



## What Should We Do to Do Conservation?

by Joel Berger

I attended the 2009 SCB meeting in Beijing and came away with both a sense of hope and images more troubling than normal. Despite the turbid air and crush of humanity, there was intensity in the eyes and hearts of many. Attendees younger than 40 years of age populated the audience; they reflected an eagerness to practice the twin mainstays of SCB—maintain what we have and restore what we've lost. Presentations were steeped in scientific methodology, findings were impressive, and there was a familiar rush to understand and to conserve both species and processes within the human milieu—all good so far.

So, why was I troubled? I was troubled in part because we conservation biologists need a few truly inspirational victories and in part because of my own—perhaps delusional—perception that we occasionally chase the wrong tail. We could go a long way by asking ourselves the “so what?” question. By this I mean

that we need to question why we do what we do. Science is one thing, successful conservation a different beast.

If sites for native biodiversity are gone, can we ever claim victory? If ecological processes vaporize, can we win? Have we rescued a species when we fail to conserve its migration? Can we feel good about doing science in the absence of site-specific conservation? Without inspiration, without education, without attitude change and lacking policy adjudication, victories will be sparse. Even if we have each of the above, neither vigilance nor enforcement must ever wane. Why? The simple answer is that threats will never vanish. After all, how many times and in how many countries have we seen a de-gazetting of protected



Musk oxen (*Ovibos moschatus*) were reintroduced to historic ranges in the 1970s; these animals are near the Chukchi Sea in arctic Alaska. Photograph by Joel Berger.

areas, a weakening of policy, a failure to care because human values change or because precious oil is next door or below the surface?

So, what is the wrong tail we mistakenly chase? I think it's climate change.

see **Berger**, page 5

## When I'm Sixty-Four

*Will you still need me, will you still feed me,  
When I'm sixty-four?*

John Lennon and Paul McCartney, 1967

This is the 64th issue of *Society for Conservation Biology Newsletter*, and my 64th and last as its editor. On 1 January 2010, Sharon Collinge will become editor of the newsletter (see page 3), while I will succeed Gary Meffe as editor in chief of *Conservation Biology*. Gary has served as editor of the journal for a remarkable 12 years, following Reed Noss (1993–1997) and founding editor David Ehrenfeld (1987–1993). The SCB community owes Gary tremendous thanks, and hopes his subsequent work will bring many rewards and joy.

The newsletter was initiated as a means to deliver news of the society independent of the journal. This primarily was a business decision that saved high-value pages in the journal for peer-reviewed articles. Peter Brussard, then president of SCB, also regarded the newsletter as a platform for debating controversial issues affecting the science and practice of conservation.

The function of the newsletter largely has not changed. Yet technology and communication have changed considerably, and thus it may be appropriate to question the relevance and

delivery of this publication. In 1993, the U.S. National Center for Supercomputing Applications was just starting to develop Mosaic, one of the earliest Internet browsers. Email was becoming popular in academia, but had not yet been adopted widely by the public. Use of attachments, collaborative word-processing features like track changes, and portable document format (PDF) was several years in the future.

The Board of Governors and I have worked to accommodate advances in electronic communication while not presuming that all of SCB's members can or choose to use the latest technology. For example, the newsletter has been available in PDF since late 2001, yet members still can elect to receive a paper copy by mail. But perhaps it has become unnecessary to offer both electronic and paper formats, and perhaps a website is sufficient for delivering information about SCB's global meeting, policy efforts, and other activities. I hope that the editorial transition will encourage SCB's leadership and members to give these issues careful and creative thought. As we move to issue 65 and beyond, do we still need the newsletter? Will you still feed it with your news and ideas? How and why should the newsletter change to reflect shifts in our society and society at large?

see **Sixty-four**, page 3

## In Memory • Simon Thirgood

Professor Simon Thirgood, renowned conservation biologist and conservationist, was killed on 30 August 2009 when a building collapsed in a storm in northern Ethiopia. His death was tragic, unexpected, and untimely (he was just 46), but he packed a lot into his life and his multiple contributions to conservation will leave an enduring legacy.

Born in Liberia and raised in Canada, Simon studied zoology at the University of Aberdeen before completing a Ph.D. on fallow deer mating strategies at Southampton University, and a post-doc at Cambridge on black lechwe lekking in Zambia. Rather than pursuing an academic career in behavioral ecology, however, Simon moved into conservation and wildlife management, working for Birdlife International and then the Game Conservancy Trust (now the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust). At the Conservancy, Simon developed, in collaboration with Steve Redpath, some of his best-known work on human–wildlife conflicts resulting from hen harrier predation on red grouse on Scottish moorlands. This body of work changed both the policy and practice of conservation management of raptors and gamebirds, and is now used as a case study to illustrate how best to integrate good science into policy and management. It was while working at the Game Conservancy that Simon started to work closely with Karen Laurenson, a disease ecologist newly returned from Africa, whom he later married.



Despite his love of the Scottish mountains, Simon missed Africa. When Karen's work took her to the Ethiopian highlands, Simon soon started accompanying her, and began research on the conservation and ecology of wildlife in the region. A later move to the Centre for Conservation Science at the University of Stirling allowed him the flexibility to expand his work in Africa, and he also started supervising the first of many African post-graduate students. In 2003, now with a young family, Simon and Karen moved back to Africa full-time, where they managed projects Africa-wide for Frankfurt Zoological Society from a base in the middle of Serengeti National Park in Tanzania. Simon became a popular figure in the small Serengeti community, maintaining good humor in the face of the many challenges, and providing a welcoming wee dram in times of adversity. During this time, Simon became increasingly concerned with the need for capacity development and training in conservation science in the countries where he worked. However, although they loved their life in Serengeti, raising children in the middle of one of the largest wilderness areas in Africa was not without its difficulties, and the need for schools brought the family back to their beloved Scotland, where Simon became Head of Ecology at the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute in Aberdeen.

Simon was committed to achieving conservation through good science, and accumulated an impressive publication record, made more remarkable since most of his career was

spent outside the university system. He was intolerant of self-importance, and was delighted when his scholarly book on resolving conflicts between people and wildlife (jointly edited with RW) inexplicably won an award for children's literature. Simon was something of a fixture at SCB annual meetings, usually running a workshop or symposium, and always keen to continue discussions in whichever bar stayed open latest. A keen outdoorsman, Simon had a well-developed sense of fun, which he applied to work as well as pleasure, and he revelled in the practical side of conservation. Always an excellent communicator, he was able to make complex information easily accessible, skills that made him popular with students. In fact,

so accomplished were his communication skills that he once managed to communicate nonstop for two full days on a long journey over bad roads from Tanzania's Rubondo Island to Serengeti.

In his recent projects, Simon started to address the need for development of sustainable capacity within African wildlife institutions. He recognized that developing country staff face considerable obstacles in accessing international funding and conducting scientific research, and saw capacity development in conservation science as crucial to address these challenges. From his own experience, he believed trained African conservation scientists were key to ensuring more effective conservation policies and management. He established major capacity development projects within the Tanzania Wildlife

Research Institute and the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, and generously gave his time and support to many promising scientists working within these institutions. Thanks to Simon's efforts, the world has better tools to resolve conflicts between people and wildlife, better information to manage uplands, and better-trained conservation biologists in Britain and Africa. It is a great loss to conservation that we can no longer benefit from his unique blend of sound science, straightforward communication, and enthusiasm.

At the time of his death, Simon was working on a project, funded by the UK's Darwin Initiative, to build capacity for biodiversity conservation in the highlands of Ethiopia. Simon died while doing one of the things he loved: sitting by a fireside in the mountains, swapping stories with an African colleague who was also a long time friend. Others that he loved—particularly his wife, Karen, and daughters Pippa and Katie—are left behind. Hopefully, through his efforts, the landscapes and wildlife to which he dedicated his life's work will be left behind for many years to come.

In lasting memory.

*Rosie Woodroffe & Sarah Durant, Institute of Zoology, London*

In Simon's memory, a scholarship has been established for children in Bale Mountains National Park, Ethiopia to attend a local secondary school. Donations are being channeled via the Born Free Foundation, [www.justgiving.com/Simon-Thirgood](http://www.justgiving.com/Simon-Thirgood)

Sixty-four, from page 1

The fundamental challenges of our profession have not kept pace with changes in the mechanisms by which we exchange science and inform management and policy. On page 1, Joel Berger, the 2009 recipient of SCB's Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award, reflects powerfully on implementation of conservation action. Joel was featured on the front page of this newsletter 63 issues ago, when Peter Brussard seized on Joel and Carol Cunningham's ejection from Namibia to comment on the gap between science and its application by resource agencies. Pete's column, reprinted in full on page 4, illustrates starkly that our struggles to reach decision-makers and to ensure scientific integrity are neither new nor particular to a given set of political leaders. Rather than despairing, I find comfort in Aldo Leopold's reminder that the important thing is not necessarily to achieve harmony with our lands, waters, and fellow citizens, but to strive to achieve that harmony.

As I conclude my tenure, I owe considerable thanks to many people. Kathy Switky and Ellen Main taught me the fundamentals of editing. Peter Brussard offered me a remarkable opportunity, and subsequent presidents and Boards of Governors gave me their vote of confidence. Alan Thornhill has been a steadfast information provider, technical advisor, and fact checker. DynaGraphic Printing in Reno, Nevada has printed each and every issue of the newsletter. Their kind and expert team walked me through a spectacular meltdown of desktop publishing software, shipped proofs to a field camp in central Nevada, and helped SCB navigate byzantine regulations of the U.S. Postal Service. Thanks especially to Bill and Tim. And not least, thanks to all of you who have contributed to the newsletter: presidents, board members, staff, award winners, correspondents from sections and working groups, meeting organizers, and members who capitalized on the newsletter to air opinions and share opportunities. You have been a consistent source of inspiration and friendship.

I look forward to seeing what the newsletter becomes. Please join me in welcoming Sharon Collinge and wishing her all the best as editor.

*Erica Fleishman*  
Editor, 1994–2009

## Sharon Collinge becomes Newsletter Editor

On 1 January 2010, Sharon Collinge will become editor of *Society for Conservation Biology Newsletter*.

Sharon Collinge attended her first SCB meeting in 1990, which deeply influenced her decision to embark on a career in conservation biology. She earned a doctorate in landscape ecology from Harvard University in 1995, and in 1998 became an assistant professor of biology and environmental studies at the University of Colorado–Boulder. Sharon was named a 2004 Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellow in recognition of her outstanding leadership ability and desire to communicate scientific issues beyond academic audiences. She currently teaches courses in conservation biology, restoration ecology, and environmental science, and mentors students in research and career development in these fields.

Sharon's research centers on how land-use changes in the grasslands of the American west affect the survival and persistence of native plants and animals. She studies how landscape modification influences the emergence of infectious diseases, specifically the impacts of urbanization on plague outbreaks in prairie dogs. Her work also integrates ecological science with restoration of endangered vernal pool species and ecosystems in California. Sharon's newly published book, *Ecology of Fragmented Landscapes*, synthesizes research on the ecological consequences of habitat loss and fragmentation and reviews ways in which science can inform ecological restoration and conservation planning.

Sharon is engaged in interdisciplinary research, teaching, and outreach. She is an active participant in the University of Colorado's Center for the American West, a collaborative group that integrates perspectives from the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences to inform Westerners about public policy. Sharon directs the graduate program in Environmental Studies at her university, served a term as Member at Large for the Ecological Society of America, and has served as a delegate and faculty resource person for the Organization for Tropical Studies. She provides scientific advice for local and national non-profit organizations on conservation and restoration issues and for government agencies on matters related to protection of endangered species and their habitats.



## Science and Conservation Agencies: Still an Uneasy Partnership

In February of this year, SCB member Joel Berger and his wife and research associate Carol Cunningham left the U.S. for Namibia, where they had been studying black rhinos for the past three years. Their research goals included evaluating the effects of “dehorning” as a conservation measure and providing comparative data on reproduction in horned and dehorned rhinos. In March, Berger and Cunningham were back in the U.S., their research permits not renewed and their money frozen by the Namibian government. The reason? Their data, published in the journal *Science* (Volume 263:1241–1242, 1994), showed that dehorned rhinos were unable to protect their young from predators and suggested that dehorning might not be the most prudent conservation policy.

Namibian officials in the ministry of Wildlife, Conservation, and Tourism (WCT) have stated that the reason for these actions was that Berger and Cunningham’s research was “abusive and non-objective.” In truth, their research was neither but rather yielded results that cast doubt on the wisdom of an established policy, an event that all too often results in strong negative reactions by resource management agencies against individual scientists or even research in general. Namibia is hardly alone in this respect; for example, stories abound of U.S. agencies muzzling, transferring, or dismissing scientists whose research results conflict with official policy.

Incidents like these should be of great concern to the SCB, since one of our major goals is to increase the amount and quality of scientific input into conservation decisions. Achieving this goal involves, among other things, increasing agency understanding of the role of science in policy decisions and clarifying the obligations of both scientists and managers in this process. Such as understanding rests on three points.

First, resource management agencies need high-quality scientific advice. All such agencies are faced with the enormous challenge of reconciling the conflicting demands of short-term expediency with long-term sustainability. And, in a rapidly changing world, long-term problems are going to arrive much sooner than later. At the least, science can provide agencies with an early-warning system so they will be better prepared to meet these challenges.

Second, agencies need to ensure that scientific research that bears on policy decisions is of high quality. How can this be evaluated, particularly by agencies that lack adequate expertise in the relevant disciplines? Publications provide a good first cut. Quality science is usually published in reputable journals, and most peer-reviewed articles have already undergone a critical quality-assessment procedure. On the other hand, projects which disappear into file drawers unpublished often are not of particularly high quality. These considerations lead to the suggestion that scientists with strong publication records are likely to be better researchers than those who publish rarely. However, many good studies have not yet been published, so a second cut at quality assessment can come from looking at the methodology employed. Were reasonable hypotheses tested?

Were observations, measurements, or experiments adequately controlled and replicated, and were the results analyzed by valid statistical procedures? Or, does the research seem to have been designed to produce a desired result? The source of funding for the research can provide another index of its quality. Obtaining funding from many sources, such as the U.S. National Science Foundation, is a competitive and stringently peer-reviewed process. Thus, research that has attracted significant funding from such sources is likely to be of high quality.



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Third, agencies need to understand the relationship between research results and policy. Rather than reacting negatively to high-quality research that challenges the wisdom of existing policies, agencies should be pleased to receive this information in a timely manner, since any problems generated by current policy are likely to get much worse as time goes on. Nevertheless, once the information is received, agencies are usually free to choose either to abandon or modify the current policy or continue to follow it because of other considerations.

How does the Berger / Cunningham affair stack up against these points? With regard to the first, rhino dehorning as a conservation policy is clearly an issue that requires sound scientific input if it is to succeed. Second, Berger and Cunningham’s research is likely of sufficiently high quality to bear significantly on this policy. Both are well-known investigators who have published two major books and numerous articles on large mammal ecology and conservation. Their rhino research was supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation, the Smithsonian Institution, the New York Zoological Society, World Wildlife Fund, National Geographic Society, Frankfurt Zoological Society (Germany), Hasselblad Foundation (Sweden), Rhino Rescue Ltd., and the American Philosophical Society—hardly a poorly conceived, fly-by-night project. They used accepted methodology, and while their sample sizes were necessarily small (rhinos are now quite rare), their results were statistically valid. Finally, the study was published in a first-rate, rigorously peer-reviewed journal.

Berger, from page 1

Despite my apparent bluster on this, I'm thoroughly delighted that climate change is receiving its deserved recognition for its over-arching threat to global society. Yet, I still fret about our path forward. Do we truly need another 5, 10, or 20 more studies to complement the volume already demonstrating its operation with respect to biodiversity? Indubitably, insights are critical at so many levels that they are hard to count, and I myself have support for projects that deal thematically with climate and conservation. Nevertheless, I am reminded of the real difference between academic pursuit and on-the-ground reality.

Some 25 years ago, as our discipline was surging ahead, there was great zest to protect genetic diversity in small populations. How many individuals were needed and over how many future generations? Africa's rhinos were being systematically slaughtered, and much concern focused on how many rhino generations of x and y abundance were needed to retain z levels of diversity. I was in meetings at a remote field site in Namibia in the 1990s when brash poachers hit. Rangers and local biologists were called away from our self-proclaimed assembly of high importance because this poaching incursion was occurring at that moment. They left with armed guards. While we worried about population sizes for future posterity and tactics for long-term conservation, rhinos were actively being slaughtered. We Americans had the luxury to muse about rhinos some 50 generations ahead. At the same time, Africans had lost more than 95% of their black rhinos in three generations. Although the study of genetics is such a no-brainer it needs no defense, if we wish to do conservation we need rhinos around.

What's my point? There are two. First, as most rational people know, it's important we act on climate change. Second,

conservation needs are urgent throughout most of the world. I am not suggesting that climate change studies are unnecessary. I only ask when do we hit a point when we say how do we implement conservation actions to address our findings?

As the world changes, so do our tactics. Climate change is here just as is the extinction crisis. While a few pundits still ridicule these points, we still race to document more and more. There are many ways to advance conservation—research is of course but one. Education is another. There are countless others—top-down, bottom-up, in situ, ex situ. Site-based conservation may (or may not) be passé because with climate change, species distributions move. But, to those young and eager to become involved, whether in Asia, North America, or beyond, might I suggest lending your expertise to local management agencies. The immediate threats to keeping things on the ground are daunting. Help can come in many forms—shaping plans to mitigate impacts when a new dam, a new road, a new wind farm is proposed. This may not be the stuff of publication in *Conservation Biology* or *Conservation Letters* or *Science* or *Nature*, but it is of the sort that might make a difference.

As you read this and if you are less than 40, please ask yourself: when I look back some 20 years from now, what do I want my contribution to have been?

Joel Berger received SCB's 2009 Edward T. LaRoe III Memorial Award. Berger was honored for his extraordinary leadership toward conservation of migration corridors and predator-prey dynamics and for shaping policy with strong science. He is well-known for his work across Africa, Asia, Alaska, and other regions of North America, and for working in close collaboration with numerous institutions and governments.

How should Berger and Cunningham's research have influenced the Namibian government's dehorning policy? Because they had filed detailed annual progress reports, their results were well known to the WCT prior to the publication of the *Science* article. In fact, their most recent report, submitted in July 1993, contained sections almost identical to that article. Clearly, Namibia felt no obligation to change its dehorning policy as the progress reports came in, nor does the country have any obligation to change its policy now. A prudent course would be to weigh the benefits of whatever short-term gains are realized from dehorning against the risk of losing long-term sustainability of the resource. The final decision, of course, is Namibia's. However, taking sanctions against reputable scientists whose results do not support this policy casts a severe chill on the relationship between science and management worldwide.

Peter F. Brussard

Reprinted from Society for Conservation Biology Newsletter 1(2):1 (May 1994).

## Please renew your SCB membership

It is SCB's membership renewal season. If you haven't already renewed your membership, please do so now. Simply go to SCB's website, [www.conbio.org](http://www.conbio.org), login with your member identification number (a lookup tool is provided if you do not recall your number), and choose the "renew" link on your member homepage. If your membership has lapsed, our new membership system will prompt you to renew, and if you pay with a credit card, you will have immediate access to all your membership benefits. Please renew promptly so we need not send, and you need not receive, many reminders!

You may have noticed we have been striving to convert to a new membership system this year. We faced diverse challenges, from our original vendor suddenly going out of business to major mail delivery problems. But we found a new vendor, created a temporary system to keep you online, solved several problems with the U.S. Postal Service, and are now proud to announce that the new system is online and close to full functionality. We are extraordinarily grateful for your patience. The new system will integrate many services that SCB provides and make your membership even more useful than before.

## News and Events in the Humanities

In September 2009, the MacArthur Foundation awarded Yale ornithologist Richard Prum one of their generous 5-year Fellowships. An evolutionary ornithologist who has studied the development and evolution of feathers, including those of dinosaurs, Prum knows how he'll spend the windfall. Prum's new research, which he cheerfully admits is "pretty out there," explores incarnations of the arts within evolutionary processes. "In particular, I'm interested in aesthetics, the connection between sexual selection as it occurs in birds, and bird plumage, and bird song and the arts, generally, or what we understand as the arts. I'm talking about the commonalities between the process of the evolution of ornament in nature and the sort of aesthetic process we see in human arts and whether those processes are a lot more similar than we realize." ([loe.org/shows/shows.htm?programID=09-P13-00040#feature7](http://loe.org/shows/shows.htm?programID=09-P13-00040#feature7)).

Concomitantly, some university-affiliated programs explore intersections of ecology and arts practices. Among them is Oregon State University's Spring Creek Project ([springcreek.oregonstate.edu/](http://springcreek.oregonstate.edu/)), whose "Long-Term Ecological Reflections" supports creative writers-in-residence at the H.J. Andrews Experimental Forest in Oregon's central Cascade Range ([andrewsforest.oregonstate.edu/](http://andrewsforest.oregonstate.edu/)). Much of the scientific work at H.J. Andrews Forest is concentrated on analysis of forest and stream ecosystem dynamics, as part of the U.S. National Science Foundation's Long Term Ecological Research program. Spring Creek's Long-Term Reflections Program, itself intended to continue for two hundred years, focuses on extending human understanding of this forest's changes over time through writers' projects drawing on and correlating literary and scientific knowledge.

No strangers to long-term perspectives on science, the History of Science Society (HSS), founded in 1924, and today with about 3000 members worldwide, fosters interest and scholarly research in the history of science and its social and cultural relations. The society's 2009 annual meeting takes place 19–22 November in Phoenix, Arizona. The meeting program is available at [www.hssonline.org/](http://www.hssonline.org/). HSS also posts links to announcements and calls for papers for dozens of science- and science-history conferences held all over the world, at [www.hssonline.org/profession/meetings/index.lasso](http://www.hssonline.org/profession/meetings/index.lasso).

*Kate Christen ([christenc@si.edu](mailto:christenc@si.edu))  
Humanities Representative,  
Board of Governors*

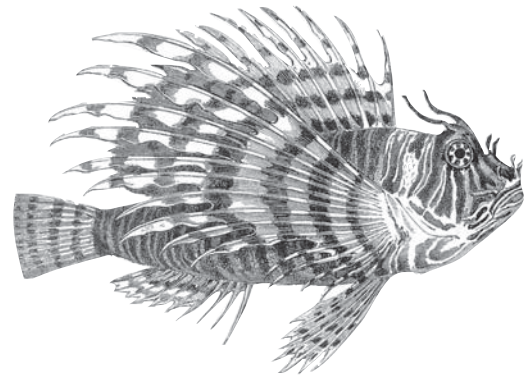
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### SCB Meeting Transitions to Biennial

In Beijing, SCB's Board of Governors voted to change the frequency of SCB's global meeting. Traditionally an annual event, the newly renamed global meeting (now the International Congress for Conservation Biology) will be held biennially beginning in 2011. Thus, the global meeting will be held in 2010, 2011, 2013, and every odd-numbered year thereafter. This decision was motivated by at least three factors: (1) the increasing cost of travel and increasing difficulty in securing funds to defray members' travel expenses, (2) the environmental impact of many long-distance airline flights, and (3) the increasing interest of SCB's sections in holding regional meetings that do not compete with the global meeting. A majority of sections already have convened well-attended regional meetings [Africa in 2009, Asia in 2005, Oceania (previously known as Australasia) in 2007, Europe in 2006 and 2009, Marine in 2009] and we expect many more.

#### 2011 global meeting to be held in New Zealand

Also in Beijing, the Board of Governors approved a proposal for the 2011 International Congress for Conservation Biology to be held in Christchurch, New Zealand from 29 November–2 December. The board agreed with the local hosts that a meeting held in New Zealand's summer would be far more appealing for the venue and for our colleagues in the southern hemisphere than a meeting in the austral winter.



#### 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*  
Alan Thornhill  
1017 O Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001-4229 USA  
1-202-234-4133  
[athornhill@conbio.org](mailto:athornhill@conbio.org)

# 2010 Annual Meeting • 3–7 July • Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Call for abstracts for oral, poster, and speed presentations

SCB is now accepting abstracts for oral, poster, and speed presentations for the 24th International Congress for Conservation Biology (ICCB), *Conservation for a Changing Planet*, which will be held 3–7 July 2010 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Abstracts must be submitted electronically by 20 January 2010. The call for proposals for symposia, workshops, discussions groups, and short courses was issued previously; the deadline was 14 October 2009.

SCB expects to make decisions on abstracts by 10 March. Notifications will be sent by email only. Please make sure that the **one** email address you provide is your primary email address and is entered correctly. We encourage you to carefully think about the presentation format that best meets your goals (oral, poster, or speed).

The scientific program will include plenary sessions, invited symposia, workshops, discussions groups, short courses, poster sessions, and concurrent sessions of oral presentations and speed presentations. Due to the high number of attendees expected at ICCB and, consequently, limited time and space for oral presentations, poster presentations are strongly encouraged.

## Meeting Theme: Conservation for a Changing Planet

Humans are causing large changes to the ecology of Earth. Industrial development and agriculture are changing landscapes. Carbon emissions to the atmosphere are changing climates. Nowhere on Earth are changes to climate having more drastic effects on ecosystems and human cultures than in the north. For example, circumpolar caribou and reindeer populations are declining with major consequences for indigenous peoples of the north, motivating our use of caribou in the congress logo. Developing conservation strategies to cope with our changing planet is arguably the greatest challenge facing today's world and its biological diversity.

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Reviewers have access to the entire abstract **except** the names of the presenters. To increase the probability that your abstract will be accepted, and in your preferred format, please consider the following criteria carefully:

1. Scientific merit
2. Application to conservation science, management, policy, and education
3. Clarity of presentation (for example, abstract begins with a clear statement of an issue and ends with a substantive conclusion)

## Author Registration

All presenters must be registered and paid in full by the early deadline of 6 April 2010. Names and abstracts of authors who do not register and pay by 6 April will not be included in the congress program.

## ORAL PRESENTATIONS

Individuals are limited to presenting only one symposium, oral, speed, or poster presentation. If your name appears on more than one abstract, please ensure that you are listed as the presenter for only one of them. Oral presentations will be grouped by topic and limited to 15 minutes: 12 minutes for presentation and 3 minutes for questions. Please choose from the list of general topic areas provided in the submission process to assist us in selecting an appropriate session for your presentation. If your abstract is accepted but cannot be accommodated as an oral presentation, you may be offered the opportunity to present a poster. All oral presentation rooms will be equipped with a computer and a data projector. Detailed information will be available to presenters several months before the congress.

## SYMPOSIUM PRESENTATIONS

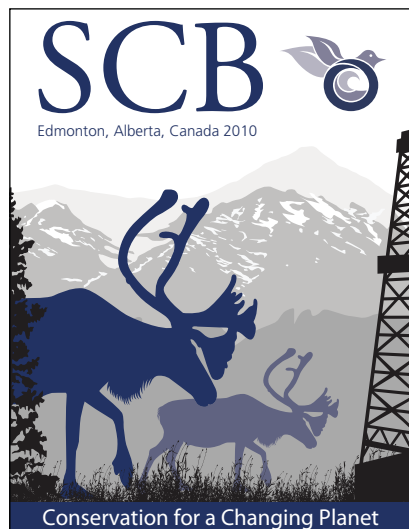
All individual symposium speakers must submit an abstract following the instructions for the oral presentation format. A tracking number will be provided to all symposium organizers. If you do not have this number, please contact the organizer of your symposium. Do not submit an abstract for an invited symposium presentation without this number. It is the responsibility of the symposium organizer to make sure that all speakers register before the deadline and according to the instructions provided.

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Poster presenters will receive general instructions on poster format in the email notification of acceptance. Advice on designing science posters is available at [www.conbio.org/studentaffairs/posters](http://www.conbio.org/studentaffairs/posters). Posters will be displayed prominently and for the entire meeting; special sessions dedicated to posters will allow in-depth discussion between authors and other attendees.

## SPEED PRESENTATIONS

If your paper topic would be of interest to a wide range of people and you would like your presentation to lead to an extended conversation with colleagues who are specifically interested in your work, you may wish to submit an abstract for a speed presentation. In the first hour of a speed presentation session, 15 speakers will be given 4 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.

To participate in the speed presentations, simply submit an abstract according to the standard guidelines and indicate that you would like your abstract to be considered for a speed presentation. If your abstract is accepted for a speed presentation, you will be notified by the steering committee and asked to prepare a 4-minute presentation instead of a traditional (15-minute) presentation. If your abstract is not accepted for a speed presentation, it still will be considered for a traditional oral presentation or poster.

## **STUDENT AWARD CANDIDATES**

Student awards for oral presentations are managed by SCB's Education and Student Affairs Committee. All questions about student awards should be directed to [studentawards@conbio.org](mailto:studentawards@conbio.org).

Student award candidates (restricted to 15-minute oral presentations, no posters, no speed presentations) must submit 2 abstracts. Both abstracts must be submitted online by 20 January 2010 and formatted according to the instructions provided. Both abstracts must be for the same work and have the identical title and authors.

The extended abstract must have a minimum of 500 words and a maximum of 800 words. Word limits apply only to the abstract body and do not include the title, figures, and all other requested information about the authors. The extended abstract must include a maximum of 3 figures or tables total (i.e., not three figures plus three tables).

Abstracts that are not submitted according to the instructions presented here will not be accepted. In recent years, the rejection rate has been approximately 85%. Many abstracts have been rejected simply because these instructions were not followed.

Your extended abstract submission must include

1. Presentation title (same title as for regular abstract)
2. Abstract body (between 500 and 800 words)
3. Authors of abstract (same authors as for regular abstract)
4. Maximum of 3 figures or tables
5. Roles of each author if two or more authors are listed on the abstract. The student must be the primary author and must submit the abstract under that name. In other words, the name of the student applying for the award and the name of the primary author must be identical.
6. Degree pursued or, for those who already have received a Ph.D., date of defense. Current students and students with a graduation date no earlier than 11 July 2009 are eligible to apply.

## **Criteria for Selection of Finalists**

The regular abstract will be included in the review process with all other abstracts for the congress and will be evaluated according to the same criteria as all other abstracts. Thus, an abstract may be accepted for presentation even if the author is not selected as a student award finalist. To present as a student

award finalist at the congress, both abstracts must be accepted.

The extended abstract will go through a review process specific to candidates for student awards. The criteria applied by reviewers in selecting finalists for student awards are

1. Relevance to conservation
2. Scientific merit
3. Presentation

The student awards subcommittee will select 12 finalists to make oral presentations at the congress. Each reviewer will attend all of the presentations. Each finalist will receive a monetary award.

The following criteria will be applied to select awardees from among the student finalists.

1. Scientific rigor of the research
2. Novelty of the research
3. Creativity of the approach
4. Explicit relevance of the study to conservation
5. Clear presentation of the study in the text of the extended abstract
6. Appropriateness and information content of the figures submitted with the extended abstract

## **MENTORING PROGRAM**

To encourage participation of members whose first language is not English, SCB's student affairs subcommittee offers a mentoring service for students who wish to submit abstracts for oral or poster presentations.

If you wish to take advantage of this mentoring program, simply submit an abstract according to the standard guidelines; indicate that you are a student, that English is not your first language, and that you would like your abstract to be mentored.

Further instructions will be sent to your email address after you submit your abstract. A mentor will contact you and provide guidance on grammar and clarity of writing. The mentor also will ensure that the abstract meets the technical criteria for submission. Note that it is not the role of the mentor to provide scientific guidance or to write the abstract.

The mentoring program will close two weeks before the abstract submission deadline to allow the mentors time to suggest edits to the submitter and for the submitter to edit the abstract.

For more complete information on the call for abstracts visit [www.conbio.org/2010](http://www.conbio.org/2010)



### Education

In July 2009, SCB's Board of Governors restructured committees, combining the education committee with the student affairs committee. The resulting education and student affairs committee has revised its terms of reference accordingly.

The Education and Student Affairs Committee shall

- (a) facilitate and carry out initiatives designed to promote the education—at all levels, including preparatory and continuing—of the public, of biologists, and of managers in the principles and practices of conservation biology,
- (b) promote a supportive environment for undergraduate and graduate students in SCB, including encouraging student participation in meetings and creating opportunities for interaction among students and professionals, and
- (c) administer the student awards program.

We are inviting individuals to join the new committee. Committee members will be responsible for a specific task related to the new terms of reference and must commit to overseeing that task for a period of time not less than one year.

Potential tasks include

1. Head a subcommittee to work on SCB's education website
2. Serve as the secretary for the committee, including coordination with section, working group, and chapter representatives to collate updates twice each year for presentation to the Board of Governors
3. Coordinate with local organizing committees of SCB's meetings regarding education symposia, presentations, training courses, student participation, and other events and activities related to global meetings
4. Lead an effort to increase representation and retention of underrepresented groups in SCB's education activities, including advising other subcommittees on representation of underrepresented students and professionals

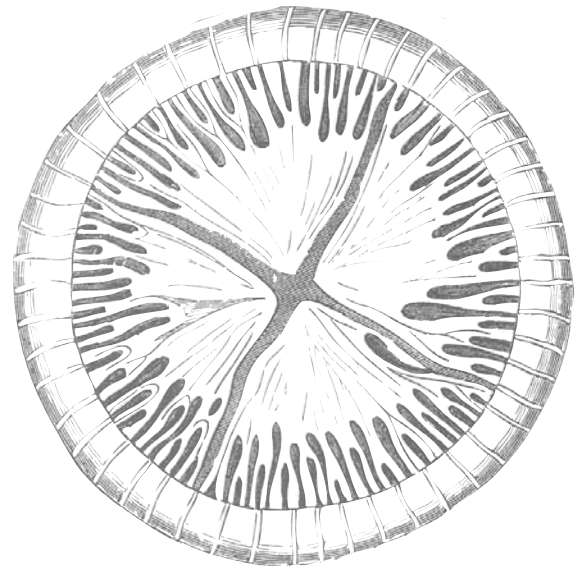
We welcome your suggestions for additional tasks you might like to lead related to our current terms of reference. If you are interested in serving on the education and student affairs committee, please send a note by 15 December to committee chair Eleanor Sterling ([sterling@amnh.org](mailto:sterling@amnh.org)). In your note, please include the task(s) to which you are willing to commit.

### Policy

The former chair of the SCB's policy committee, Luigi Boitani, became president of SCB at the end of the members' meeting in Beijing. Luigi appointed Jeff McNeely to replace him as chair of the committee. The committee will now be preparing a new strategic plan that will take effect in 2010. The committee seeks to develop close working ties with the science and publications committee and the regional sections. Membership of the policy committee will be reviewed in the coming months, and

nominations for new members are welcome. Suggestions for major policy issues that warrant attention from the committee also will be welcome as part of the strategic planning process. Send suggestions for both committee members and strategic plan elements to Jeff McNeely ([jam@iucn.org](mailto:jam@iucn.org)).

The work of the policy committee during the past few months has focused on climate change and biological diversity, with particular attention to the major issues being considered at the meeting of the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark in December 2009. The role of biological diversity in adaptation to climate change will be emphasized, as will potential benefits and risks of the proposed measures included under reduced emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD).



### Structure of the Board of Governors Changes

The context in which we conduct the science and practice of conservation changes rapidly, and so does the context within which the business of SCB operates. As demands and opportunities change, and in order to undertake effectively its business of overseeing SCB's work, the Board of Governors requires members with a diverse range of experience and expertise. In response to these needs, SCB's membership voted in Beijing to change the structure of the Board. The vote changes our bylaws to allow open nominations of board members irrespective of professional affiliation. In addition, the number of at large elected board members has increased from six to nine. In part, this shift will be accompanied by an explicit effort to place board members as chairs of standing committees.

# Updates from Working Groups and Regional Sections

## Freshwater Working Group

We encourage working group members to submit abstracts on freshwater related topics for the 2010 meeting in Edmonton. Let us aim to have a strong presence at the meeting.

During the recent annual meeting of the American Fisheries Society, members of the working group and AFS discussed opportunities for collaboration. The idea that seemed most appealing for immediate action was the creation of “top 10” lists of freshwater conservation needs in the areas of research, policy, and outreach. Paul Angermeier (biota@vt.edu) is spearheading the research list, Laurie Fowler (lfowler@uga.edu) is leading the policy list, and Anna George is the outreach point person (alg@tnaqua.org). Please send them your ideas.

The call for working group’s soon. Four board positions will be open and we encourage members to nominate themselves or others. Nominees must be committed to the freshwater conservation cause and willing to put in time working for the cause.

nominations for members of the board will be announced



The working group’s strategic plan is available at [www.conbio.org/workinggroups/freshwater/](http://www.conbio.org/workinggroups/freshwater/)

We encourage you to post freshwater conservation issues, publications, jobs, and resources to our email list, [freshwater@list.conbio.org](mailto:freshwater@list.conbio.org). You may sign on to the list at <http://list.conbio.org/mailman/listinfo/freshwater/>. If you cannot access this link, then forward your information to Aventino Kasangaki, our list moderator, at [aventinok@yahoo.com](mailto:aventinok@yahoo.com).

*Aventino Kasangaki & Ken Vance-Borland*

## Oceania

On 26 and 27 November, the Oceania Section’s Board of Directors will meet in Christchurch, New Zealand. If any members of the section have topics they would like discussed at that meeting, issues or complaints, or strategic areas on which they’d like to see the section focus, please email us (Nicola.Nelson@vuw.ac.nz).

Dates have been set for SCB’s 25th International Congress for Conservation Biology. The meeting will be held 29 November–2 December 2011 in Christchurch.

## Publication

*Conservation Biology* recently published a focus on policy as viewed by SCB’s regional sections. The Oceania Section

was represented by Kingsford, R.T., J.E.M. Watson, C.J. Lundquist, O. Venter, L. Hughes, E.L. Johnston, J. Atherton, M. Gawel, D.A. Keith, B.G. Mackey, C. Morley, H.P. Possingham, B. Raynor, H.F. Recher, and K.A. Wilson. 2009. Major conservation policy issues for biodiversity in Oceania. *Conservation Biology* **23**:834–840.

The publication received extensive media coverage, showing that we can get the key message on the extinction crisis out in the public arena with a bit of effort. Thanks to Richard Kingsford for leading the publication.

Illustrations of media coverage:

*Sydney Morning Herald* (front page): [www.smh.com.au/environment/australia-one-of-worst-animal-destroyers-20090728-e068.html](http://www.smh.com.au/environment/australia-one-of-worst-animal-destroyers-20090728-e068.html)

*Canberra Times* (front page): [www.canberratimes.com.au/news/national/national/general/call-for-treaty-to-save-pacific-species/1580846.aspx](http://www.canberratimes.com.au/news/national/national/general/call-for-treaty-to-save-pacific-species/1580846.aspx)

ABC Radio AM Current Affairs: [www.abc.net.au/am/content/2009/s2639447.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2009/s2639447.htm)

ABC Radio – Pacific: [www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200907/s2640197.htm](http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/pacbeat/stories/200907/s2640197.htm)

ABC TV News in some parts of Australia: <http://abc.net.au/news/video/2009/07/29/2639900.htm>.

*Nicola Nelson*

## North America

The section has initiated five policy goals for the section and SCB partners to accomplish in 2009–2012: (1) development of a blueprint that strategically targets key policies affecting biological diversity in North America, (2) evaluation of proposed changes to landmark environmental laws and regulations such as the U.S. Endangered Species Act, (3) proposed changes to the roadless conservation rule in the United States, (4) climate change policy under development by the U.S. Congress and Obama administration, and (5) building partnerships through coordination of policy needs of the section, Canada subsection, and burgeoning chapters.

**Conservation policy blueprint.** Noss et al. (2009) discussed the need for a blueprint for conserving biological diversity in North America. In response, the section recently launched a series of workshops to develop policy goals. The first workshop, focused on the southwestern United States and northern Mexico, was held in Flagstaff in October 2009. Workshops are anticipated at the global SCB meeting in Edmonton (July 2010) and at a joint meeting of the North America and Austral and Neotropical America sections in Mexico (2012). The workshop in Flagstaff, which followed the 10th Biennial Conference of Research on the Colorado Plateau, focused on challenges from energy development, decreasing water availability, and climate change.

**Endangered species management.** SCB has played a pivotal role in endangered species policies in the United States through

peer review of species listings, delisting proposals, changes to critical habitat, and recovery plans. The section will continue to review policies that affect endangered species, including the next draft of the recovery plan for the Northern Spotted Owl (*Strix occidentalis caurina*), anticipated in spring 2010. Members of the section also are working with the Obama administration to reverse more than 50 endangered species decisions by the Bush administration that reduced protections for listed species.

**Proposed changes to the roadless conservation rule.** SCB members maintain an ongoing presence in policies affecting roadless areas on U.S. National Forests, including detailed comments on a recent proposal by Colorado Governor Bill Ritter to reduce protections for the state's roadless areas.

**Climate change legislation and policies.** New policies and legislation on climate change continue to be a priority of the section and SCB's policy director, John Fitzgerald. SCB recently developed a set of principles for legislators and the U.S. administration to consider. Examples include a goal of reducing emissions of carbon dioxide to 350 ppm as soon as possible and protection of old forests in the United States as part of the nation's commitment to carbon sequestration.

**Building partnerships among the section, subsection, and chapters.** We continue to work with the nascent Canada subsection and with members of chapters to address mutual policy needs.

Noss, R.F, E. Fleishman, D.A. DellaSala, J.M. Fitzgerald, M.R. Gross, M.B. Main, F. Nagle, S.L. O'Malley, and J. Rosales. 2009. Priorities for improving the scientific foundation of conservation policy in North America. *Conservation Biology* 23:825-833.

*Dominick DellaSala*

## Europe

Since the August newsletter was distributed, we held the second European Congress of Conservation Biology in Prague. After much planning and preparation, the meeting was declared a great success by organizers and participants alike. More than 1300 European conservation biologists from 65 countries gathered for the meeting. Their expertise included protection of biological diversity, biology, and social sciences. They discussed their latest research, exchanged perspectives on conservation of biological diversity, and sent an urgent message to European Union environment ministers.

The four days of the congress included about 840 scientific presentations on topics including design of protected areas, maintenance of biological diversity in farmlands and forests, and conservation genetics. Topics of paramount importance such as the Natura 2000 network, the interface between economics and conservation, sustainable decision-making based on scientific knowledge and evidence, and invasive species were highlighted in plenary addresses by the Czech minister of the Environment, Ladislav Miko, Spanish ecological economist Joan Martinez-

Allier, Cambridge professor of conservation biology Bill Sutherland, and the Czech expert on invasive plants, Petr Pyšek.

Issues related to market valuation of biological diversity were discussed in the context of an ongoing study on the economics of ecosystem services and biological diversity. Participants in the congress urged economists to address errors in their basic theorems and models on which many policy decisions affecting biological diversity are based. The congress also voted to send a call to action to European Union environment ministers gathering in Strömstadt, Sweden to discuss visions of future policies on biological diversity. This message, "Need for priority actions rather than visions—biodiversity conservation beyond 2010," was well received by those at the Strömstadt meeting.

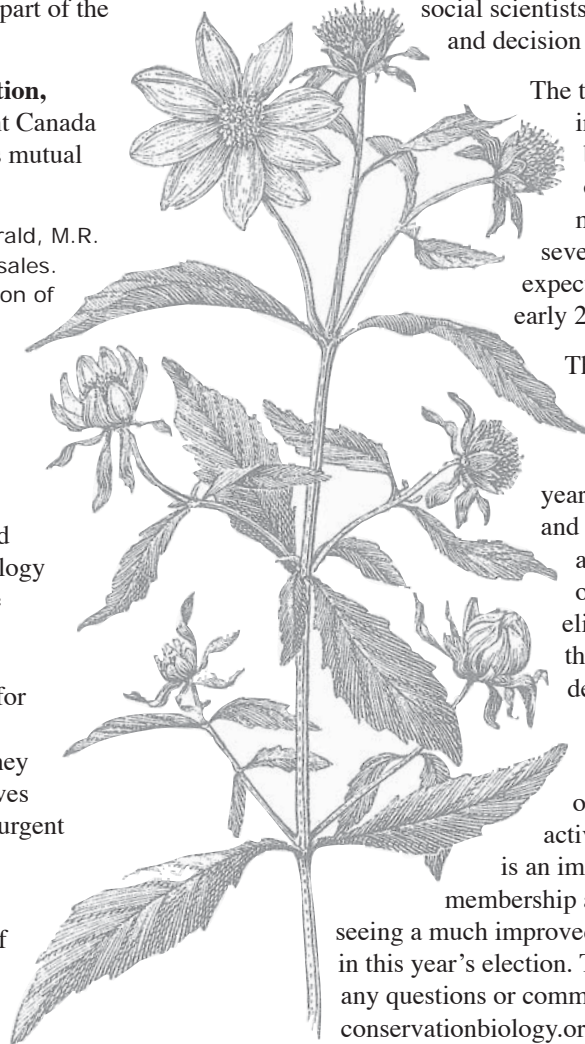
The scientific program of the congress reflected the participants' diverse backgrounds, research, and cultures, yet there was great coherence in the priorities expressed and it was clear that conservation biologists from across Europe have many common goals. The meeting catalyzed new collaborations and highlighted the desire and need for collaboration among natural scientists, social scientists, educators, practitioners, and decision makers.

The third congress will be held in 2012. The board soon will be reviewing expressions of interest in hosting this meeting, and will invite several full proposals. We expect to announce the site in early 2010.

The section soon will hold annual elections. Three positions on the board of directors are open this year. Profiles of the candidates and voting instructions are available at [www.conbio.org](http://www.conbio.org). All section members are eligible to vote, so please visit the website and exercise your democratic right.

As always the board encourages the participation of section members in the activities of the section. Voting is an important element of section membership and we look forward to seeing a much improved level of participation in this year's election. To contact the board with any questions or comments email [europe@conservationbiology.org](mailto:europe@conservationbiology.org) or visit [www.conbio.org/Sections/Europe/](http://www.conbio.org/Sections/Europe/), which details committee activities and opportunities to become involved.

*Owen Nevin*



## Austral and Neotropical America

Flyers describing the Austral and Neotropical America Section and its activities are available for download at <http://conservationbiology.org/Sections/ANA/>. Please feel free to print and distribute this information.

**Formation of Cuban chapter.** A number of the section's board members have volunteered to sponsor one year of membership for a Cuban colleague. This will help form a Cuban chapter within SCB. The membership costs only US\$10 per year and gives members online access to *Conservation Biology* and other high-quality journals. If you are interested in sponsoring a Cuban colleague, please contact the section's director of conservation, Felipe Melo ([fplmelo@gmail.com](mailto:fplmelo@gmail.com)).

Education director Nora Bynum is recruiting individuals to serve on the section's education committee. Each potential member should have a project or activity that they are willing to lead or organize, such as a course for section members, or an idea for keeping section members apprised of educational opportunities. If you are interested, please contact Nora ([nbynum@amnh.org](mailto:nbynum@amnh.org)) as soon as possible.

*Sandra Pompa Mansilla & Nora Bynum*

## Asia

The Asia Section was proud to have served as host for SCB's 2009 meeting in Beijing. We were particularly pleased to see so many conservation biologists from within our region, and we sought to expand the section's membership. We discussed major challenges facing conservation biology in Asia, recognizing that many of them are due to external factors beyond the effective influence of conservation biologists; yet conservation biology has much to offer many other sectors of societies in addressing problems such as agricultural production, watershed management, and wetlands management. We also welcomed the incoming president of the Asia Section, David Hulse, who is based at the Ford Foundation's office in Jakarta ([D.Hulse@fordfound.org](mailto:D.Hulse@fordfound.org)).



## Update from SCB's Policy Program

The third and fourth quarters of 2009 saw an upsurge of SCB policy progress. In part this reflected meetings hosted by the Europe Section and by the Colorado Plateau Chapter in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey. Meeting attendees prepared policy recommendations that were informed in part by the scientific content of the meetings.

The Europe Section prepared draft policy recommendations that were available to meeting participants for review and revision. The section board and I helped to consolidate these recommendations into a statement urging environment ministers to strengthen the Habitat Directive of the European Union on the occasion of its tenth anniversary review. This statement, while consonant with SCB goals and policies, was a product of meeting attendees from more than 60 countries rather than from SCB. The statement emphasized that lack of enforcement and implementation have contributed to the directive's failure to halt losses of biological diversity in Europe.

The North America Section held a policy workshop immediately after the 10th Biennial Conference of Research on the Colorado Plateau. The conference was organized by SCB's Colorado Plateau Chapter and the U.S. Geological Survey. Speakers at the workshop included the Secretary of Energy of New Mexico and the former chief counsel of the White House Council on Environmental Quality.

### Climate Change

SCB's policy committee has been reviewing new research on forests and climate change, including work on sequestration of carbon in old growth forests and drought and heat stress in tropical rainforests. In August we sent the summaries of these studies to the Senate Environment Committee, which had asked for our help in developing their approach to forests. The Senate Committee leadership introduced its draft bill on 30 September.

More policy news, including an executive order on Climate Change that was executed on 5 October and the Secretary of the Interior's directive on the same subject, is available at [www.conbio.org/resources/policy](http://www.conbio.org/resources/policy).

### Marine Scientific Integrity

The Marine Section and policy director prepared a filing for the ocean policy process led by the White House. We recommended steps to reduce noise in U.S. waters.

*John Fitzgerald, Policy Director, SCB*

government decided to establish a nature reserve there to protect the calving ground of the chiru.

That field work assured me that my decision was right. The vastness, the rolling mountain ranges, and the amazing Tibetan antelope on the Tibetan Plateau are something I want to work to conserve. Hence, after my Ph.D. study, I joined the family of the Wildlife Conservation Society, and accepted a position in the West China conservation program. Our team visited the Pamir region of Xinjiang, China for Marco Polo sheep, Qinghai Lake for Przewalski gazelle, and the Chang Tang of Tibet for chiru.

We did a winter traverse in northern Chang Tang in 2006. The region had not been visited since a trip by British Captain M.S. Wellby in 1896. Over 1500 km we met no humans, but only wildlife—the chiru, kiang (Tibetan wild ass), wild yak, and Tibetan gazelle. Once again, the trip provided evidence that the Chang Tang is one of the last great wilderness landscapes on Earth. The wildlife on this landscape, especially the chiru and its traditional migration, need to be cherished and preserved.

Luck knocked on my door again. The EU and China's Government launched a big biodiversity conservation program in west China in 2007. Nineteen regional programs got funding. Among them, WCS became the lead agency for the project *Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Natural Resource Use in the Chang Tang Region of Tibet*. I was appointed to be the leading official for that project. I moved to Lhasa and established the team for the program. Our main local partners were from the Tibetan Forestry Bureau, Tibet Academy of Agriculture and Animal Sciences, Institute of Zoology, Chinese Academy of Sciences, and World Wide Fund for Nature.

Through this project, we are trying to help local conservation agencies and departments improve their capacity, collect a baseline of wildlife information on the ground, and encourage the participation of local communities. The program has been running for two years. I spent time as much as possible in the field. In the past, most work on chiru was focused on the migratory population. Now, the project has more information on the resident populations that will help to improve their protection. At the same time, the first Biodiversity Monitoring Rule has been completed and will be implemented this year, the first biodiversity database is being designed, and the first ecotourism evaluation is being conducted. All of those firsts thrill our team. However, my colleagues and I recognize that "first" means "beginning," and that maintaining and continuing these achievement will require sustained effort.

Just as George Schaller told me, there is no end for conservation. Wildlife and conservation will always raise new questions for us. Without wildlife, we won't be happy any more. Holding those beliefs, I will continue my effort to conserve wildlife.

*I thank Peter Zahler for assistance with revisions.*

Aili Kang received SCB's Early Career Conservationist award in 2009 for her work on conservation of mammals in the Chinese and Tibetan steppe. Her efforts already have had a significant positive impact on Marco Polo sheep, yak, saiga, Przewalski's gazelle, and other species, and she continues to expand the scope of her conservation work.

## Call for 2010 Board Nominations

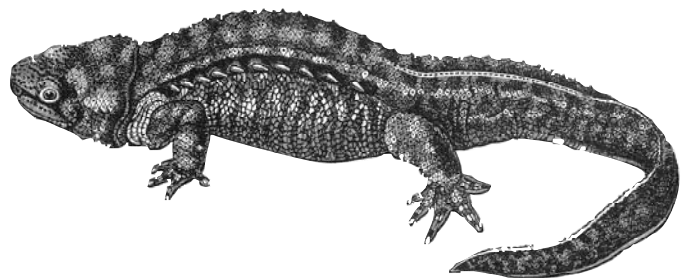
DEADLINE: 1 DECEMBER

SCB seeks nominees for three open positions on the Board of Governors. The positions are open to nominees from any country. Nominees must be SCB members in good standing. By agreeing to stand for election, nominees indicate their willingness to serve SCB by attending Board of Governors meetings during their three-year (Members at Large) or four-year (President Elect; two years each as President Elect and President) term of office that begins 1 July 2010. Except under extreme circumstances, board members are expected to attend all board meetings, which are scheduled well in advance, and to attend at their own expense (some funds may be available to support travel costs as necessary). In addition, board members are expected to be actively engaged in directing SCB through committee work and by working with sections and chapters.

Given the expertise of current board members, the schedule of retirements, and significant tasks for SCB during the next few years, we particularly welcome nominations of (or self-nominations from) individuals with experience and interests in the following areas: international conservation biology conferences and meetings; conservation biology teaching, training and education; and development and fundraising. There is also a continuing need for individuals with experience and an active interest in social sciences and humanities. Positions on the board, however, are not restricted to individuals with expertise in these topics.

Nominations will be accepted until 1 December 2009. Candidates for each position will be chosen from the nominees by the governance committee. Slates of candidates for each position will be organized into the ballot. Ballots are available for approximately 60 days during the first quarter of 2010. The ballot will be made available to members in good standing via SCB's website and a paper ballot in the February 2010 newsletter.

If you are interested in serving on the board, or would like to nominate another candidate, please express that interest to the chair of the governance committee, Georgina Mace (g.mace@imperial.ac.uk). Nominations should include complete contact information for the nominee. Please also indicate whether the nominee has confirmed interest in serving.



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## SERDP Solicitation

The U.S. Department of Defense's Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) announces the release of solicitations for project funds to be awarded for U.S. federal fiscal year 2011. Topics most relevant to SCB members include impacts of climate change on Alaskan ecological systems, behavioral ecology of cetaceans, ecological forestry and carbon management, and ecology and management of source-sink populations.

For a complete list of Statements of Need as well as instructions for submitting proposals, visit [www.serdp.org](http://www.serdp.org) under the Funding Opportunities link.

SERDP is the Department of Defense's environmental research and development program, planned and executed in partnership with the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. SERDP's role is to fund research and development that addresses environmental issues relevant to the management and mission of the Department of Defense. SERDP supported efforts lead to the development and application of innovative environmental technologies or methods that improve the environmental performance of the department by improving outcomes, managing environmental risks, or reducing costs or time required to resolve environmental problems. SERDP funds both fundamental and applied research.

## Leadership Training

A graduate and professional course, *Effective Conservation Leadership*, cosponsored by the Smithsonian's Center for Conservation Education and Sustainability and the George Mason Center for Conservation Studies, will be held 3–13 January 2010 in Front Royal, Virginia. The course fee of US\$2500 includes instruction, course materials, and transportation to and from Dulles International Airport. All other costs are the responsibility of the participants. Course credit may be available through George Mason University. For more information about the course or the Smithsonian–George Mason Partnership, contact [zootraining@si.edu](mailto:zootraining@si.edu).

## Collaborative Proposal

Interested faculty participants are sought for inclusion in a proposal to the U.S. National Science Foundation on improving teaching in conservation biology by (1) teaching from a systems-based perspective, (2) including active and scientific teaching, and (3) conducting educational research. Faculty participants would receive training in the areas listed, and would subsequently disseminate this training to faculty members at their own institutions. Ideally, candidates would be able to recruit and train three to five additional faculty members at their home institutions who are teaching on topics relevant to conservation biology. We are particularly interested in including

faculty participants from minority-serving institutions. Please contact Nora Bynum ([nbynum@amnh.org](mailto:nbynum@amnh.org)) or Eleanor Sterling ([sterling@amnh.org](mailto:sterling@amnh.org)) for more information.

## Meetings

The annual Partners in Environmental Technology Technical Symposium and Workshop, *Meeting the U.S. Department of Defense's Environmental Challenges*, sponsored by the Strategic Environmental Research and Development Program (SERDP) and the Environmental Security Technology Certification Program (ESTCP), will be held 1–3 December 2009 in Washington, D.C. The event will offer a dynamic opening plenary session followed by a comprehensive technical program on topics including challenges associated with regional predictions of climate change impacts, ecology and management of the Department of Defense's coastal and estuarine ecosystems, and greenhouse gas emissions and the carbon footprint from the Department of Defense's land use and installations. Other highlights include more than 450 posters showcasing innovative environmental research and technology and networking with more than 1000 environmental professionals from the government, academic, and private sectors. A special session describing SERDP and ESTCP funding opportunities also will be offered. For more information about the event or to register, visit [www.serdp-estcp.org/symposium](http://www.serdp-estcp.org/symposium).



*Society for Conservation Biology Newsletter* is published quarterly. To submit materials or request permission to reprint articles contact the editor. Before 1 January 2010 contact Erica Fleishman, Bren School of Environmental Science & Management, University of California, Santa Barbara, [efleishman@conbio.org](mailto:efleishman@conbio.org). Starting 1 January 2010, contact Sharon Collinge, [sharon.collinge@colorado.edu](mailto:sharon.collinge@colorado.edu). Decisions concerning publication rest with the editor.

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## Nobel Prize awarded for work on the commons

This year's Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences was awarded to Indiana University Professor Elinor Ostrom for her work on understanding how people can collectively manage common-pool resources, such as fisheries, forests, and water. Ostrom's work has profound conservation implications for a range of ecosystems. In particular, she challenged the pervasive "Tragedy of the Commons" paradigm, in which users of common property resources are assumed to be trapped by a system that creates incentives for unsustainable exploitation. In announcing the prize, the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences said, "Elinor Ostrom has challenged the conventional wisdom that common property is poorly managed and should be either regulated by central authorities or privatized."

Ostrom's theoretical, modeling, and empirical work has been instrumental in identifying both the types of institutions that promote sustainable use of common-pool resources and the conditions under which these institutions can be successful. She suggested that unsustainable exploitation tends to occur only under a very limited set of conditions: when resource users are anonymous and cannot communicate, have no foundation for trust or reciprocity, and lack established rules. Ostrom has shown that there are numerous examples in which these conditions are not present and resource users organize themselves to manage common-pool resources.

Noted the Academy, "Based on numerous studies of user-managed fish stocks, pastures, woods, lakes and groundwater basins, Ostrom concludes that the outcomes are, more often than not, better than predicted by standard theories. She observes that resource users frequently develop sophisticated mechanisms for decision-making and rule enforcement to handle conflicts of interest, and she characterizes the rules that promote successful outcomes." Her work also emphasized that there is no panacea for resource management and that understanding and incorporating the social, economic, and political contexts is critical in sustainably managing many common-pool resources.

Ostrom is the first woman to receive the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences. She shared the prize with Oliver E. Williamson of the University of California, Berkeley for their independent work in the field of economic governance.

*Joshua E. Cinner*  
*James Cook University, Australia*



## Acclaim for *Conservation* Magazine

For the fourth consecutive year, *Conservation* magazine received the Gold Excel Award for general excellence from Association Media & Publishing. For the first time, the magazine also received extraordinary recognition from the judges. More than 1000 association magazines were entered this year, of which 170 received a bronze, silver, or gold award. Of those 170 winners, the judges picked four magazines as the "Best of the Best," and *Conservation* magazine was one of those four. This is particularly noteworthy because *Conservation* was competing against magazines with circulations well over 100,000—such as AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), American Dental Association, and Habitat for Humanity. The award represents a vote of confidence in the outstanding quality of *Conservation* magazine.

Stories from *Conservation* are growing legs: they are walking into areas that warm the heart yet extend the reach of conservation science. The summer issue cover story "Is a Warmer World a Sicker World?" was featured on *The Guardian's* environmental network home page (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/network>), and a story on hybridization and conservation was featured on the Discovery Channel website (<http://dsc.discovery.com/earth/wide-angle/rapid-evolution.html>).

If you haven't see Journal Watch Online (<http://journalwatch.conservationmagazine.org/>), take a look. Three to five new conservation science stories are posted every week and an increasing number of high profile blogs are directly linking to Journal Watch, including The Nature Conservancy, Ecological Society of America, Island Press, the Audubon Society, and the Sierra Club. We are seeing the ripples from *Conservation* magazine widening and our impact growing.

Congratulations to *Conservation* magazine's editor Kathy Kohm, senior editor Justin Matlick, and their extraordinary editorial team and publishing partners.

## Knocking on the wrong door, going down the right path by Aili Kang

Every time someone asks me about the reason that I work for wildlife, my answer is, “It is my luck to knock on the wrong door.” I was an undergraduate student in the biochemistry department in East China Normal University in the late 1990s. During my fourth year, like many other students, I wondered about my future and tried to find a professor for future research development. One day, I knocked on a door without name on it. Dr. Endi Zhang answered the door and said, “May I help you?” Endi had just returned from abroad and his specialty is animal behavior and conservation. I had never known about this field before. But after several talks, I knew I had found an amazing world to explore.

During the Ph.D. period, I lived with a herd of saiga antelope in a remote research center in northwest China. Those animals, with their strange proboscis-like noses, become my favorite species. Although they were in the research center, the 27 ha enclosure with natural terrain and plants offered them good space to maintain their natural behaviors. Within this enclosure, the saigas taught me a lot. However, the condition of their wild population concerned me. If we cannot maintain the wild population, the behavior of the saiga will disappear, and what can we study after that? It was this question that led me think more about the value of conserving wild species.

In 2002, following Endi’s suggestion, I translated and published the Chinese version of George Schaller’s *Wildlife of the Tibetan*

*Steppe*. The scientific words mixed with George’s deeply felt descriptions of nature guided me to the Tibetan Plateau a number of times during the translation period. From then on, I made the decision that I would go and work there for the wildlife, especially the Tibetan antelope (chiru), which is similar to the saiga antelope.

Finally, in 2005, led by George, I began my first field work in a chiru calving ground located in the Kunlun Mountain Region at the north edge of the Tibetan Plateau. Other than a geographic team from decades ago, our isolated camp was the only human track in that place. Our objectives there were to obtain detailed information about the movements of chiru calves and mothers within the calving ground. We put radio collars on baby chiru and followed them on foot. Neither the collaring technique nor finding the signal was difficult. However, at an elevation of more than 5000 m, the oxygen in the air is only about 60% that at sea level. It was June, but heavy snow was always a threat. At the same time, it seemed that chiru mothers didn’t like to stay in one site for a long time, even for one day. Hence, the requirement for physical strength is enormous. Sometimes, it made me feel crazy when I lost the signal, because it meant I needed to climb over one or more hills to obtain the signal again. The most popular game we had when we had a rest during walking or climbing was to list all my favorite foods that I planned to have after field work.

After wandering in that place more than one month, we collected useful information for local management agencies. One of our local workers left a piece of scrip on the top of a hill near our campus. On the scrip, there was one sentence: “We need to protect these animals.” That person had never done that kind of work before our trip. Based partly on our suggestion, the local



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