

History of the Society for Conservation Biology: How and Why We Got Here

For the record, the Society for Conservation Biology originated about 5 p.m. on May 8, 1985, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, at the conclusion of the Second Conference on Conservation Biology. An informal motion to organize such a society was approved by acclamation, following reports by chairpersons (Jared Diamond and Peter Brussard) of two ad hoc committees. These committees met during the conference to discuss the need for such a society and for a journal. I was asked to take it from there. With the help of many people and organizations, we held three meetings around the country (Washington, D.C., at the offices of the World Wildlife Fund—U.S.; Chicago at the Brookfield Zoo; San Diego at the San Diego Zoo). At these meetings (held in August and September) we drafted a constitution and discussed matters of policy and publication.

Representatives from the Washington, Chicago, and San Diego meetings met at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on Nov. 19, 1985. A draft set of articles and by-laws was approved (printed elsewhere in this issue). Those attending or participating by conference call constituted themselves as an interim or pro tem Board of Governors, and officers were elected. Peter Brussard was elected pro tem Secretary—Treasurer, and I was elected pro tem President.

In addition, Robert May and Daniel Simberloff agreed to serve as chairpersons of a search committee

for the editor of the journal you are now reading.

After the Ann Arbor meeting I contacted an attorney, Bernadette Probus in San Diego, who helped us with the incorporation process (effective in California April 8, 1986). We were also successful in applying for not-for-profit status in California (R&T 23701(d) and with the Internal Revenue Service. We received our 501(c)3 status from the IRS effective July 7, 1986.

A meeting of the Board of Governors was held in Washington, D.C., on March 20, 1986, at the offices of the World Wildlife Fund/Conservation Foundation to discuss editorial policy and the merits of alternative publishing arrangements. Soon thereafter, an ad hoc Publications Committee, consisting of Peter Brussard, William Conway, David Ehrenfeld, George Rabb, and myself, chose Blackwell as our publisher and handled the negotiation of our contract with them.

Since then, several people have agreed to chair standing committees: William Conway, Development and Nominations Committee; Peter Brussard, Conference Committee; Jared Diamond, Awards Committee; Katherine Ralls, Policy and Resolutions Committee; David Ehrenfeld, Publications Committee.

All of this could not have been achieved without the moral and material support of many people and organizations. Among the latter are the Chicago Zoological Society, The

New York Zoological Society, The World Wildlife Fund and the W. Alton Jones Foundation. Many individuals have contributed enthusiastically their time and advice. Now, let me indulge in a few editorial comments.

The Society is a response by professionals, mostly biological and social scientists, managers and administrators to the biological diversity crisis that will reach a crescendo in the first half of the twenty-first century. We assume implicitly that we are in time, and that by joining together with each other and with other well-intentioned persons and groups, that the worst biological disaster in the last 65 million years can be averted. We assume implicitly that science and technology are neither inherently good nor evil, but are tools that can benefit or harm. We assume implicitly that environmental wounds inflicted by ignorant humans and destructive technologies can be treated by wiser humans and by wholesome technologies. Although we have varying personal philosophies, we share a faith in ourselves, as a species and as individuals, that we are equal to the challenge.

As conservation biologists, our major role in this unprecedented movement is a scientific one, though some of us may take on other jobs in the conservation movement—as publicists, as advocates, as activists, and mentors. But as members of this Society, as students, scientists, managers, and administrators, we have particular and unique responsibili-

ties. These include 1) the modeling and analysis of population, community, ecosystem, and planetary processes; 2) basic field work, including inventories and systematics; 3) experimentation to test hypotheses; 4) development and evaluation of technological and management interventions that maintain and restore diversity and function; 5) the communication of results to facilitate their application; and 6) the integration of this knowledge and technology with complementary human activities, from agriculture to anthropology. For these reasons we join together in professional alliance, in the service of each other, but also in the service of the less articulate members of our evolutionary tree.

We are not the only organization with these goals. The objectives of many professional groups, societies, foundations, and other entities are shared and overlap with ours. But conditions change, and now they require a new kind of organization. Let us hope that we can be as effective as our older, sister organizations, for the benefit of all beings.

Michael Ellman Soulé

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The first annual meeting of the Society for Conservation Biology will be held at Montana State University, Bozeman, June 23–26, 1987. In addition to the Society's first business meeting, we will have a distinguished banquet speaker, Norman Myers, contributed paper sessions, and four symposia. The symposia are: "The role of disease in population regulation and conservation," organized by Bob May; "Edge effects and conservation," organized by Larry Harris; "Conservation genetics of fishes," organized by Fred Allendorf; and "How do we train conservation biologists?", organized by David Hales. The registration fee will be around \$50, or \$35 for students.

The SCB meeting will partially overlap a joint meeting of the Society for the Study of Evolution and the American Society of Naturalists held at MSU June 21–24. Several symposia of interest to conservation biologists will be held at this meeting as well. Those wishing to attend both the ASN/SSE and the SCB meetings can do so for a registration fee of about \$90, or \$60 for students.

Bozeman is in the heart of the Northern Rocky Mountains close to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Bison, wolves, grizzlies, trum-

peter swans, extensive wilderness areas, and black-footed ferret habitat are all within a few hours' drive. Dormitory and motel accommodations are very reasonable. This is an excellent opportunity to combine an unparalleled vacation with one or more outstanding scientific meetings.

Registration information and a call for contributed papers was mailed to the SCB membership in early February. If you did not receive this mailing or would like this material sent to you, contact Dr. Peter Brussard, Department of Biology, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717. (406) 994-4548.

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The Society for Conservation Biology has received grant funds for the purpose of providing free subscriptions to *Conservation Biology* for a limited number of libraries outside the United States that cannot afford the subscription price.

Nominations for the subscription grants, along with a letter justifying the request, should be sent to: Dr. Peter Brussard, Secretary-Treasurer, SCB, Biology Department, Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 59717.