

Editorial

Launching the International EcoHealth Association

The publication of this issue immediately precedes EcoHealth ONE, the first international conference associated with this journal. This event also marks the official launch of the new international organization associated with EcoHealth. This organization is replacing and taking over the reins from the founding EcoHealth Consortium established 4 years ago to launch the journal, which was built upon the groundwork of the former International Society for Ecosystem Health and the journal *Ecosystem Health*. Not long after the Consortium decided to launch *EcoHealth*, while we were meeting with various prospective publishers, the idea of a membership society or association surfaced frequently in discussions. Publishers' representatives often commented about how scholarly journals were launched by membership societies or professional associations. We knew this, of course. We believed having a broad-based membership organization was essential to the long-term success of the journal. It would be critical to provide opportunities for the broader "ecology and health community" to support and engage with the journal. More importantly, it would be critical to advance the transdisciplinary field of ecology and health. However, not only were our "hands full" creating and publishing a new journal, we felt the journal would cultivate the right conditions in time for an organization to emerge—if the journal were indeed to achieve its potential.

This time has now arrived. The launch of the new scholarly and professional organization at EcoHealth ONE in Wisconsin is a reality achieved through the efforts of many of the same people whose hard work helped us launch the journal. As we reflect on the past

several years spent getting the journal off the ground and anticipate the years ahead, we wonder if this is not also a time of transition in terms of awareness of the connection between ecology and health. There seems to be an urgency to address problems that have been mainly on the margins of the agendas of science and society. Global warming, for one, with the likely role of humans, which until perhaps this year was doubted by the majority of the lay public, has both become mainstream in the public consciousness and, so the polls tell us, accepted as scientific fact by the majority. Perhaps this elevation of consciousness was engendered by a general sense of our vulnerability resulting from catastrophic events including the South Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, and the Pakistan Earthquake.

Another such event, the global spread of the avian influenza H5N1 strain has penetrated the public consciousness on a remarkable scale due to the wide and unrelenting coverage by lay and science media outlets and by governments. Most significant to us is how it focused attention on the connections among wildlife, livestock, and human populations that underly the process of infectious disease emergence, previously not widely appreciated even in the scientific community. Less well publicized, but representing significant turning points nonetheless, are other issues including breakthroughs in understanding and "spreading the word" on the global amphibian decline, which has been featured extensively in *EcoHealth* and received a "call-to-arms" in a Policy Forum in *Science* in July 2006. The completion of the *Millennium Ecosystem Assessment* with its *Health Synthesis*, describing in a comprehensive manner for the first time the link between

ecosystems and human health, is yet another recent consciousness-raising event.

The launch of the new association represents an historical opportunity for us to join together and redouble our efforts to advance the shared concerns of the ecology and health community. On behalf of those who preceded us by laying down the foundation upon which *EcoHealth* was built, and those of us who dedicated ourselves to its establishment during the last 4 years, we ask you to join us, literally, by becoming a member of the new organization at this crucial time

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