

What's New?

Keep up to date with new initiatives and activities that are fostering research and practice pertinent to *EcoHealth* readers. In this issue, you can find out about:

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Regular updates are also available at the *EcoHealth* website: <http://www.ecohealth.net>

TRI-PARK ALIGNMENT HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IN GLOBALLY PROTECTED AREAS

Researchers in three globally protected areas have come together in a long-term collaborative initiative to identify and tackle the “hard issues” associated with what might broadly be described as managing for ecosystem sustainability. The three protected areas include:

- Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: the University of Wyoming operates a large seasonal research station at the base of the Grand Tetons.
- Fraser Island World Heritage Area, Australia: the University of the Sunshine Coast has recently estab-

lished a research center on the world's largest sand island.

- Kruger National Park, South Africa: SANParks Research Services maintain extensive on-site research facilities and supports a large number of research projects initiated from universities around the world.

The three lead research agencies for these national parks have met to strategically map existing and neglected areas of research and concern for park managers. To date, there has been a plethora of research on the ecology and landscapes of these three protected areas, but minimal research activity in matters of boundary issues, ecotourism, interpretation and communication, gateway communities, and spatial data for decision making. These also include a multitude of what *EcoHealth* readers might consider standard catchment management and environmental health issues such as the release of bacterial pathogens from in-park septic systems. Interesting (but, to date, neglected) matters have emerged, such as the high number of traffic accidents associated with “cowboy” driving behavior on sand beaches on Fraser Island and the effects on beach ecology of such behavior.

Staff and graduate student exchanges have been initiated, as have collaborative research projects on these boundary and catchment issues. The group is also keen to align with other researchers with interests in such matters, and contact can be made via Ron Neller (e-mail: rneller@usc.edu.au) at the University of the Sunshine Coast's Institute for Sustainability, Health and Regional Engagement (iSHaRE), <http://www.usc.edu.au/ishare>.

CULTURE-ENVIRONMENT LINKS FOR MAORI CULTURAL WELL-BEING

Following the opportunities and obligations enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi, Maori are increasingly exploring ways to communicate their knowledge and expectations. The impact of such activities is being investigated in terms of cultural health and well-being. Funding from the New Zealand Health Research Council is supporting a seeding grant for geographers at the University of Otago, to work with Maori to explore the wider cultural benefits of participating in environmental monitoring activities.

The project is framed by a belief that understandings of cultural well-being should be supported by an approach that: (a) acknowledges the intimately interwoven nature of culture and environment; and (b) adopts a fully collaborative research partnership between academic and Maori parties. The project builds on development of a "Cultural Health Index" developed by member groups within Ngai Tahu. This work has far-reaching implications for the relationships between ecology, culture, and health for other iwi in New Zealand and indigenous peoples around the world.

Throughout ongoing negotiations and piloting of field work, the project will be guided by a sense of well-being that moves well beyond conventional Western, health-science approaches measuring individual happiness or life-satisfaction. In particular, well-being is conceptualized as both culture- and place-specific; and as being a dynamic, lived experience rather than a static state that can be measured by a narrow set of indicators. An important feature of the work will be the development and refinement of a conceptual framework that recognizes people's well-being at individual and collective (kinship and tribal) levels, situated within a traditional environment. In particular, this work will examine whether and how cultural benefits of environmental monitoring can maintain and enhance individual and collective well-being. While recognizing diverse elements of lived expression and well-being, the project will explore the whole cycle of reciprocity and balance within a traditional/home environment (rohe) as a guide to more nuanced understanding of cultural well-being.

For more information, contact: Dr. Gail Tipa (e-mail: gtipa@extra.co.nz) or Dr. Ruth Panelli (e-mail: rp@geography.otago.ac.nz).

GLOBAL ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY GROUP (GEIG): CONFERENCE REPORT

At the largest of its conferences since 1992, 38 experts in ecology, economics, ethics, geography, law, medicine, philosophy, political economy, and public health convened in Venice, Italy, June 29–July 3, 2005. Participants came from Australia, Canada, Costa Rica, Great Britain, Italy, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, Romania, South Africa, South Korea, Sri Lanka, The Netherlands, and the USA. The chief organizers were Laura Westra and Colin Soskolne of Canada; thematic clarity was provided by William Rees.

Conferences of this Group meet almost annually under the leadership of Laura Westra. New and returning delegates find these meetings an academic highlight, providing opportunities and impetus for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary networking and approaches to be put into practice. The theme of this year's conference was "Global Ecological Integrity and the Sustainability of Civilization: Hard and Soft Law Perspectives." The World Health Organization's office in Venice was key to identifying the meeting venue: a magnificent newly renovated convent in the heart of Venice.

Meeting highlights included joining with the Earth Charter Campaign (http://www.earthcharterusa.org/earth_charter.html) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Committee on Ethics and Law (<http://www.iucn.org/themes/law/cel01.html>). Notions of both global and personal integrity were explored in innovative ways. The foundational nature of the Earth Charter to law—locally, nationally and internationally—was explored for sustainable ecological governance.

In their conference summation, Drs. Westra, Rees, and Soskolne raised the concern that no known entity is concerning itself with alternatives to current global paradigms driven by economic growth. This theme has therefore been adopted for the next conference in July 2006 (Island of Samos, Greece), where the focus will be on the negative impacts on life-supporting ecosystems from the perspectives of population growth, overconsumption and waste, and misuse of technological innovation—and the role of governance in addressing these issues. To be added to the e-mail distribution list for this Group, please contact Colin Soskolne (e-mail: colin.soskolne@ualberta.ca).

IDRC LAUNCHES *HEALTH-ENVIRONMENT: GLOBAL LINKS NEWSLETTER*

The Ecohealth program initiative at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) is pleased to introduce the inaugural issue of *Health-Environment: Global Links Newsletter* (<http://www.idrc.ca/ecohealth>). This four-language, annual publication is being produced to meet a need for information and knowledge exchange globally expressed at the International Forum on Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health that convened in Montréal, Canada in May 2003.

The purpose of this newsletter is to sustain the momentum that began with the Forum and continue building with the emerging global Community of Practice on health and environment. The newsletter is sponsored by IDRC, but is intended as a forum for the emerging global community of scientists and development practitioners working on health and environment linkages. Therefore, while the first issue of this newsletter emphasizes projects and activities sponsored by IDRC, all comments, suggestions, and story ideas are welcomed as contributions to building a vibrant, effective community. Feel free to contact *Health-Environment: Global Links* (e-mail: ecohealth@idrc.ca) or find updates at: <http://www.idrc.ca/ecohealth>

FIRST NEW ZEALAND SYMPOSIUM ON CONSERVATION MEDICINE

Auckland Zoo, in collaboration with the local tertiary institution, Unitec New Zealand, hosted the first national symposium on Conservation Medicine in early July 2005. Auckland Zoo is building a new teaching, research, and medical facility—to be named the New Zealand Centre for Conservation Medicine—which aims to promote and develop wildlife health research and training within the collaborative, ecological framework of Conservation Medicine. The 2-day symposium was designed to raise awareness of this new discipline within New Zealand and to provide a forum for people working in the environmental, human,

and animal health sectors to exchange information and explore the potential for collaboration. New Zealand, like other island nations, has a high level of plant and animal endemism and has suffered dramatic species extinctions and declines as a result of widespread habitat modification and the introduction of a large number of exotic, invasive species. One third of the endemic bird species have become extinct since humans first colonized these islands, as recently as 700–800 years ago, and 75% of what remains is classified as threatened. While primary causes have been a combination of habitat loss, competition from invasive species, and over-harvesting, the role of disease is unclear. Circumstantial evidence for the rapid, widespread disappearance of some species, such as the korimako (bellbird) (*Anthornis melanur*) in the 1860s, is suggestive of a localized epornitic.

Topics included in the July 2005 Symposium raised a range of ecosystem health challenges including evidence for southerly spread of introduced mosquito vectors of avian malaria and Ross River virus; human morbidity and mortalities associated with an epornitic in exotic house sparrows, *Passer domesticus*, of *Salmonella typhimurium* DT160; mass die-off in the Southern Ocean of endemic New Zealand sea lion pups, *Phocarctos hookeri*, associated with a point-source of the human pathogen, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*; concentration of *Aspergillus fumigatus* fungus at disrupted forest margins impacting on the survival of the endangered endemic honeyeater, the hihi (*Notiomystis cincta*); and a mass die-off of an endemic frog species (*Leiopelma archeyi*) due to unidentified causes. Major public health concerns were also raised related to the possible spread of the H5N1 avian influenza virus from Southeast Asia to New Zealand. Participants identified numerous potential collaborative opportunities, including involvement in organizing future conferences and the further exploration of conservation medicine as a framework for transdisciplinary collaboration.

For more information about the New Zealand Centre for Conservation Medicine, contact Richard Jakob-Hoff (e-mail: richard.jakob-hoff@aucklandcity.govt.nz).

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