
Introduction

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The present issue has a breadth of perspectives and great temporal scope that reflects the healthiness of environmental history globally. Contributors from North and South America, Oceania and Europe cover thousands of years of history, and topics as diverse as ornithology and conservation, humans and woodlands, agribusiness and the Anthropocene, colonial environmental change and conservation, and marine snails and humans.

International Review of Environmental History has a truly global reach. As of mid-2021, the journal had nearly registered **78,000 downloads**. The journal is now listed—or will soon be—on the following databases:

- Directory of Open Access Journals
- ProQuest
- Informit
- Scopus
- EBSCO
- National edeposit (accessed through Trove)
- ANU Open Research digital repository

Before introducing our present issue, I would like to welcome two new members to our editorial board, Professor Eric Ross from Al Akhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco, and Dr Rosie Ibbotson from the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

In the opening article, ‘**What have limpets ever done for us? On the past and present provisioning and cultural services of limpets**’, Louise B. Firth provides a reassessment of this ubiquitous but under-appreciated gastropod. Far from simply being a famine food, Firth demonstrates that everyone from early hominids and *Homo sapiens* to indigenous subsistence gatherers and more recent middle-class consumers of ‘wild foods’ have appreciated limpets gastronomically. She also examines the role of limpets in religious ceremonies, medicine and ecosystem services and what she terms ecosystem disservices.

The second article, **‘Fatal fashions and caring actions: Florence Augusta Merriam Bailey and the rise of avian conservation’**, explores our complex and contradictory relationship with consumption and environment. Wieteke A. Holthuijzen writes about North American ornithologist Florence Augusta Merriam Bailey. Bailey’s text, *Birds through an Opera Glass* (1889), Holthuijzen shows, marked a change in attitudes towards bird conservation in the west. For Holthuijzen, Bailey’s accessible text, combining scientific with ecological and emotional arguments, helped to popularise conservation in the early twentieth century.

From the sea and air, we move to the soil, with the **‘Genealogy of the Soyacene: The tropical bonanza of soya bean farming during the Great Acceleration’**. Claiton Marcio da Silva and Claudio de Majo’s contribution to global environmental history considers the introduction and expansion of a grain from Asia into subtropical South America. From the 1960s, as the authors observe, the widespread introduction of the soya bean has imposed ‘different agricultural management and territorial control regimes upon rural communities ... ultimately modifying entire ecological bioregions’. While the grain’s expansion comes at considerable environmental and social cost, it has equally provided a transformation in global nutrition. Its ambiguous legacies, de Silva and de Majo observe, place this grain firmly within the Anthropocene.

In **‘Fashioning a future Part II: Romanticism and conservation in the European colonisation of Otago, 1840–60’**, I conclude a two-part article on the environmental history of this region. This article demonstrates that, despite ushering in profound environmental changes, ‘Otago settlers were neither indifferent to the environment around them, nor to the effects of their own actions on it’. While settlers used aesthetic conventions to ‘read’—and rank—the different environments of Otago, authorities and some settlers urgently attempted to conserve remaining forests. A host of different conservation schemes demonstrates very different conceptualisations of the ecologies and needs of settlers. The article also considers urban conflict over the preservation and use of the Town Belt in Dunedin, designed as a recreational reserve and lung for the nascent town.

The next article, **‘The oldest new woodland on earth: Recognising, mapping, naming and narrating the Great Western Woodlands’**, stays with the topic of forests, but examines the highly biodiverse, semi-arid woodland of Australia’s inland south-west. Alexandra Vlachos and Andrea Gaynor demonstrate the impacts of narratives of progress and development on this region. They chart a movement away from images of the conquest and exploitation of nature, and their marginalisation of Indigenous groups, to ones in which NGOs and Indigenous peoples, together with scientists and conservationists, co-operate to create new cultural and environmental values that help to protect the woodlands.

The final article returns us to the subject of water, but in this case (originally) freshwater, as Daniel Rothenburg examines the environmental degradation of the Goulburn–Murray Irrigation District in Northern Victoria. In **‘Too much water: How salinisation transformed Australia’s ‘food bowl’, 1945–2017’**, Rothenburg challenges the traditional environmental despoliation model, by demonstrating the manner by which rural communities, in conjunction with government departments, developed agricultural practices able to operate in saline conditions, themselves caused originally by unsustainable irrigation. He also considers the impact of Australia’s 14-year ‘Millennium Drought’ from 1996 in giving the region a reprieve from problems associated with salinisation.

Looking ahead to 2022, we have a special issue on **‘Animals and epidemics in modern East Asia’**, guest edited by Professor Fa-ti Fan. This could not be a more apposite topic, given the reach of the current pandemic into all our lives.

Looking into the journal’s immediate future, I would like to acknowledge the generosity of an anonymous donor for funding the copyediting of the *International Review of Environmental History* from 2022 as an interim measure. The cessation of funding from Victoria University of Wellington has meant that without this support, the journal would not be published. Nevertheless, long-term funding sources for the journal will have to be found. I am determined to keep the journal as open-access, but if it becomes a choice between the journal’s continuance and its open-access status, then I will have to choose the former. I invite correspondence or potential long-term sponsors of the journal to contact me.

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 or Asia. Please also contact me if you are interested in guest editing a special issue.

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James Beattie, Dunedin, September 2021

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