

## What's New?

Keep up to date with new initiatives and activities that are fostering research and practice pertinent to EcoHealth readers. In this issue, you can find out about:

- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: First Round Completed April, June Start for Second Round
- Oceans and Human Health Initiatives Established by US Federal Agencies
- Variations in Animal Behavioral Response to Human-induced Rapid Environmental Change
- Launch of Australian National Sustainability Initiative: Towards Healthy People in Healthy Places—Where Society and Environment Meet

Regular updates are also available at the EcoHealth website: <http://www.ecohealth.net>

### MILLENNIUM ECOSYSTEM ASSESSMENT: FIRST ROUND COMPLETED APRIL, JUNE START FOR SECOND ROUND

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The end of the first round of peer review for the millennium ecosystem assessment was marked by a meeting of lead authors in Montreal in April 2004. The meeting involved discussion of the first round review comments and a process of integration and synthesis.

An independent review board of 85 experts, chaired by José Sarukhán and Anne Whyte, was assigned to examine responses and to determine whether the review comments have been adequately addressed.

The second round of review starts in June 2004. Government review requests will be sent to the National Focal Points of the Convention on Biological Diversity, Convention to Combat Desertification, Ramsar Conven-

tion on Wetlands, the Convention on Migratory Species, and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Over 800 experts will also be invited to submit review comments. The peer review process has been open to all, offering a significant opportunity to participate and shape the world's most comprehensive effort to establish best knowledge of the links between human well-being and ecosystem services. Anyone can register to access the drafts and provide comments on them before August 16, 2004. More details are available at the millennium ecosystem assessment website: <http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/products.chapters.aspx>

A report synthesizing the findings of the four directly health-related chapters is planned, coordinated by the World Health Organization. Contact: [simon.hales@anu.edu.au](mailto:simon.hales@anu.edu.au)

Further information is also available in the *EcoHealth* Profile, "Health Aspects of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment," by Simon Hales, Colin Butler, Alistair Woodward, and Carlos Corvalan (*EcoHealth* 1:124–128).

### OCEANS AND HUMAN HEALTH INITIATIVES ESTABLISHED BY US FEDERAL AGENCIES

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The National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), one of the National Institutes of Health, have announced funding for four joint Centers for Oceans and Human Health (COHH). The centers will be located at the University of Washington, the University of Hawaii, the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution in Massachusetts, and the University of Miami.

The centers will bring together experts in biomedical and oceanographic sciences to study the effects of harmful

algal blooms, marine pathogens, and the oceans' vast potential for drug discovery. Research foci include: toxic algae and how toxic domoic acid produced by algae accumulates in Puget Sound shellfish (University of Washington); ciguatoxin-producing organisms and development of improved methods for detecting these toxins in fish and humans (University of Hawaii); toxic plankton Alexandrium in the Gulf of Maine and the relationship of its various genotypes to its toxicity, including effects on shellfish toxicity (Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution); and hazardous algal blooms in subtropical ecosystems and the development of probes to identify new species and toxins (University of Miami).

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has mounted a similar initiative to establish intramural centers at existing NOAA facilities, as well as an extramural grants program. In May 3–4, 2004, NOAA held a “Workshop on Oceans and Human Health” to bring together scientists and program managers across NOAA who are directly or indirectly involved in understanding and predicting the role of the oceans on human health.

The history and current state of these developments is described by Donald L. Rice, Allen Dearry, and David L. Garrison in a Profile in this issue of *EcoHealth*.

For more information about the Centers for Oceans and Human Health, see: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/oc/news/ocean.htm>

For more information about the NOAA Oceans and Human Health Initiative, see: <http://www.ogp.noaa.gov/mpe/ohi/index.htm>

## VARIATIONS IN ANIMAL BEHAVIORAL RESPONSE TO HUMAN-INDUCED RAPID ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

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A workshop sponsored by the Center for Animal Behavior at the University of California (UC) at Davis was held on May 8–9, 2004 to examine variation in behavioral responses to human-induced rapid environmental change (HIREC), including habitat change, climate change, spread of exotic species, and chemical pollutants. These changes are clearly causing species declines worldwide. Notably, while many species are not coping well with HIREC, other species are doing fine. Indeed, some are moving in with us, and are now considered pests. This phenomenon leads to a critical question—what explains this variation in ability to cope with HIREC? In many cases, the environmental changes are

occurring so rapidly that to cope, organisms must exhibit appropriate, immediate behavioral responses to these novel environments.

The focus of the workshop was to understand variation in behavioral responses to HIREC. For example, when natural habitat is converted into urban, suburban, or agricultural habitat, why do some organisms avoid these new habitats, while others move in with us? Or, when novel predators (perhaps humans) invade, why do some naive prey respond appropriately, while others do not, leading to their extermination?

Teams of UC Davis graduate students presented conceptual overviews on each of the four major types of HIREC listed above. Keynote speakers covering these areas included: Colleen Cassady St. Clair (University of Alberta), Tyrone Hayes (University of California-Berkeley), Steve Lima (Indiana State), Terry Root (Stanford University), and Paul Sherman (Cornell University). Case studies were presented by other UC Davis scientists. A final session looked at variation in how well humans, individuals, and societies respond to HIREC. Extensive discussion focused on developing organizational frameworks for guiding future study. A series of manuscripts are in preparation.

For further information or to offer suggestions, contact Andy Sih at [asih@ucdavis.edu](mailto:asih@ucdavis.edu)

## LAUNCH OF AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE: TOWARDS HEALTHY PEOPLE IN HEALTHY PLACES—WHERE SOCIETY AND ENVIRONMENT MEET

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The Australian National Sustainability Initiative (ANSI) was launched in Canberra on March 31, 2004, by Australia's inaugural 1973 Minister for the Environment, Moss Cass, and Hunter Lovins of Natural Capital Inc. The Sustainability Initiative is a collaboration between social and natural scientists, community action groups, business and industry, and government. Patrons are Professor Frank Fenner and Dr. Stephen Boyden. The Initiative is the outcome of a feasibility study of the needs of the collaborating sectors. It defines its purpose as: “to provide places, real and virtual, where a healthy sustainable society can be advanced, through a combination of inquiry by researchers, inspiration from the community, innovation from business, and incentives from government.” The three initial avenues of action are:

**Australian Sustainability Network:** A network of Australian networks in which organizations and individuals can develop online identities and collaborate on shared projects. This project is starting small with an interactive website forum: <http://www.sustainability.org.au>

**Sustainability Demonstration Centre:** Based in the national capital, a concept design has been completed for a wetlands/urban interface with demonstration buildings, landscape, and experiences. Outreach educational projects have begun.

**Landmark Green Office Buildings:** Business plans are being developed with draft designs, potential tenants, and interest from backers for user-friendly buildings with zero impact on environmental resources. Contacts: ANSI Executive, Dr. Brendan Mackey at [b.mackey@sustainability.org.au](mailto:b.mackey@sustainability.org.au); Em. Professor Valerie Brown at [v.brown@sustainability.org.au](mailto:v.brown@sustainability.org.au); Dr. John Harris at [j.harris@sustainability.org.au](mailto:j.harris@sustainability.org.au)

Published online: July 13, 2004