National Biodiversity Council

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THE National Biodiversity Council was formed in December 1994. The Council is an independent body that acts as a scientific voice for biodiversity conservation in Australia. It consists of a council of 12 scientists, elected by their peers, and an Assembly of representatives from scientific societies and institutions and those nominated by the Council to provide balance and additional expertise. The Council was formed because many people were concerned about the lack of an independent scientific voice on environmental and development issues, and because many Australian scientists lacked full freedom to comment on government and institutional policies affecting biodiversity. The Council was to be that voice and Council members were empowered to speak freely and openly on behalf of the Council.

In its first two years, the Council has been active in number of areas. The Council and Councillors have commented on Commonwealth and State initiatives for forest conservation and management, the need for control of vegetation clearing, and reasons to better regulate the introduction of exotic species (including those intended for agriculture) and the translocation of native species within Australia, among other more local issues. A conference on the Design of Reserves for Nature Conservation in the Darling Botanical District of Western Australia was co-sponsored with the Centre for Ecosystem Management of Edith Cowan University, Perth. A primary concern expressed by the Council in commenting on national forest policies was the attempt by the Commonwealth to shroud its proposed forest reserve system with scientific approval. The Council made the point that the basis for arriving at the Commonwealth's proposals were neither scientific, nor were they necessarily supported by the nation's scientists as the Commonwealth had alluded. No doubt the Council could have done more, but the lack of funding seriously hampered activities.

As the first Council had been elected for only two years, it was decided to use the requirement of elections to strengthen the structure of the Council. Accordingly the Council employed Don Driscoll to co-ordinate both a restructuring and the election of a new Council. Both are proceeding as this is being written in December 1996. It is intended to expand the Council from 12 members to 18 and to encourage the formation of state branches. The reason behind both initiatives is to counter the lack of funding by spreading the work among a larger number of people and having state representatives who can comment for the Council on local issues which may be as important for biodiversity conservation as, say, the continued lack of national objectives on managing and conserving native vegetation.

The results of the election and restructuring will be reported in the next issue of *Pacific Conservation Biology*. Council activities will be reported in each issue of *Pacific Conservation Biology*. Persons interested in the Council or in the formation of state branches are invited to contact Harry Recher at Edith Cowan University (h.recher@cowan.edu.au).

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APPEARING IN FUTURE ISSUES

The following Research papers will appear in future issues of *Pacific Conservation Biology:*

The protection of forested coastal wetlands in Southern Sumatra: a regional strategy for integrating conservation and development. *J. Davie* and *Effendy Sumardja.*

Predation at nests of two New Zealand endemic passerines; implications for bird community restoration. *K. P. Brown.*

Restoration of New Zealand islands: redressing the effects of introduced species. *D. R. Towns, D. Simberloff* and *I. A. E. Atkinson.*

How secure is the Lord Howe Island woodhen? A population viability analysis using VORTEX. *B. W. Brook, L. Lim, R. Harden* and *R. Frankham.*

Natural history of the New Georgia Monkey-faced Bat *Pteralopex* sp. nov. from the Solomon Islands. *D. Fisher* and *E. Tasker.*

Distribution and response of rats *(Rattus rattus, R. exulans)* to seed fall in New Zealand beech forests. *C. M. King* and *H. Moller.*

Papers for News and Views, Forum Essays, Reviews and Book Reviews will also appear when available.

Projected publishing dates for Volume 3:

No. 2 — May 1997

No. 3 — August 1997

No. 4 — November 1997

Nature Conservation in Production Environments: Managing the Matrix

Throughout the world, native animals and plants have suffered from the impact of economic development by clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation, selective harvesting and the degradation of ecosystems. Sustainable development by people includes the need for extensive extractive production from land and sea. Past attitudes allowed these activities to occur almost regardless of the effects on the environment. Increasingly, companies, landowners, community groups and local authorities are realizing their responsibilities to sustainable use of the environment. Connecting economy and ecology will enhance the sustainability of production that uses natural resources. Long-term survival of native biodiversity within a production environment is an indicator of ecologically sustainable production. How we value biodiversity, what we measure, who manages and who pays are important questions to be addressed at this conference.

Effects of production typically extend far beyond the boundaries of traditional management. Life cycle analyses and other management tools used to enhance long-term sustainability rather than short-term growth of human economic activity are valuable for ensuring economic returns while enhancing quality for life for all stakeholders. Past attitudes of governments which have placed biodiversity management in the hands of public agencies charged with management disconnected from market realities and in areas physically separated from people has reinforced the view that biodiversity conservation is independent of productive activities. This attitude has led to the undervaluing of natural resources and has provided economic disincentives for others to consider natural resources as part of their normal activities. Healthy natural ecosystems provide invaluable natural services to all people and are necessary for all production activities. Managing this complex matrix of interdependency is the challenge underpinning sustainability.

Sectors of particular interest in relation to the questions posed by this conference include: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, urban, mining, industry and tourism. The conference organizers are seeking contributions from companies, landowners, indigenous peoples, community groups, local authorities, scientists, economists, and other resource managers addressing issues associated with conservations of biodiversity within production environments.

Conference dates: Sunday, 30 November–Friday, 5 December, 1997.

Conference location: Taupo, New Zealand.

Conference objectives:

1. To provide an understanding of ways that conservation and production can be integrated, including the development of accounting links which value biological diversity, rather than discount it.
2. To understand how knowledge of the current functional and disfunctional links between conservation and production can be used to enhance sustainability.
3. To provide methods of achieving both economic benefit and conservation as ways of enhancing the quality of life.
4. To understand how a landscape approach can integrate social, economic and conservation goals.
5. To develop an ability to establish performance criteria that integrate the matrix encompassed by production and conservation.

For more information, including registration details, contact:

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