

From the Editor's Desk

IN a previous editorial (Recher 2002), I expressed an opinion that the opportunity should have been taken at the 1993 Conservation Biology meeting in Queensland to establish an Australasian Society for Conservation Biology. In my view, a local society would be preferable to supporting an Australasian branch of the North American Society of Conservation Biology. Mack *et al.* (2002) disagreed and encouraged us to support the Society for Conservation Biology's initiative to establish a regional branch. They also said that *Pacific Conservation Biology* should be supported as a regional journal and "expanded to reflect work being conducted throughout the region rather than its present focus on Western Australia". The last comment surprised me and I decided I needed to review the origin and content or scope of papers we have been publishing in *Pacific Conservation Biology*. It would be unfortunate if the journal did have a Western Australian focus, especially as my accepting Western Australia as part of the Pacific Region requires some creative geography. Such a review, I felt, would also identify subject areas and regions where we needed to make a greater effort to encourage papers for the journal.

The scope of *Pacific Conservation Biology* is presented in the following, but before going there I'd like to say that, when the initiative to establish a regional branch of the Society of Conservation Biology (SCB) was first circulated, I responded positively and made the suggestion that the branch could adopt *Pacific Conservation Biology* as its own journal. I see no conflict in this, as many societies have a core national or international journal, while branches publish journals of more parochial interest. There would also be benefits for conservation in the Pacific: *Pacific Conservation Biology* is an important regional journal for conservation biology, but it will not survive without support from regional conservation biologists. I hope my suggestion will be considered carefully by those forming an Australasian branch of SCB.

Review of *Pacific Conservation Biology*

To determine the scope of papers published in *Pacific Conservation Biology*, I reviewed the 28 issues comprising Volumes 1 to 7 (June 1993 to March 2002). In that time, we published 240 papers. Of these, 198 were research papers (189) or notes (9), 15 were reviews, 25 were Forum Essays, and there were two viewpoint papers. I began the review by assigning each paper to a locality or region. I could do this for 209 papers. The remaining 34 concerned topics or issues that had no geographical base, such as the Precautionary Principle. Additionally, 71 books were reviewed, a process which has given many postgraduate students an opportunity to experience the pain and joy of publication.

Of the 209 papers assigned to a locality, 143 were Australian and 23 came from New Zealand. The remaining 43 papers were spread around the Pacific with 19 from the South Pacific, seven from Hawaii, five from Papua New Guinea, six from North America and one each from the Arctic, Antarctic, Chile, Indonesia, China and Japan. Quite clearly, *Pacific Conservation Biology* has an Antipodes bias. No doubt this reflects the origin of the journal and the high level of conservation biology research in Australia and New Zealand. However, with 21% of papers coming from elsewhere in the Pacific, I think we are meeting our goal of being a journal dedicated to promoting conservation biology throughout the Pacific.

Taking up the concern of Mack *et al.* (2002) that *Pacific Conservation Biology* has a Western Australian focus, of the 143 Australian papers, 37 (26%) are from Western Australia and these are almost entirely from the south-west. Of the other 106 papers, New South Wales with 36 papers and Queensland with 23 were well represented. Only 12 papers came from Victoria, four from Tasmania and two from the Northern Territory. There were none from South Australia or the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and 19 that could not be assigned comfortably to a State. Ten of the 19 came from the tropical north and five from semi-arid regions.

Without question, *Pacific Conservation Biology* has a strong Western Australian representation, but this is understandable given that southwestern Australia is recognized as one of the world's "hot spots" for biodiversity, has an active group of conservation biologists, and the editor resides there. However, I do not think I would go so far as saying *Pacific Conservation Biology* has a "Western Australian focus". As editor, I encourage papers from other parts of Australia and am now wondering why I receive so few submissions from Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory, the ACT and Victoria.

It is hard for an editor to overcome any regional bias. I can only work with the papers I receive and I receive remarkably few papers from other regional biodiversity "hot spots", such as New Guinea and Indonesia. Readers might like to take this as a challenge and encourage the submission of papers from "north of Australia" to *Pacific Conservation Biology*.

While I was at it, I categorized papers according to subject matter. In doing so, a paper might fall into several categories. For example, a paper on arboreal marsupials might fall into categories of mammal, eucalypt forest, tree hollows and forestry. Therefore, numbers are not so neat as with putting papers into a geographical category. It is also fairly cumbersome and a table seemed in order, although not something I normally do with editorials. Table 1 assigns the 240 papers of Volumes 1 through 7 into categories exclusive of geography. Table 1 has 17 categories, but my original list had 69 categories exclusive of geographic origin, including, for example, plant cultivars (1), climate change (1), indigenous people and conservation (1), and economics (4). The original list being too long, I practised a type of censorship and restricted the categories in Table 1 to subject areas with 10 or more papers after some fairly coarse merging of the original categories. As a result, not all papers or subjects are represented.

As can be seen, the subject matter of *Pacific Conservation Biology* is broad and is probably a good reflection of the conservation subjects topical of the time. Thus, threatened species, eucalypt ecosystems and conservation politics/philosophy feature prominently, as do birds, mammals (including marsupials) and exotic species. Somewhat surprising, given their high profiles in both the research and political arena, biodiversity, rainforest, remnant vegetation and forestry rank low. The large number of bird and marine papers reflect the special issues devoted to them. However, *Pacific Conservation Biology* receives a regular flow of papers concerning avian ecology and conservation which may indicate a relative shortage of pages in quality Australasian bird journals. In contrast, I think we receive

Table 1. Subject categories of research papers and essays published in *Pacific Conservation Biology* volumes 1 (1993) through 7 (2002). Papers have been grouped and only categories with 10 or more papers are shown. Papers often fell into two or more categories, but many papers dealt with subjects not included in those listed in the table. Hence, the table is only a coarse indicator of the breadth of the journal.

Subject	Number of Papers
Birds	49
Threatened Species	34
Mammals	31
Conservation	27
Eucalypt Forest/Woodland	24
Marine Plants and Animals	22
Terrestrial Invertebrates	21
Politics, Economics, Ethics	20
Exotic Species	17
Reptiles/Turtles/Frogs	17
Population Biology/Genetics	16
Terrestrial Plants	16
Fire Effects	13
Rainforest	12
Biodiversity	12
Remnant Vegetation/Restoration	12
Forest Conservation/Forestry	10

too few papers on marine and aquatic conservation, despite my efforts to encourage the submission of papers within these disciplines. The willingness of *Pacific Conservation Biology* to publish essays, reviews and opinion pieces has given good coverage to thoughtful and provocative papers on ethics, policy and conservation philosophy. More would be welcome.

In his inaugural editorial, Craig Moritz, our first editor, asked "why we need a new journal" (Moritz 1993). He began by saying that the "... *Pacific region has profound and urgent problems in conservation and land management*". These problems arose in part from "... *inadequate communication among research biologists, conservation managers and administrators*". Craig went on to say that *Pacific Conservation Biology* would be a forum for discussion, debate and the dissemination of knowledge; there would be an emphasis on clarifying the relevance of research to conservation management. In doing so, *Pacific Conservation Biology* would be more than just a journal for research papers, but would be a vehicle for ideas and principles.

Has *Pacific Conservation Biology* lived up to those expectations? In reviewing the scope of *Pacific Conservation Biology*, I am impressed by the breadth of subject material and ideas published in the nine years since that first issue. Moreover, *Pacific Conservation Biology* has been venue for papers and ideas that might otherwise find publication difficult. This is not because there is a lack of rigour or quality in the papers, but because few Australasian journals, other than the *Australian Zoologist*, allow the latitude of expressing opinion, providing detail or relating research findings to conservation and management that is routine in *Pacific Conservation Biology*. The journal, as expressed by Craig in the concluding remarks to his seminal editorial, was created in response to a need perceived by conservation biologists. He urged us to "... *enjoy it, use it and be part of it*". I would like to think we have done all that and that *Pacific Conservation Biology* plays an important role in promoting both the science and application of conservation biology in the Pacific. We may publish a fair few papers from the West of Australia, but they and all the others published are a testimonial to the efforts of researchers, managers and lay people alike to protect and enhance the biodiversity and ecological values of the biota of the Pacific. Please keep the papers coming, and remember "it is your journal", use it, support it, enjoy it.

A new editor for *Pacific Conservation Biology* is needed

The response to the publisher's invitation for someone to take over from me as editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology* (Beatty 2001) has not been successful. Being a conservation biologist, a researcher and a scientist means more than just doing research and publishing papers. It means more than acting as a referee for journal articles, as important as that is. It means being willing to assume the responsibility for seeing that journals, such as *Pacific Conservation Biology*, are available for others to publish in and for knowledge and ideas to be disseminated. It means work that may not be given credit by one's masters in Auckland, Canberra, Washington or Port Moresby, but it is work essential to achieve the goals of conservation biology. As Paul Ehrlich and I expressed it, "... *science must be viewed as part of a larger social picture*" (Recher and Ehrlich 1999). It is necessary for each of us to participate in the scientific process at all levels. This means being active in the scientific community, playing a role in professional bodies, and communicating widely with non-scientific audiences. If we fail to do this, then Ehrlich and I warned that we risked losing not only our right to conduct research, but we would fail in our responsibility to the future.

I am unable to continue as editor of *Pacific Conservation Biology*. This is a voluntary position with a journal that produces no financial gain for its publisher, although Ivor Beatty profits from knowing that Surrey Beatty & Sons are contributing in a meaningful way to conservation in the Pacific. Whether the journal will continue without someone taking over from me is unknown. Nevertheless, I have no option but to step down as editor at the conclusion of this volume. I sincerely hope one or more individuals committed to conservation biology in the Pacific will take up the challenge and carry *Pacific Conservation Biology* forward. Although being an editor is a challenge, there are many rewards, not the least is an opportunity to put your views to a wide and discerning audience.

Anyone interested in taking on the editorship of *Pacific Conservation Biology* can contact me or the publisher, Ivor Beatty. To end on a light note, "we have people waiting to take your calls".

Postscript

In a normal world, I would have sent this editorial to Andrew Mack and his co-authors (Mack *et al.* 2002) for their comments. However, they never provided us with an address (snail mail or email) and so I have not been able to extend them this courtesy. Perhaps, they would be so kind as to contact me.

References

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