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EDITORIAL

20th Anniversary Editorial: *Animal Conservation* 1998 - 2018

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Animal Conservation celebrates its 20th Anniversary in 2018, a fantastic achievement. One of the great things about anniversaries, apart from the obvious opportunity for celebrations, is that it gives us a chance to reflect on the past. Twenty years is a long time in the history of any journal; when *Animal Conservation* was launched there were 14 journals with “conservation” in their title, now there are 43, and it is pleasing that *Animal Conservation* is ranked within the top four. Conservation, in general, has a greater place in society’s view of the world than it did 20 years ago. The issues raised through ecological and conservation research highlight the challenges that biodiversity is facing due to land-use change, invasive species, over-utilisation and climate change. Research has also shown what can be done to conserve animal species in both zoos and the wild. Many of the articles published in *Animal Conservation* have led to real change in the ways that animal species and communities are both understood and managed.

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So, how did the Journal start, what niche was it trying to fill? As prescribed by the editorial in the first edition, “We intend the journal to address scientific issues of past, present and future factors influencing the conservation of animal species and their habitats” (Bruford et al. 1998). This intention was reflected in the first volume of the Journal - of the 34 papers published, 24 were focused on individual species. The Journal has, over the past 20 years, moved generally away from studies on the conservation of individual species to focus on the broader lessons from animal conservation that can be learnt and applied more holistically. This first reflects the fact that animals obviously live within habitats and ecosystems, so an understanding of the broader context is important to making appropriate conservation decisions. Secondly, it is an immense task to study every species to support its conservation and we now can be more strategic in applying learnings from one species to others with careful evaluation of whether broad applications of policy and management actions are valid. Third, conservation ‘framings’ have changed significantly away from “nature for itself” to “people and nature” that emphasises the need for cultural, organisational and governance structures that support positive outcomes for humanity and nature (Mace 2014).

The reality is that most of the challenges facing animal conservation, across the globe, are manifest in the developing world. Whilst the investment in research is much greater in higher income countries, the development of the research capacity in low- and middle-income countries to address local issues is paramount for the long-term future of animal conservation in these regions. Even though multiple papers in the first Volume of *Animal Conservation* were focused on species in developing countries, over 70% were authored by researchers from the USA and Europe. In the 2017 Volume this figure has dropped to 58%. There is obviously still a lot of work to do and the Editors have recently recruited more Associate Editors from across the globe to reduce geographic bias, and are looking at other ways of increasing submissions from researchers in the low- and middle-income countries.

Globally, there is a growing acknowledgement of the structural issues in academia limiting the recruitment, progression and retention of female researchers. Clearly the role that women play in publishing scientific articles is important to support these attributes of their career. *Animal Conservation* has been leading the way following an editorial in 2013 (Pettorelli et al. 2013) in which we reflected on the importance of the “choices we make when we suggest reviewers and associate editors, when we approach potential writers for commentaries, or when we decide on who gets to become an editor”. The editorial team is now more gender balanced and the number of women who are first authors of articles published in the Journal has risen from 18% in 1998 to 44% in 2017. We are committed to continue supporting female conservation scientists as a diversity of ideas,

leadership and engagement is needed to solve the many challenges that the planet's biodiversity faces.

From today's perspective it was surprising to read in the 1998 editorial "Although we hope that articles will always be relevant and useful for conservation planning, we are not intending to include commentary dealing specifically with policy and implementation". One big change, over the past 20 years, has been the closer engagement between the animal conservation science community and those that manage and plan for conservation outcomes. With the growing importance of demonstrating the real-world outcomes of investment in scientific research, comes the necessity of understanding and acting on the needs of the policy and practitioner communities. This requirement from funding bodies is far greater now than 20 years ago. The introduction of our *Letters from the Conservation Front Line* feature (Gordon et al 2014) is our way of bringing those voices to the animal conservation science community. The dialogue has just started, let's turn it into a cacophony.

So that's reflecting on the past, let's look into the crystal ball - what will the 40th Anniversary Edition of *Animal Conservation* highlight? One thing we can be sure of is that the articles published in 2038 will likely be very different from those published today. Whilst there will still be a place for traditional binoculars and notebook animal conservation science, the rate of development of genetic, electronic, computer and data technology is staggering. Animal conservation has entered the age of big data and increasingly relies on new technology to support real-time monitoring of ecosystem health and deploy management interventions to deal with threats (e.g. invasive species and weather events). Making sense of, and integrating, different types of data will be an important focus. As a result of the significant decreases in animal population size and range, species loss through extinction and the degradation of natural ecosystems, emphasis will likely be placed on restoration and rewilding - novel means of restoring genetic diversity within species, resurrecting extinct species and re-engineering ecosystem processes and ecosystem service delivery. With growing human populations, there has been, and will continue to be, a move to supporting the conservation of animal species living in human-dominated landscapes. This will focus attention on human/wildlife conflicts and how to manage them effectively, and the roles and benefits that wild species can play for local human communities. Humans are, therefore, central to positive outcomes for animal conservation and the role of the social and economic sciences will come to the fore. At the moment we don't see a lot of the business disciplines in conservation science, but we expect to see more valuation (ecosystem services), accounting and return on investment approaches brought into the conservation literature. These are exciting times for animal conservation scientists and it is

the Journal's job to not only reflect the scientific endeavor but shine a light into the future through e.g. opinion pieces, reviews and editorials.

So, back to the celebrations. We raise a glass to the Journal for reaching its 20th Anniversary, but more importantly, we salute you, the animal conservation community of scientists and practitioners that have contributed to the success of the Journal over the past 20 years. We couldn't have done it without you.

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