

## SCB-A Newsletter December 2006

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### Inaugural conference of the Australasian Section of the Society for Conservation Biology

IT is now just a bit more than six months to the inaugural meeting of the Australasian region of SCB 'The Biodiversity Extinction Crisis, a Pacific and Australasian Response', which will be held July 10–12 2007 at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. This conference faces the major problems for biodiversity conservation in our region, existing and potential solutions and links to the global biodiversity initiatives. There will be five major themes: (1) Regional challenges (particular issues for our part of the world); (2) Managing threatening processes of universal importance; (3) Case studies of conservation in action, including biodiversity monitoring and assessment; (4) Conservation science and policy; and, (5) Conservation science and the community (non-government organizations, indigenous people). With Australian governments finally awakening to the reality of global warming and its consequences for Australasia, this meeting has the potential to make a significant impact on regional conservation. Not only is your attendance important to the success of the conference, but it is your opportunity to be heard on issues as important as water allocation for environmental flows in Australia, biodiversity conservation in the Southern Oceans, climate change and the allocation of resources to threatened species management.

Information about the conference is available through the conference web site <http://www.biodiversity2007.com/>. To help support the conference please forward the address to other people you might think would be interested. You can register your interest in the conference on the page provided on the web site, which also provides details on registration and abstract submission.

### Society for Conservation Biology Strategic Plan and Policies

The following information was provided by the Society for Conservation Biology.

In support of the SCB 2006-2010 Strategic Plan (SP [http://www.conbio.org/AboutUs/StrategicPlan/2006/SCB\\_StrategicPlan.pdf](http://www.conbio.org/AboutUs/StrategicPlan/2006/SCB_StrategicPlan.pdf)) and the vision presented therein of a unified Society and consistent messaging, [the society has] initiated a series of policies to more effectively run [the] rapidly growing organization (both in membership size and our sections, chapters, working groups). While growth enriches the SCB by bringing new perspectives, networking opportunities, and collaboration between disciplines, increasing numbers of operating units acting independently can mean [the Society could] appear fragmented and disorganized — in direct opposition to the goals of the SP.

Details of SCB policies and guidelines, including the new initiative mentioned above, can be sourced from <https://www.conbio.org/intranet/PoliciesAndGuidelines/>. Input from members is encouraged.

### SCB Working Group for Ecological Economics and Sustainability Science

An edited version of an email message from Stephanie Januchowski to members of the Australasian Section of SCB follows:

"I am writing to you today, on behalf of the SCB Working Group for Ecological Economics and Sustainability Science (WGEES), in regards to your interest in receiving further information about the working group and the proposed economic growth position recently presented to the SCB's Board of Governors.

"Let me start with an explanation of the WGEES and its purpose, in that the WGEES is an international group of SCB members who are

seeking the adoption of a policy position on economic growth and biodiversity conservation by the SCB at large. Further, we believe that the threat of economic growth to biodiversity and other aspects of ecological integrity should become one of the unifying issues for conservation professionals.

"The WGEES is not a primary forum for deliberation or debate on "limits to growth"; rather it is a group of conservation professionals who have already achieved unity about this issue. Membership to the WGEES is open to all members of SCB, and is currently comprised of individuals who recognize fundamental conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation. Thus, this recognition provides the WGEES with the unity to efficiently convey principles of ecology into economics and economic-policy making venues.

"Currently the WGEES is developing a position on economic growth to be adopted by the SCB. The development of the position is in light of the believed need for professional societies, such as WGEES to interact with the public and policy members to ensure an accurate understanding of the conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation. SCB members who work on these and/or related issues between economic growth and biodiversity conservation are also members of WGEES, considering such topics as ecological foot-printing, natural capital valuation, alternative energy futures, environmental justice, and the political economy of biodiversity conservation.

"If you are an SCB member who recognizes a fundamental conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation and the items noted above are pertinent to your field of interest, then you should join the WGEES. A large membership base will develop a foundation to ensure the adoption of a strong

position on economic growth by the SCB. Further, all members who work under the framework of ecological economics and sustainability science are encouraged to join the WGEES, as all members will be part of a "loose-knit" but valuable network concerning all aspects of ecological economics and sustainability science relevant to biodiversity conservation. As with all SCB sections and working groups, there are no dues to join WGEES. Please pass all inquiries or additional items directly to Brian Czech, Interim Chair, at [brianczech@juno.com](mailto:brianczech@juno.com), or by telephone at +1-703-901-7190."

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#### Student Prizes

The Australian Branch regularly awards prizes to students for outstanding presentations, including posters, at regional meetings. The most recent award was given to Tanya Anne Rankin, School of Biological Sciences at the University of Sydney for her poster at the Australian Society of Limnology conference held in Albury/Wodonga, Australia.

Her poster was deemed to be the best student poster on a conservation topic. Tanya provided the following information on her poster and the award.

#### Diet and dietary selectivity of the platypus in relation to season and macroinvertebrate assemblages

Rankin, Tanya<sup>1</sup> [tanyarankin@iprimus.com.au](mailto:tanyarankin@iprimus.com.au), Dickman, Chris<sup>1</sup> [cdickman@bio.usyd.edu.au](mailto:cdickman@bio.usyd.edu.au) and Grant, Tom<sup>2</sup> [t.grant@unsw.edu.au](mailto:t.grant@unsw.edu.au)

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We studied the diet of platypuses (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) through an

examination of cheek pouch material from streams in Kangaroo Valley, NSW, and compared this with available invertebrates across seasons and stream habitats. Platypuses consumed a wide range of almost exclusively benthic invertebrate prey and foraged in all habitats, pool, riffle and stream edge, but not equally so suggesting that habitat selection was occurring. Invertebrates in the diet were most similar to those from stream edge and pool habitats compared with riffles, suggesting that platypuses focused their foraging activities in these deeper water habitats. Although there was no seasonality in invertebrate community structure, there was significant variation in platypus diet between seasons, notably between winter and summer, but not between the sexes. Dietary selection was apparent as the invertebrate fauna in the diet differed in proportional composition from the invertebrates available in the streams.

#### What winning this award means to me:

I am very pleased to have won an award from the Society for Conservation Biology for my poster on my research on the diet of the platypus which I recently presented at The Australian Society for Limnology Congress. This work formed an integral part of my PhD research on the foraging ecology of the platypus, *Ornithorhynchus anatinus*. My research explored the functional role that platypuses play in the aquatic systems in which they occur and demonstrated that, as a top predator in these systems, they are important in structuring aquatic macroinvertebrate communities.

By winning this award, which gives me two years membership to SCB and a subscription to the journal *Pacific Conservation Biology*, I will be able to keep abreast of new research in the field of conservation biology in the Pacific region. I will also be able to promote the awareness of the importance of platypuses to aquatic ecosystem functioning in Australia. This understanding is intrinsic to directing conservation programmes aimed at protecting this unique species and their aquatic habitats.

#### Upcoming Conferences 2007

**BIODIVERSITY CONFERENCE IN TASMANIA:** Tamar NRM, in association with the Centre for Environment, University of Tasmania, is holding a conference entitled "Biodiversity: Balancing Conservation and Production — case studies from the real world" from 26–28 June 2007. The conference will be a pooling of practical experience, innovative ideas and vision to inspire informed action for the improvement of both productivity and biodiversity. For more information contact Amanda Bruce ([amanda.bruce@launceston.tas.gov.au](mailto:amanda.bruce@launceston.tas.gov.au)) or the Conference Managers on (03) 6330 1444, [Luba.Richards@conferenceplus.com.au](mailto:Luba.Richards@conferenceplus.com.au).

**AUSTRALASIAN ORNITHOLOGICAL CONFERENCE (AOC):** The AOC is the major ornithological conference for Australasia and is held biennially. The next AOC will be held in Perth, Western Australia in December 2007 following the annual Conference of the Ecological Society of Australia. For details contact Sue Mather ([mather@cygnus.uwa.edu.au](mailto:mather@cygnus.uwa.edu.au)) and from the Birds Australia website (<http://www.birdsaustralia.com.au>).

#### A call for news from the membership

Please contact Harry Recher ([hjrecher@pacific.net.au](mailto:hjrecher@pacific.net.au)) if you have anything you would like to contribute to the News and Views section of our Journal, *Pacific Conservation Biology*. Items from the News & Views are also made available through the Society for Conservation Biology newsletter. Short reviews of local conservation initiatives of regional interest are encouraged.

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