
INTRODUCTION

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This first issue of 2019 speaks to the many exciting dimensions of environmental history. Represented here is environmental history's great breadth, in terms of geographical scope (Brazil, the Atlantic world, Europe, global, Africa and New Zealand); topics (animal studies, biography, climatological analysis, energy and waste); and temporal span (from the early modern to the contemporary period).

The first article, '**Nature's revenge: War on the wilderness during the opening of Brazil's "Last Western Frontier"**', explores the ongoing trope of the frontier and 'frontiersman' in the environmental history of twentieth-century Amazonia, Brazil. The author, Sandro Dutra e Silva, does so by skilfully analysing the creation of the heroic image of the road-building engineer Bernardo Sayão, and his deployment by the state to underpin its aims of developing Amazonia.

In the next article, '**Water as the ultimate sink: Linking fresh and saltwater history**', Simone M. Müller and David Stradling, both of the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society, persuasively argue for the need to integrate histories of freshwater and marine ecosystems. Using the case study of 1960s–1970s water pollution, they demonstrate that a confluence of both historiographies can produce a far more meaningful, engaged history of water, one drawing on aspects such as water's materiality and the scale at which environmental historians examine the topic.

Daniel R. Headrick similarly takes a large scale and topic. In '**Climate change: Debate and reality**', Headrick not only summarises current climate debate, but presents a persuasive argument that developmentalism and consumerism are key issues if any meaningful progress is to be made in mitigating climate change. To illustrate his point, he uses the People's Republic of China to highlight the particular challenges posed by a rapidly developing economy and associated energy demands, and the great challenge these factors pose to a government committed to mitigating climate change.

Kate B. Showers picks up one of the key issues raised by Headrick, that of electricity consumption. Her focus, however, is on African supplies of electricity to the European Union, a relationship, she reveals, founded on long-standing structural inequalities between the regions, dating to colonialism. In **‘Biofuels’ unbalanced equations: Misleading statistics, networked knowledge and measured parameters. Part I: Evolution of globalised soil, land and terrain databases’**, the first of a three-part article on the topic, Showers provides a forensic interrogation of the problematic and inaccurate projections of African land suitable for biofuel production. Her work provides a chilling indictment of ‘globalised model-based analysis for practical policy formulation and local implementation’.

In the next article, Christopher Blakley offers a fascinating examination of the animal histories associated with the West African slave trade. In **“To get a cargo of flesh, bone, and blood”: Animals in the slave trade in West Africa’**, Blakley traces the ambiguous ways in which animals provided a shared medium of exchange, in forging alliances and securing slaves between Europeans and Africans, but also in posing health risks to those involved in slaving.

Anton Sveding examines the role of ecology and foreign expertise in the development of a scientifically informed government forest policy in mid-twentieth century New Zealand. In **‘Providing guideline principles: Botany and ecology within the State Forest Service of New Zealand during the 1920s’**, Sveding charts the simultaneous rise of the professional scientist and a growing recognition of the need for public engagement over science.

This issue’s final article, by John O’Leary, remains with New Zealand, but demonstrates aspects of that colony’s international botanical connections in the nineteenth century. In **“Zambesi seeds from Mr Moffat”: Sir George Grey as imperial botanist’**, O’Leary focuses on the relationship between William and Joseph Hooker of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and George Grey. Here, Grey emerges as an exemplar of the model of an improving governor (of both the Cape Colony and New Zealand). O’Leary reveals the long-standing (and warm) friendship between the Hookers and Grey, as they exchanged not just plants but also opinions on the latest ideas on evolution.

Call for papers

I particularly encourage submissions on topics related to history and energy, the atmosphere and water, especially in relation to Africa, South America and Asia. Please also contact me if you are interested in guest editing a special issue.

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