
INTRODUCTION

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I'm delighted to introduce the first issue of the third volume of *International Review of Environmental History*. This is dedicated to the geographer Eric Pawson, who in April 2017 retired from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, after an illustrious career of more than 40 years. Eric's contribution as a teacher and supervisor, public intellectual, research collaborator, and researcher is addressed by the first three contributions to this issue: by the historical geographer Graeme Wynn, Professor Emeritus, University of British Columbia; the biogeographer Peter Holland, Professor Emeritus, University of Otago; and the environmental historian Tom Brooking, Professor of History, University of Otago.

Eric's broad interests are reflected—and shared—by the articles in this issue. They demonstrate the value of interdisciplinary research, of subjecting scientific ideas to the scrutiny of social science and the arts and of subjecting historical evidence to the scrutiny of scientific theory. They examine attitudes to environmental change, trace early conservation measures, interrogate changing boundaries between science and non-science, and investigate the impact of introduced species—issues close to Eric's own research. Several of the articles also trace environmental change in Eric's adopted province of Canterbury, New Zealand. And, in being drawn from scholars working in biology, art history, ecology, environmental history, and historical geography, the contributions to this issue trace in tangible form Eric's path-breaking interdisciplinary collaboration and research which has laid the groundwork for a journal of this nature.

The first article, by Rosie Ibbotson, '**De-extinction and representation: Perspectives from art history, museology, and the Anthropocene**', illustrates the contribution that art history and museum studies can make to de-extinction. Ibbotson uses the case study of portrayals of the extinct huia (*Heteralocha acutirostris*) to unpick broader issues about de-extinction, notably the often uncritical use of representations of extinct animals to inform attempts to recreate these animals. She also highlights the ambiguous role of the museum as 'an institution in which contested practices such as collecting, curating, conserving, and canon formation

echo debates and processes within ecology management, including those surrounding de-extinction'. For Ibbotson, museums are 'an analogy for—and an engine of—genetic rescue and the Anthropocene.'

The second article also examines a single species, in this case a nearly extinct buttercup (*Ranunculus paucifolius* T. Kirk), to debate issues around conservation and human–nature interactions. In '**Cultivating the cultural memory of *Ranunculus paucifolius* T. Kirk, a South Island subalpine buttercup**', Joanna Cobley takes a long-term view of the plant to illuminate 'certain ambiguities and risks associated with the preservation of regionally and nationally significant plants', and to draw attention to 'the evolving importance of indigenous flora in cultural memory'.

Robert L. France's article, '**Imaginary sea monsters and real environmental threats: Reconsidering the famous Osborne, "Moha-moha", Valhalla, and "Soay beast" sightings of unidentified marine objects**', keeps with the theme of nature–human reactions, and picks up topics both Ibbotson and Cobley explore: the role of scientific understandings in debates about the non-human world, as well as the boundaries between species, and between science and non-science. France provides a fascinating examination of the motivations and manifestations, problems and processes, that nineteenth-century sightings of unidentified marine objects (UMOs) posed to science and scientific classification. As he notes of nineteenth-century scientific debates, 'if composite creatures such as sea monsters defy categorization, then our place of wisdom at the apex of Creation must be re-examined, something that feeds into the unease raised by Darwin's revolutionary theory'. France also reevaluates and contextualises the later post-nineteenth-century groupings of UMO sightings.

The next two articles focus on two different aspects of environmental change in the nineteenth-century South Island of New Zealand—topics to which Eric's scholarship has contributed, as references in these articles attest. Paul Star's '**Regarding New Zealand's environment: The anxieties of Thomas Potts, c. 1868–88**' advances important understandings about developing European attitudes towards a New Zealand, and especially South Island, environment undergoing rapid change. In particular, Star stresses a shift in emphasis in Potts's later writing, away from scientific publications and more towards popular natural history articles. The latter, in particular, contributed to changing European attitudes towards New Zealand's indigenous environment. This is especially valuable because, with some exceptions, we really do not have a good sense of an individual's changing ideas about the natural world in New Zealand. While it can be read alone, the article on Potts complements Star's examination of Potts's ideas about forest conservation—'**Thomas Potts and the Forest Question: Conservation and Development in New Zealand in the 1860s**'—which appeared in volume 1 (2015) of *International Review of Environmental History*.

Potts was particularly troubled by the loss of the native bird population to introduced species. Carolyn M. King examines two major agents of nineteenth-century environmental change—introduced rabbits and ferrets—the latter of which continues to have an especially severe impact on native bird populations. In **‘The chronology of a sad historical misjudgement: The introductions of rabbits and ferrets in nineteenth-century New Zealand’**, King provides a carefully researched article that contextualises the debates, fears, and hopes attached to both sets of introductions. An extraordinary knowledge of the primary-source record enables King, a trained biologist, to delineate the factors (from the timing and rate of biological reproduction to the feeding characteristics of ferrets and the nature of the local environments into which they were introduced) that, with one or two exceptions, meant that ferrets could not rid the South Island high country of rabbits.

The final article, by the historical geographer Michael Roche, **‘Seeing scenic New Zealand: W. W. Smith’s eye and the Scenery Preservation Commission, 1904–06’**, examines a topic also close to Eric’s heart: the relationship between conservation and aesthetics. Roche provides an insightful analysis of the kinds of environments that the Secretary of New Zealand’s Scenery Preservation Commission, W. W. Smith, appreciated and, indeed, recommended for preservation. This is particularly significant because much of the areas that were preserved in this period are part of the conservation estate today. More than that, Roche’s article also examines what motivated Smith’s reading of the landscape, which Roche situates in relation to Smith’s training as a gardener in Britain.

Two issues a year

The high number of submissions to the journal has meant that it is now possible to publish two issues a year, subject to ongoing demand.

Later this year we will have a special issue on landscape archaeology, guest-edited by Sjoerd Kluiving, Kerstin Lidén and Christina Fredengren.

New associate editors

I would also like to welcome two new associate editors and thank them for coming on board:

Professor Andrea Gaynor, an environmental historian at the University of Western Australia, whose work traverses a broad array of topics: urban environmental history, garden history, water history, agricultural history and science.

Dr Rebecca Priestley, who jointly established Victoria University of Wellington's Science in Society Programme, and works on the history of science, science communication, and creative writing, with particular interests in science in Antarctica and science more generally.

Call for papers

I would particularly like to encourage submissions on topics related to the atmosphere, water, and energy, especially in relation to Africa, South America and Asia.

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James Beattie, Editor
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