

What is in this issue?

WELCOME to the second issue of *Pacific Conservation Biology*. The offerings are, again, diverse. They include a thought-provoking essay on the potential conflicts between western conservation and the needs of indigenous peoples and reviews on the lessons of biogeography for the future of anthropogenically fragmented rainforests, on ways of determining whether parasites or pathogens are responsible for population declines, and on potential uses of morphological asymmetries as indicators of stress in natural populations. The research papers also cover a wide range of topics from biogeography to demographic and genetic studies on threatened species.

This issue also initiates correspondence arising from previous articles — in this case, the essays on interactions between NGOs and Samoan communities and on the management of the Leadbeater's Possum. Some additional responses to the former essay are expected and should appear in the next issue. Correspondence arising from articles published in *Pacific Conservation Biology*, or indeed on other issues, is an important part of our attempt to foster debate and communication on regional conservation issues and I urge you, the reader, to contribute. Likewise, I would welcome more in the way of short news items or announcements. This issue also includes a book review; enquiries about book reviews should be directed to Harry Recher (Tel: 067-732-019, Fax: 067-732-769) at the University of New England.

The next issue of *Pacific Conservation Biology* will focus on Landscape Ecology. Richard Hobbs has edited a series of papers covering theory, methods and applications of landscape ecology. Together, these provide a timely overview of

this rapidly developing aspect of conservation biology. I expect that we will have more such theme issues; another on Conservation Biology in New Zealand is in preparation.

Erosion of research within state conservation agencies — a matter for concern?

It has become apparent that, in these times of economic hardship and rationalism, the resources and staffing for research within government conservation agencies throughout Australia is in rapid and serious decline. Is this true? Is it occurring also in other countries in the region? If so, it appears the conservation biologists are themselves vulnerable, if not endangered. We are told by politicians and bureaucrats that when funds get tight, research is the first to go. However, the timing is unfortunate as, at least in Queensland, the National Park estate has virtually doubled in the past four years and there is increasing emphasis on off-park management. Where is the information to properly manage these areas? Simultaneously, a better educated and more environmentally conscious public is demanding increasingly sophisticated, scientifically based management of the National Park estate. The rationalist view is that research is most efficiently conducted through external consultancies — for some types of research this may be true — but who is going to interpret the results, translate them into effective management and monitor the consequences? There is no substitute for having biologists with extensive research experience within the state conservation agencies. To attract high quality biologists, and to ensure that urgently needed or long-term research can be carried out, there is also a need for in-house research programmes.

If my interpretations are correct, then the case for conservation research needs to be backed by facts and put forcefully in a variety of forums. It is we conservation biologists who must raise the issue — nobody else will! I would welcome correspondence from readers of *Pacific Conservation Biology* who share — or disagree with — these concerns. In particular, I shall be grateful for correspondence from those affected, detailing the scope and effects of cutbacks. Only with such information will it be possible to mount a campaign to defend and increase the research effort within government conservation agencies.

CRAIG MORITZ, Editor



ON FRONT COVER

Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), a circum-tropically distributed species threatened by over harvesting. See paper by Broderick *et al.* in this issue (Photo: J. Miller; sponsored by Meteorology and Environment Protection Administration, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.)