley, Convenor and Chair (graham.kerley@nmmu.ac.za), Margot Collett, Project Manager (margot.collett@nmmu.ac.za), or visit the meeting Web site, www.conbio.org/2007.

For people visiting southern Africa, the choices of "entertainment" are seemingly endless. If you are planning a trip to the 2007 annual meeting in Port Elizabeth, you will have the trip of a lifetime. However, you will need to plan ahead for two reasons. First, things move slowly in Africa, so making choices should take some time. Second, there is so much to choose from that if you don't want to miss the "best," you must think ahead.

I spent the majority of 12 years living, working, and traveling in southern Africa and East Africa. In my opinion, South Africa offers a sampling of all that Africa has to offer, from the Big Five (elephant, lion, water buffalo, rhino, and leopard) to coral reefs (great white sharks, too) to rain forest to desert to rocky coastline to mangrove estuaries, and more. The tourism industry is well appointed, diverse, affordable, and eager to please.

The subcontinent includes a number of nations, South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Namibia, and Botswana, all of which are part of a region that cooperates in transportation and commerce.

The distance between Cape Town and East London is about 1000 miles and takes two days to drive without stopping, but the scenery almost certainly will compel you to stop again and again. The distance between Durban and Port Elizabeth is even longer, but, fortunately, South Africa has an efficient and affordable internal airline system. Some discount airlines offer competition to the main carrier, South African Airways.

Although car rental and the highways are easy and friendly, unless time is no problem you would be better advised to rent and drive locally rather than to cover extensive distances yourself.

The northeast provinces of Limpopo and Mpumalanga contain Kruger Park (possibly the world's largest managed park) and a series of private reserves, whereas Kwazulu Natal holds the Hluhluwe / Umfolozi Parks and a series of smaller private camps. At Richards Bay are magnificent reserves for coastal life, wetlands, and coral reefs. In Botswana, there is the Okavango Delta and Moremi Game Reserves. And in Namibia and Botswana are the Kalahari Desert and Skeleton Coast, where diamonds wash up on the beach (but you cannot reach them). These sites are distant from Port Elizabeth, but visits can be arranged in concert with your travels either before or after your participation in the 2007 annual meeting.

Ron Abrams

Call for 2007 Award Nominations

Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award

The Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award is given annually to an individual with a distinguished record of research and outstanding application of science to the conservation of our biological resources. The intention of the award is to recognize the innovative application of science to resource management and policy. Although all scientists are eligible for the award, because of Edward LaRoe's distinguished career as a public servant, preference is given to employees of governmental resource management agencies or science agencies.

Past recipients of the LaRoe Award are

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|------|-------------------|
| 2005 | Daniel Pauly |
| 2004 | Jerry Franklin |
| 2003 | Stephen Schneider |
| 2002 | John Lawton |
| 2001 | Robert Pressey |
| 2000 | Phil Pister |
| 1999 | Chandler Robbins |
| 1998 | J. Michael Scott |
| 1997 | Barry Noon |

The 2006 LaRoe Award recipient is Stuart Pimm.

Please send nominations for the 2007 LaRoe Award to J. Michael Scott, Department of Fish and Wildlife, P.O. Box 44-1141, Room 103, University of Idaho, Moscow, ID 83844-1141, USA, msscott@uidaho.edu (with copies to Sarah

Martinez, sarahm@uidaho.edu). Nominations should be in the form of a nominating letter with an accompanying resume of the nominee. Multiple letters of support for nominees are encouraged. Nominations must be received by **1 October 2006**.

Distinguished Service Awards

SCB annually presents awards for distinguished service in the field of conservation biology. For 2007, SCB is soliciting nominations from its members and other conservation professionals. Among the categories eligible for awards are

- Academia
- Government
- Outside academia and government
- Social, economic, and political work
- Education and journalism

Nominations for individuals or institutions, including a nomination form and a minimum of two supporting letters, must be received by **1 October 2006**. The form is available at <http://conbio.org/SCB/Activities/Awards/>. Letters and form must be submitted as a single document in Word. Separate letters will not be accepted. Please send nominations to Saterson.Kathryn@epamail.epa.gov. If the nominator does not have internet access, contact Kathryn Saterson, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 109 TW Alexander Drive, MC: B305-02, Research Triangle Park, NC 27711, USA, 1 919 541-2535.

clear, replicable examples that deliver this promise into reality. It is this quest for working models of conservation across India's landscapes that has motivated us at NCF. At the heart of such a quest, we believe, is a good scientific understanding of two complex entities, wildlife ecology and human society. For an organization that is somewhat averse to being bound by definitions, keeping science at the core of our conservation efforts is perhaps the closest we come to a unifying approach.

Based largely on the individual expertise of highly motivated professionals, our modest portfolio encompasses a wide range of research themes related to India's wildlife and natural areas. These include assessments of threats such as hunting, livestock grazing, and habitat fragmentation; impacts of climate change; understanding human-wildlife conflicts; status surveys and conservation assessments for endangered species; and exploration of India's biological frontiers; as well as fundamental research into animal behavior, ecology, and evolution. Our work spans diverse social and ecological settings, with programs in the rain forests at the Himalayan foothills, in the trans-Himalayan cold deserts, in the forests of the Western Ghats, and in the near-shore marine and coastal environments of the mainland and the oceanic islands. Each program is founded on sound research, based on which we have built small but closely monitored programs of on-the-ground conservation and management. We also have sought to bring about wider changes through education and policy outreach.

Even today, the wildlife wealth of many regions in India remains unexplored. Over the last decade we have undertaken a number of expeditions to identify important areas for conservation in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, and Kashmir, several states of northeast India and along the Western Ghats hills. Our surveys in northeast India have led to the discovery of fascinating species, including the Arunachal macaque, a primate new to science described in 2005; many mammals hitherto unknown from India such as the leaf deer; and more than a dozen new records and rediscoveries of amphibian and reptile species. Our work has helped to identify potential regions for inclusion in the protected area network and establish a Biosphere Reserve in the high elevations of Arunachal Pradesh in the Eastern Himalaya biodiversity hotspot.

In the tropical deciduous forests of southern India, our studies found that hunting, livestock grazing, and biomass removal lead to significant alteration of habitat, declines in wild mammal abundance, and the spatial exclusion by livestock of wild grazing herbivores such as elephants and gaur, even within protected areas. Our research on livestock-killing by tigers and leopards and crop-raiding and human deaths due to elephants helped to identify measures to ameliorate the conflict. In the trans-Himalayan cold deserts, our research on pastoral communities discovered serious overstocking of

rangelands with livestock, decrease in livestock production, consequent competition with and local extinction of wild ungulates, livestock depredation by snow leopard and wolf, and their retaliatory persecution by local people—a bleak conservation situation. Over the last decade, our conservation program established participatory livestock insurance programs, incentives for good herding practices, local capacity development, and student research projects. NCF also is collaborating with central and state governments to develop a comprehensive wildlife policy and action plan for the region, Project Snow Leopard.

At the other end of the Himalaya, in the rain forests of Arunachal Pradesh, hunting by indigenous communities seriously affects species such as hornbills and large mammals. Without access to even the most basic health care, education, sanitation, or means of livelihood, the survival needs of these marginalized people completely overshadow conservation concerns for the region's wildlife. While keeping the focus squarely on wildlife conservation, NCF's program in the region is addressing people's welfare needs, and, in the process, mainstreaming conservation as a central concern in this traditional hunting community.

In many parts of India, wildlife survives tenuously in severely exploited or fragmented habitats. In areas ranging from the rain forests of the Anamalai hills to the high-elevation pastures of the Himalaya, our efforts have focused on restoring degraded lands and reviving their wildlife populations. A related endeavor is a recent program to establish no-take areas in the coral reefs of Lakshadweep to revive fish stock while achieving marine conservation goals. These restoration efforts have involved unique partnerships with indigenous people and artisanal fishers, as well as business houses.

In every one of our programs, we recognize the importance of nurturing conservation leaders at every level, from every quarter. In particular, NCF's newly initiated Ph.D. program is fostering students to gain a well-rounded appreciation for India's variegated conservation needs while keeping science central to their quest.

To receive SCB's Distinguished Service Award merely a decade after we began is a tremendous honor. On the one hand, there is gratification that our efforts, small though they are, have had some significance and impact in a wider context. On the other hand, in our circumspect moments, we wonder if we enjoy the perverse advantage of a somewhat maverick institution in a setting where conservation problems outnumber conservation professionals by several orders of magnitude.

*Nature Conservation Foundation
Mysore, India*

The Nature Conservation Foundation (India) received a 2006 Distinguished Service Award from SCB for the scientific rigor, focus, and imagination that they use to affect sustainable conservation and for a vision that is leading to the addition of mature scientists to the region's workforce of conservation biologists. The award will be conferred on the evening of Saturday, 24 June at the 2006 annual meeting.

UPDATES FROM REGIONAL SECTIONS AND WORKING GROUPS

AUSTRALASIA

Australasia Regional Conference

Keep an eye out for information on the first Australasia Regional Conference, which will be held 10–13 July 2007. The conference will include three days of sessions, with a one-day break in the middle for field trips.

New Board Members

Welcome to two new ex officio members of the Section board, Wendy Jackson and Sarina Loo, who will be sharing the role of Student Affairs Committee chair. Wendy is a doctoral student in the Environment, Society, and Design Division of Lincoln University in New Zealand; Sarina is in the fourth year of her Ph.D. at Monash University in Melbourne.

Editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology*

We're pleased to announce that Associate Professor Ian McLean (University of Otago, New Zealand) has agreed to become Editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology*. Professor Harry Recher has done an outstanding job of focusing on the Pacific through the journal and we give him our heartfelt thanks for his many years of hard work as Editor.

Conference Announcement

The eighth New Guinea Biology Conference, *Linking Cultural and Biological Diversity: Framework for Research, Training and Action*, will be held 20–22 June 2006 at the University of Papua New Guinea's Waigani Campus in Port Moresby. The interdependence of biological and cultural diversity are best demonstrated among the communities from the island of New Guinea. Natural systems cannot be understood, conserved, and managed without recognizing the human cultures that shape them. Together, cultural diversity and biological diversity hold the key to ensuring resilience and sustainability in both social and ecological systems. This interdependence is the theme of the 2006 New Guinea Biology Conference. The main theme will be explored through a number of subthemes: methodologies, knowledgebase (botany, zoology, ecology, and so forth), resource management strategies, threats, and case studies. Deadline for abstracts (250 words) is 30 May. Submit abstracts to Jane Mogina (moginaj@upng.ac.pg) or Rose Singadan (singadan@upng.ac.pg).

compiled by Nicky Nelson

Bula Column—BirdLife Pacific Partnership

I recently was promoting an idea for a book on endangered birds of the Pacific. A 900 page book documenting all globally threatened birds, *The Threatened Birds of the World*, has been produced by BirdLife International. My argument for a regional

book is that the information on the Pacific's threatened species is less accessible in this large volume than in a regional book. Moreover, the Pacific region has the highest extinction rate of birds in the world. The region is home to 289 species of globally threatened birds—24% of the world's total. Thirty-seven (14%) of these are Critically Endangered. In addition, a large number of species are believed to have gone extinct within the last few decades. For example, nine species in Hawaii are believed to have gone extinct since 1960.

The main causes of extinction are invasive alien species and habitat destruction, and these often appear to work in synergy. Alien predators such as rats, feral cats, and mongoose have the most severe and dramatic impact on island birds. Other invasive species, such as herbivores and plants, contribute to habitat modification. In addition, new cadres of alien species, including ants and disease vectors such as mosquitoes, have the potential to contribute to bird extinction. In many cases, the establishment and spread of invasive alien species appears to be facilitated or enhanced by habitat disturbance. A bird species may be able to persist in the face of one anthropogenic pressure, but the combined impacts of habitat degradation and increased nest predation may result in extirpation or extinction.

The BirdLife International Pacific Partnership is committed to halting bird extinctions in the Pacific region and reversing declines in biodiversity through the implementation of the BirdLife Pacific Strategy. Among the specific targets are identification of sites of global significance for birds in the region. The development of a strong and effective partnership with the capacity to implement grassroots, community-based conservation measures on these sites is critical for success. This includes working directly with NGOs to build their capacities through technical training, project development, institutional support, guidance, networking with other NGOs, grant applications, and the development of fledgling conservation NGOs.

A Pacific Partnership of NGOs was initiated at a meeting in New Zealand in 2001 and currently has eight partners: Birds Australia, Taporoporoanga Ipukarea Society (Cook Islands), Dick Watling (Fiji), Société d'Ornithologie de Polynésie—MANU (French Polynesia), Société Calédonienne d'Ornithologie (New Caledonia), Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (New Zealand), Palau Conservation Society (Palau), and Le Si'osi'omaga Society (Samoa). A small team of secretariat staff are located in Fiji, two dedicated to the Fiji Country Program and three to supporting the partnership.

Identification of Important Bird Area (IBAs), areas of international importance to birds, is a prioritization process that informs effective avian conservation and strengthens advocacy and funding applications. Identification is based on proportions of endemic or restricted range species or large aggregations of waterbirds. IBAs are of sufficient size to support viable populations of target species, but small enough to act as discrete manageable units. IBA identification in the region was initiated in 2002 in Fiji. Field based research to inform the

identification and prioritization process subsequently was initiated in French Polynesia, New Caledonia, and Palau. This project will use desk based methods to identify IBAs in other Pacific island states where field work currently is not an option. Birds Australia initiated an IBA identification process in 2006.

The IBA process has produced a wealth of new information to inform conservation policy and action while confirming regional data deficiencies. One “lost” species has been rediscovered by the project, and new populations of numerous species have been located by field teams. In each country where work has progressed, field work is resulting in a large number of threat level changes; sadly, for many, the move is to a higher risk category. The IBA process has delivered stronger institutions and project teams armed with greater skill, knowledge, and enthusiasm. It has raised awareness among communities and has been accepted as a credible and scientifically robust method for biodiversity site prioritization.

From this strong platform, the challenge now is to turn inventory to action, and we need to do it fast and on multiple fronts: research, education, and capacity building. Projects and programs already are being rolled out. In Fiji, a community based project funded by the Australian Regional Natural Heritage Programme is working on management plans for four protected areas and to develop protected area status for undesignated sites. Site based community work also is being rolled out in Palau and French Polynesia, while several projects in New Caledonia are supported by provincial governments. In 2006, for example, the British Birdwatching Fair fund will support several regional partners on a project to conserve the region’s small parrots. Aside from the clear conservation benefits, this also represents an unrivalled opportunity to raise regional and international awareness.

Can this biodiversity crisis be turned around on Pacific islands? The task for birds alone is daunting, let alone for other taxa. However, there is cause for optimism from within the region. There have been several examples of extinction being prevented, notably the Rarotonga monarch in the Cook Islands, and New Zealand has made significant advances in endangered species recovery and alien species management. In Mauritius, bird extinction has been stemmed by the implementation of conservation intervention, and in the Seychelles, the combined efforts of civil society and governmental action recently have reduced the threat status of four endangered birds. These island nations provide valuable lessons, advocating the benefits of capacity development, long running educational programs, and effective partnerships between civil society, governmental, and private bodies. Given that conservation intervention was initiated in the 1960s and 1970s, it also is clear that there are no magic bullets in the realization of zero bird extinction.

James Millet, BirdLife International

EUROPE

In late March the Board of the Europe Section met in Eger, Hungary. This meeting was followed by the third meeting of the scientific committee of the European Congress of Conservation Biology (ECCB). Once again we were hosted by András Báldi of the Animal Ecology Research Group of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungarian Natural History Museum. With 17 confirmed symposia and more than 800 submitted abstracts, ECCB 2006 is likely to be one of the largest gatherings of conservation professionals in Europe in recent years. The abstracts cover a wide range of topics across the science and practice of conservation biology and the quality of presentations will be high. In addition, there will be plenary addresses by conservation scientists and policy makers including Sir John Lawton, Georgina Mace, Bob Pressey, and Ladislav Miko, and a day of training courses before the meeting led by an international team of experts.

The scientific committee congratulates the local organizers on their successful preparations and looks forward to your company at the meeting in August. Visit the ECCB Web site, www.eccb2006.org, for up-to-date information and to register.

Once again the Board encourages the participation of Section members in the activities of the Section, and we look forward to meeting with Section members during the ECCB in August. To contact the Board with any questions or comments email europe@conservationbiology.org. Visit the Section’s Web site, www.conbio.org/Sections/Europe/, for details of committee activities and opportunities to get involved.

Owen Nevin

NORTH AMERICA

Election Results

I am happy to announce the results of the elections for the North America Section board. You have elected Erica Fleishman as President Elect. She will serve in this role for two years (2006–2008) and then be President for two years (2008–2010). You have also elected Nick Haddad, Adina Merenlender, and Jon Rosales to three-year terms (2006–2009) as members of the board. Congratulations to all of them, and my thanks to all of you who voted in this election.

Steve Trombulak

Student Affairs Committee for the North America Section

The Student Affairs Committee (SAC) for SCB was formed in 2003 to recognize and encourage student participation and contributions to SCB. As SCB and the science and practice of conservation continue to grow, so too does the need to contribute to student development and, in turn, the development of future conservation professionals. With this goal in mind, the North America Section has initiated its own SAC with the objective of advancing the involvement of student conservationists in North America. Other Regional Sections also are establishing SACs, allowing efforts to be tailored to fit the specific needs of students in these different areas.

As conservation professionals, we often can remember interactions with a mentor who provided encouragement or advice that had a profound impact on our career path. The establishment of the Section's SAC creates an exciting chance to provide such opportunities to students. We also can work to maximize the efficiency of student conservationists by linking groups within North America together. SCB's Student Affairs Committee then can extend these links to the global level.

Several areas have been identified for initial efforts by the Section's SAC. One such effort is development of mentoring schemes in which students can submit manuscripts and abstracts for review by other students prior to the formal peer-review process. This mentoring also can include the establishment of direct links between student-dominated local chapters of SCB in North America and in developing nations. Such links already have been developed between the Berkeley, California and Kenya-based East Africa chapters, providing a blueprint for how exchange of information, advice, and resources can aid the professional development of both groups of students.

An additional area in which the Section's SAC can focus efforts is encouragement of student participation at Section meetings. With the possible development of a regional meeting in North America in 2007, there is an obvious need to ensure that a diversity of student conservationists is able to attend and, hopefully, present. Such meetings can act as a catalyst in student development, as well as facilitating further linkage of student groups.

These ideas are examples of the many ways in which student involvement in SCB can be improved. The North America SAC currently is under development. The committee's direction depends on the specific needs of students in the region. We now seek committee members. The committee will include a core group of individuals who can commit the time and energy needed to make this project a success (although we understand that everyone has other professional commitments). We also would like to identify a larger group of individuals who are able to offer input on specific projects, for example mentoring.

The committee as a whole has the potential to greatly improve the involvement of students in SCB, and the strength of the Society in general. If you would like to become involved, or have any questions or suggestions, please contact Dave Patrick (David.Patrick@umit.maine.edu).

David Patrick and Elizabeth Harper, Interim co-chairs, North America Section Student Affairs Committee

FRESHWATER WORKING GROUP

Freshwater-Oriented Symposia at the Annual Meeting

Look for the following symposia at the 2006 annual meeting: *Freshwater Invasive Species: A Double-Edged Sword* on Tuesday 27 June, *The Role of Recreational Fishers in Conservation and Management: Lessons from Freshwater Systems for Marine Practitioners* on the morning of Wednesday 28 June, and *A New Conservation Continuum: Connecting Land and Sea* on the afternoon of Wednesday 28 June. General

abstracts for the symposia and abstracts for individual presentations are available at the meeting Web site. Check the annual meeting program for other freshwater talks, and don't forget to look through the program of the Society for Conservation GIS meeting (being held concurrently with SCB's annual meeting) for more.

Members' Reception and Meeting

As in the past, the annual Freshwater Working Group members' meeting will be held during SCB's annual meeting. This year there will be a reception (with refreshments) and meeting 6:00–7:30 P.M. on Sunday 25 June. The location of the reception will be listed in the annual meeting program. Please plan to join us. In addition to socializing, your new officers and Board members will be introduced, and future priorities for the Working Group will be discussed.

Working Group Reorganization

The Interim Board completed the formulation of proposed Bylaws in early March and the Bylaws subsequently were approved by a vote of the members. Nominations were solicited for officers and Board members during April and elections will be open until the end of May. Please log on to the SCB Web site, www.conbio.org, and cast your vote.

Ken Vance-Borland

SOCIAL SCIENCE WORKING GROUP

Launch of Redesigned Web site

Thanks to the efforts of Sheri Stephanson (SSWG Communications Committee) and Kat Powers (SCB Executive Office), the new SSWG Web site is up and running. Bookmark our home page, www.conbio.org/workinggroups/sswg/, and visit the site to learn more about who we are and what we do.

We have redesigned the site to achieve three primary goals.

1. Frame our primary objectives and organizational structure
2. Provide venues for members to contribute to SSWG
3. Provide relevant information and access to SSWG products

Also visit the Jobs page at www.conbio.org/Jobs/filter.cfm?groupid=9, which is full of position announcements for conservation social scientists.

The redesigned Web site serves as a common framework to guide our Working Group's activities. It will evolve continually as our committees produce and post their work, so check frequently for updates.

Social Science Represented Strongly in San Jose

Thanks to close coordination between the SSWG and the Steering Committee, social sciences will be well represented at the 2006 annual meeting. Eleven symposia, workshops, and

organized discussions related to social sciences are scheduled, in addition to many contributed oral sessions and posters. Visit www.ConservationBiology.org/2006/SSWG.cfm for more information. Many thanks to Rich Wallace, SSWG Program Committee Chair, for his outreach and organizational efforts.

Elections

The SSWG soon will hold elections for four positions on the Board. The positions to be filled are political science representative, economics representative, and two at large representatives, one of which will be a student. Elections will take place in late April and early May, with elected individuals taking office following the 2006 annual meeting. All Working Group members will receive an email when elections open. Make your voice heard—VOTE!

Graduate Student Toolkit

The SSWG Student Affairs Committee is developing a toolkit for graduate students interested in cross-disciplinary conservation research. The toolkit will include techniques for integrating social and natural sciences into cohesive project design, cultivating partnerships in multiple academic departments, locating funding for multidisciplinary projects, and publishing the results.

The Student Affairs Committee seeks input from those with experience in both natural and social sciences. We need to ascertain which strategies work and how SSWG can connect conservation practitioners from diverse backgrounds. We aim to present a preliminary draft of this toolkit at the 2006 annual meeting, so please contact us as soon as possible. For more information contact Jen Shaffer (jshaffer@uga.edu), acting Student Affairs Committee Chair.

Conservation Social Science Toolkit

The SSWG Conservation Committee, led by Diane Russell, is developing a conservation social science toolkit. This toolkit is designed to help conservation practitioners by providing them with a guide to the range of social science tools and approaches that can strengthen conservation policy and practice. The committee is creating a product that is useful as well as robust, while building on earlier compilations. Currently the toolkit is oriented toward such key conservation questions and concerns as improving local livelihoods, land-use choice and change, affecting policy changes, understanding and influencing markets, threat identification, monitoring and mitigation, community-level dynamics, building trust and confidence, and building on and integrating local knowledge and building constituencies for a conservation movement. In each case we are collecting materials that describe the broader context and theory as well as specific tools. We aim to complete the toolkit by the 2006 annual meeting.

SSWG seeks the broadest possible disciplinary representation. The toolkit will contain contributions from all social science disciplines, so don't hesitate to contribute. If you are willing to volunteer some time to help us compile the toolkit, or have any

suggestions, please contact us. To contribute to the toolkit, contact Diane Russell (dirussell@usaid.gov), Conservation Committee Chair.

SSWG Board Member Presents a Panel at the American Association of Geographers Conference

William Forbes, Geography Representative on the SSWG Board, organized and chaired a panel discussion on 9 March at the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Chicago, Illinois, USA. The panel addressed how geography as a social science can help resolve biodiversity and endangered species issues around the globe.

Panelists included Mike Mascia (World Wildlife Fund; SSWG President), Chris Sneddon (Dartmouth College), Lisa Campbell (Duke University), Kathleen McAfee (University of California–Berkeley), Andrew Millington (Texas A&M University), Robert Ford (Loma Linda University), Barry Solomon (Michigan Technological University), Mikhail Blinnikov (St. Cloud State University), Michael Steinberg (University of Hawaii), J. Anthony Abbott (Stetson University), and John Gallo (University of California–Santa Barbara).

Panelists and audience members participated in discussions on funding, interdisciplinary work, political ecology, and methodology. The audience included several prominent geographers working on the integration of social issues and biodiversity conservation such as Karl Zimmerer (University of Wisconsin), Diane Rocheleau (Clark University), and Brian Child (University of Florida). Forbes and the SSWG Program Committee are currently developing follow-up sessions for the 2007 Association of American Geographers meeting in San Francisco and the 2008 SCB meeting in Tennessee.

Nejem Raheem

Donations to SCB promote the science of conservation biology and protect the diversity of life on Earth

- Donate appreciated stocks, bonds, or mutual funds. If you donate equities owned more than a year, you can avoid tax on the capital gains and reduce income tax by deducting the fair market value as a charitable contribution.
- Make a bequest to SCB in your will. A bequest may reduce taxes on your estate.

Please send donations to
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Social Science, from page 1

Conservation social science is currently emerging as a recognized field of study, although several social science disciplines have long traditions of conservation-relevant research. Anthropology, economics, human geography, political science, psychology, and sociology are the most commonly recognized social science disciplines, although some also include history, legal studies, and other disciplines within the social sciences. Each discipline has developed its own term(s) to describe its branch(es) of conservation social science, including

- Environmental or ecological anthropology
- Environmental, natural resource, or ecological economics
- Environmental or conservation geography
- Environmental politics and policy
- Environmental or conservation psychology
- Environmental sociology
- Environmental history

Most general social science professional societies have established formal working groups or sections focusing on environmental or conservation issues; some disciplines have even established separate conservation-oriented professional societies.

Conservation social scientists (like all conservation scientists) study a variety of conservation-relevant research questions, at a variety of scales, using a variety of methods. Common research topics include conservation attitudes, beliefs, and values; cultural traditions and norms; resource use patterns; economic valuation of ecosystem goods and services; natural resource governance; and environmental social movements. In investigating these issues and others, social scientists use diverse research designs (e.g., controlled experiments, comparative case studies, surveys) to gather quantitative and qualitative information through a wide array of data collection methods, including direct observation, interviews, text analysis, participatory mapping, and remote sensing.

Conservation social *science*, of course, is distinct from social *policy* and social *wellbeing*. Like all science, conservation

social science attempts to develop a richer understanding of how the world works through systematic and rigorous inquiry. Social policy, by contrast, is a specific course of action established by decision-makers (often politicians, but not necessarily so) to achieve a particular set of outcomes. Social wellbeing is the state or condition of human welfare in a particular place or among a particular group of people. Conservation social scientists study both social policy and social wellbeing, but understanding these phenomena (science) is distinct from deciding what should be done (policy). Thus, integrating social science into conservation policy remains a challenge. Fortunately, some conservation social scientists study the role of science in the policy process, so there is a scientific foundation for improving the effectiveness of science in conservation policy.

Conservation social scientists can make particularly critical contributions to conservation policy and practice in three areas. First, *where* should the conservation community focus its efforts? Conservation biologists obviously have done tremendous work to determine the distribution and abundance of rare and threatened species and ecosystems; conservation social scientists can enhance these efforts, for example, by identifying socially significant elements of landscapes (e.g., through valuation of ecosystem services); “enabling environments” for conservation (e.g., sacred forests); and “policy windows” for conservation action. Second, *how* should the conservation community design and implement its conservation interventions? A diverse array of conservation strategies exist, but

conservation social scientists can help to identify what strategies will work best in a given context, help make existing strategies more effective (e.g., enhancing compliance with protected area regulations), and identify and develop novel, complementary strategies (e.g., the 21st century equivalent of ecolabeling). The third broad area where conservation social science can contribute is to help answer the question, “*What are the impacts of our conservation interventions?*” Documenting and rigorously evaluating the social and biological impacts (positive and negative) of our conservation interventions can help the conservation community learn from experience, replicate success, and initiate the science-based reforms necessary for socially and ecologically sustainable biodiversity conservation.

For more information about SCB’s Social Science Working Group, please visit www.conbio.org/WorkingGroups/SSWG/

The following papers provide brief introductions to some of the conservation social sciences.

- Mascia, M.B., J.P. Brosius, T.A. Dobson, B.C. Forbes, L. Horowitz, M.A. McKean, and N.J. Turner. 2003. Conservation and the social sciences. *Conservation Biology* 17:629–630.
- Orlove, B.S. and S.B. Brush. 1996. Anthropology and the conservation of biodiversity. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25:329–352.
- Armsworth, P.R. and J.E. Roughgarden. 2001. An invitation to ecological economics. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* 18:229–234.
- Saunders, C.D. 2003. The emerging field of conservation psychology. *Human Ecology Review* 10:137–149.

Mike Mascia

MEMBERS’ MEETING AND RECEPTION

The annual SCB Members’ Meeting will be held from 4:00 to 6:00 P.M. on Tuesday, 27 June during the 2006 annual meeting. This is your best opportunity to learn about SCB’s objectives, initiatives, and activities—and to ensure they reflect your interests and priorities.

Please join SCB’s Board of Governors, editors of SCB’s publications, Executive Office staff, and fellow members from around the world for this brief, informative, and participatory event. No concurrent sessions are scheduled during this time.

Pimm, from page 1

with the date, the time, and location. At least one Cape Sable sparrow survives.

Much of what I do every day is quite ordinary for an academic. I teach students, mentor graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, sit on department and university committees, and write papers with a wonderful slate of students and colleagues worldwide. What Sonny Bass and I are doing in Everglades National Park before sunrise is not ordinary. Neither is how I spent much of last week. I was getting lost in various U.S. Senate buildings awaiting the chance to meet senators and their staffs to deliver a letter signed by 6000 scientists—likely many of you who are reading this—on the Endangered Species Act.

I'm hugely honored and flattered to receive SCB's 2006 Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award because it notices that what I've done isn't—as yet—ordinary for an academic. It should be.

I once promised myself I would never work in Hawai'i. Surely, the proper places to do ecology were those where humans trod lightly, if at all. How could one understand how nature worked where many of the species—life's cogs and wheels—were already missing? At a 1976 meeting in San Francisco, the food service was appallingly slow—you've been to meetings like that, right? As we both waited 45 minutes for a tasteless hamburger, Charlie van Riper persuaded me to visit Hawai'i. I did, and we used my week there to write a grant proposal for work on the i'iwi, a species extinct on some islands and much reduced on the others. That grant, awarded by Tom Lovejoy at the World Wildlife Fund, supported a six-month field trip.

My daily experiences there tortured me. I knew that thirty years later, that's 2008—papers in good journals would not prevent the stinging question, "What were you doing in Hawai'i while all those species were going extinct?" "Writing erudite papers" was manifestly not a sufficient answer; only "Doing something to prevent extinction" was acceptable. The fieldwork taught me something about why some species are vulnerable and others less so, so I understood that science could make a difference. More than any experience later in my life, Hawai'i taught me that science had an obligation to do so.

I had no idea what to call that work. In the early 1980s, Michael Soulé invited me to a meeting in Michigan. This meeting and SCB's founding in 1985 gave a name to what we do: conservation biology. It also embodied Michael's extraordinary vision that it was to be very much more than just biology. We must understand Bryan Norton's philosophy, Herman Daly's economics, Don Worster's history, and many other wonderful people whom I could have ignored totally if I had remained an academic ecologist. SCB's rapid growth is unequivocal proof that staying within an academic discipline is not sufficient to stem the irreversible loss of biodiversity.

My first of five points is that the task of making biodiversity conservation ordinary is not complete. SCB is still heavily

North American. Our leaders show an admirable commitment to become more international and it's essential that we support them. Meetings in Brazil in 2005 and South Africa in 2007 are a wonderful start. The ultimate goal must be to provide a home for everyone who shares the conservation mission, wherever they live, whatever their job titles.

My second point is that I could not have started when and where I did were it not for that initial grant. Precious few grants put would-be conservation professionals into the trenches where they will learn their craft. Much of my time goes toward finding funds for students' first forays into practical conservation. Like you, my frequent flyer miles support several of my international programs. Their location looks suspiciously like the route map for Delta Airlines. We urgently need more small grants programs.

In the late 1980s, National Audubon asked me to be on a committee to examine a dispute between the U.S. Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service over plans for expanding Everglades National Park. Promised "long hours, no money, and no academic reward," I naturally accepted, expecting to invest weeks, but not a career. In the Park, I first heard Federalish, the strange language spoken by federal employees. I'm now so proficient that "A section 7 consultation on the planned CSOP and the present IOP and ISOP, representing USACE's RPAs in response to the service's BO" seems a perfectly clear description of how Sonny Bass and I spent Thursday.

Stranger still was the experience of flying with Marty Fleming across the Everglades. Until then, I had never thought about ecological processes at the scale of tens of thousands of square kilometers. Marty did so every day, and with extraordinary clarity. The subsequent invitation to work in the Everglades meant that since 1992 Bass and I have watched most April sunrises from a helicopter. Everglades' problems promised much work, annual grey literature reports, few published papers, and work that refuses to be pigeonholed into recognizable sub-disciplines of ecology or anything else. What a privilege it has been to work on them!

My third point is that one should never say "no" to a chance to work on world-class conservation problems. More than that: seek such opportunities vigorously. Journals rarely capture any of the bare-knuckle conflicts I experience in trying to solve conservation problems. Published papers and academic tradition aren't the place to determine a conservationist's future. I was 40 before I understood that one should actively seek trouble and most likely find it where people clash with sensitive ecosystems and threatened species. I fret that even conservation journals have too many papers about the tools we know how to use, rather than the tools we need to use. The solution is to find tough problems and solve them using whatever tools are needed while admitting the near-certainty that one lacks them.

I next went looking for trouble, worried by the fact that I was doing conservation in a well-funded national park in the richest country in the world, which isn't exactly typical. My group's research suggested the coastal forests of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil held more threatened species than anywhere in the Americas.

For a decade, we've worked with Maria-Alice Alves at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, helping her map priorities for conservation. Trouble also found me in the form of Rudi van Aarde, who suggested a visit to the University of Pretoria, where I now have my secondary appointment.

These programs require constant attention, but above all, they require an invitation. I can't imagine metaphorically parachuting into some country and announcing, "I'm a conservation professional who will now solve your problems." My group has worked internationally because we've found ways to be useful to colleagues in countries that face serious conservation challenges. Again, it's a huge privilege to do so.

My fourth point is that developing conservation programs in biodiversity-rich countries is difficult, but that cannot be an excuse. I'd feel foolish accepting this award if my students and I worked only in the United States. We have important conservation issues, but far more are in developing countries.

Three years ago, Steve Schneider wrote much of I might say about communicating science. By way of addendum: every academic has a responsibility to teach. There is no fine print in my Duke University contract to "teach only Duke students," no prohibition on informing the media, church congregations, and politicians about what we do.

So how does one approach politicians in Washington, D.C., or any other national capitol, suggesting how science should inform how they vote? There are many answers and most are a matter of just asking to meet with local, state, or national politicians. I know from innumerable questions that many find an initial approach difficult. My final point is that in the United States, staff in SCB's Executive Office dedicated to national policy issues should provide those answers. They should advise on the policy issues that matter to conservation and how we can influence them. If we do not do this now, how can we expect other nations to follow suit?

Stuart Pimm
Doris Duke Chair of Conservation Ecology
Nicholas School of the Environment and Earth Sciences
Duke University

Stuart Pimm received the 2006 Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award from the Society for Conservation Biology for his leadership in translating principles of conservation biology into real-world conservation. The award will be conferred on the evening of Saturday, 24 June at the 2006 annual meeting in San Jose, California.

Letter to the Editor: SCB and Sustainable Growth

The editorial Economic Growth, Biodiversity Conservation, and SCB [SCB Newsletter 12(4):10, 12] and responses [SCB Newsletter 13(1):1, 11–12] continues to stimulate discussion.

Dear Editor,

The recent exchange on sustainable growth highlights why conservation biology has failed to be relevant in today's society and to resource management issues. The need, or even the hope, we could or should maintain some sort of steady state economy is a complete fallacy. Any steady state in nature merely reflects too short a time frame on the part of the observer, and who can really advocate stopping economic development when half the world still lives on \$2 a day? Resource management decisions need to be based on better long term economic and social impacts. Environmentalists have failed to define long term impacts of decisions that are driven by short term gains for a select few. Conservationists will continue to be sidelined in the decision making processes until we drop the rhetoric about good growth versus bad growth and learn to more accurately identify costs and benefits to our and future generations.

The challenge is immense, but the stakes of not developing better decision making tool are even greater.

Daniel Evans
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BUILDING THE STRENGTH OF SCB CHAPTERS

As the number, strength, and influence of SCB chapters continues to increase, a global network is emerging, offering an amazing opportunity to increase SCB's reach and strengthen its voice for science-based approaches to conserving biodiversity worldwide. As the incoming Chapter Representative on the Board of Governors, I want to take a moment to introduce myself, offer a few comments on where we stand today, and solicit your ideas as we move toward strengthening links among chapters, with SCB's Regional Sections, and with our Executive Office. When I joined the board after the 2005 annual meeting, we had 22 active chapters, with several more beginning to organize. We now have 25 or 26, including new chapters in Argentina and China, and chapters are organizing in new locales as I write. It is an exciting time, full of potential. But it is important to recognize that while chapters can accomplish a great deal, they can be fragile. Each new effort is a start-up enterprise, dependent on the energy and enthusiasm of a few visionaries. These volunteer-based efforts can fade with time if not nurtured, as evidenced by 15–20 inactive chapters that need help and revitalization. It is my hope that over the coming year we can link all the chapters more directly, with each other and with the Sections and Executive Office, to build a stronger network for communication and coordinated efforts.

The time is right to consider how we might better link and support our local chapters. In 2005 the Board of Governors developed a new Strategic Plan; in 2006, we are beginning to implement the plan. By helping to develop an appropriate role for chapters, and a strong network anchored by the Executive Office, the Plan can move us toward a more integrated approach, with a stable institutional base for chapter members and activities. An integrated approach will allow chapters to draw on the most current scientific understanding and to build on the collective experience and wisdom of SCB members. It also will allow the chapters to play an appropriate role in SCB governance, adding diverse voices and perspectives on key scientific and SCB issues.

Part of this effort will involve bringing chapter members into our global society so we can grow and sustain this broad network of conservation scientists. Another part will require a simple and easy means of organizing chapter communications, perhaps using Web conferencing and other emerging low-cost or no-cost technologies. Most vital, however, is a clear vision of how a tighter global community of conservation scientists can advance our efforts so that they lead to real conservation achievements rather than becoming mired in procedural and organizational details. This is where I really can use your input. SCB chapters comprise a world of experience, and I would like to hear your thoughts and ideas about how we can most effectively incorporate chapters into the greater SCB envisioned in the Strategic Plan (available on the SCB web site). I will be representing chapters on the Board of Governors for three years and I hope that during that time, we can make significant progress toward strengthening communications and coordination to create a more powerful, global network for conservation biology.

Tom Sisk, Thomas.Sisk@nau.edu

SCB NETWORKING NIGHT • MONDAY, 26 JUNE, 8:00–11:00 P.M.

The local chapters of SCB will host a Networking Night during the 2006 annual meeting. Come for the live music, food, and drinks. Stay to meet conservation professionals from around the world. Who knows, you might decide to start your own chapter by the time you leave! All are welcome at this event. Tickets will be available at the SCB local chapters booth in the exhibition area at the annual meeting.

Announcements

Funding Available

The Dennis Raveling Scholarship for Waterfowl Research is awarded annually to a student(s) with a desire to pursue a career in waterfowl or wetlands ecology. Awards are based on the candidate's resolve, academic achievement, and project merit. Candidates must be pursuing an advanced degree in wildlife, zoology, botany, ecology, or another pertinent biological science. Applicants should submit a one-page proposal for an original research or management project and be prepared to submit a detailed project proposal if requested. Two awards will be given this year, one of US\$2000 and one of US\$1000. Along with the proposal, submit a resume, letter from a faculty member indicating willingness to sponsor the candidate and detailing any requirements (e.g., final report or thesis) for receiving university credit, and contact information for two references. Application deadline is 31 October 2006. Send applications to Nicole Berset, California Waterfowl Association, 4630 Northgate Blvd., Suite 150, Sacramento, CA 95834, USA, nicole_berset@calwaterfowl.org.

Educational Opportunity

Several times a year, including June 2006, the Smithsonian National Zoological Park's Conservation and Research Center in Front Royal, Virginia, USA offers Spanish-language introductory and advanced short courses in the use of GIS and remote sensing. The introductory course focuses on the application of GIS to monitoring and management of wildlife and forest vegetation. The advanced course provides step-by-step training in conducting a regional conservation assessment of critical conservation areas for an endangered species using GIS, satellite imagery, and landscape analysis. For more details, visit <http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/ConservationGIS/GIS%5Ftraining>.

Meetings

The Center For Ethics at the University of Montana–Missoula will offer an Environmental Ethics Institute, *Exploring the Landscapes of Environmental Thought*, in June and July 2006. The Institute will feature leading scholars in environmental ethics, philosophy, and environmental studies. Participants will be able to choose from three courses (Environmental Justice in Montana's Indian Country, Foundations of Environmental Thought, and How We Experience Nature: Environmental Aesthetics, U.S. & Japan), guided field trips, and public lectures and panel discussions. Courses begin online on 5 June and meet in Missoula in July. All field trips and evening events run will be held from 10–28 July. For complete information, visit www.umt.edu/ethics or contact The Center For Ethics at ethics@mso.umt.edu or 1 406 243-5744.

The 33rd annual Natural Areas Conference, *Stewards of the Old and New West*, will be held 20–23 September 2006 in Flagstaff, Arizona, USA. The meeting will be co-hosted by the National Park Service. The conference will examine whether traditional use and ranching activities can be sustained while preserving

natural areas and native biodiversity in the face of population growth and development. For details visit www.cpcesu.nau.edu/NAC2006/ or contact Program Chair John Vankat (vankatj1@muohio.edu).

Forging Collaboration Between Health and Ecology, a conference sponsored by the International EcoHealth Association, will be held 7–10 October 2006 in Madison, Wisconsin, USA. The deadline to submit abstracts is 15 May. For more information, visit www.ecohealth.net/Conference/site/ or contact conf2006@ecohealth.net.

An international conference on environmental flows will be held 3–6 September 2007 in Brisbane, Australia, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy and the 10th international Riversymposium. The conference will explore environmental flows from a science, policy, and management perspective. For more information visit www.riversymposium.com and www.nature.org/freshwaters or contact Dierdre Paterno Pai, dpaterno-pai@tnc.org, 1 303 541-0344.

SCB ELECTION RESULTS

The following individuals were elected to the Board of Governors in the 2006 general election. A total of 601 ballots were received. The new Board members will begin their three-year terms of office after the 2006 annual meeting.

Stuart Strahl, Botanical garden, zoological garden, public aquarium, or natural history museum
Mark Schwartz, University or college

Four positions will be open in the 2007 election

- President Elect
- Non-governmental organization
- Governmental agency
- Social sciences

As always, these positions are open to nominees from any country who are SCB members in good standing. Nominees must be willing to serve SCB by attending, generally at their own expense, all Board of Governors meetings during their two-year (President Elect, followed by two years as President) or three-year (all other governors) term of office. Board meetings occur at each annual meeting. They are scheduled on the day prior to the first day of scientific sessions and during the meeting (rarely conflicting with concurrent sessions). Another Board meeting is held in February or March (location varies). In addition, Board members are expected to be actively engaged in directing SCB through work with committees, Regional Sections, and local chapters.

Please send nominations, including the nomination category and complete contact information for the nominee, to Erica Fleishman (efleish@stanford.edu) or Deborah Jensen (deborah.jensen@zoo.org).

Will the Society for Conservation Biology Become Carbon-Neutral?

Climate scientists are unanimous in their judgment that human activities, especially emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, are altering Earth's climate in ways that will affect our lives profoundly. For instance, in this century global climate change may produce a one meter rise in sea level, which would put most of Bangladesh and some island nations, and much of the U.S. state of Florida, under sea level. In addition to these well-publicized direct impacts on humans, global climate change will have an enormous impact on biological diversity. For instance, in 2004 a team of conservation biologists at the University of Leeds concluded that under the most plausible projections of climate change, 15% to 37% of all land-based animals and plants may become extinct by 2050.

At SCB's 2006 annual meeting, the Board of Governors will discuss proposals to take responsibility for our carbon impacts. If we choose to become "carbon neutral," we will neutralize the effect of our greenhouse gas emissions so that our activities no longer contribute to global warming. Our two main options are emission avoidance (e.g., investing in solar energy projects that reduce fossil fuel consumption) and carbon sequestration (e.g., restoration of forests to degraded landscapes). For an organization like SCB, carbon sequestration is

particularly attractive if we can invest in restoration of the tropical forest ecosystems that harbor 50% of Earth's terrestrial biodiversity in < 7% of the planet's land area.

More than 95% of SCB's contribution to global warming derives from jet fuel burned to take people to our annual meeting. Each passenger on a fully-booked London–New York flight, for instance, is responsible for about 1.2 tons of carbon. The cost of offsetting the impact of an individual's flight to meeting is about US\$10–\$20, depending on flight distance and how the carbon is offset. Because we would want to offset carbon in a way that not only cleans the air but also benefits biological diversity directly, our costs may be towards the upper end of this range. Blackwell Publishing, the publisher of *Conservation Biology*, recently became the first major academic publisher to make its operations carbon-neutral. Although I am mildly embarrassed that our for-profit publisher and huge organizations like the World Bank became carbon-neutral before SCB, I am excited that SCB still has the opportunity to be a leader in this arena.

There are many issues to be resolved and many risks involved in carbon-offset investments. For instance, as the global

temperature increases, there is increasing risk that the trees in a reforestation project will burn or die. Also, we want to pay only for reforestation that would not otherwise have happened, and we don't want to reward land exploiters who would cynically destroy a forest for timber income and then get paid to replant. Similarly, SCB will want to invest in a botanically diverse forest rather than a monoculture that will not support most native species. Fortunately, the Kyoto protocol, public sentiment, and initiatives by the European Union and others have spurred the development of markets, expertise, consultants, and third-party certifiers that address these issues.

To provide input to the Board, you soon will receive an email inviting you to participate in a brief poll (no more than three multiple-choice questions, and an opportunity to comment) about your willingness to increase the price of meeting registration to make SCB annual meetings carbon-neutral. Please reflect on this issue. If you have time, visit a few Web sites on carbon-neutral initiatives. And when you receive an email on "carbon-neutral SCB," please take a minute to respond.

Paul Beier, SCB Secretary

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