

## EDITORIAL

Ecological science proceeds in well defined steps. The first step is knowing what is out there (i.e. inventory of flora and fauna) in a given area (e.g. habitat). This is followed by finding out what are the requirements (both biotic and abiotic) of the flora and fauna of the given area. And, how abundant are different members of that flora and fauna. After all this is somewhat properly understood, then a scientist can use the information to predict what will happen to the biodiversity if we attempt to change some environmental variables of that or similar areas. Through this last step comes out what we call Conservation Biology. However, both Conservation Biology and Ecology will, in my mind, be spineless if our initial steps are faulty or lacking.

I feel that in our current scientific wisdom, we are building our castles without putting too much effort into our foundation which is derived from sound field natural history. Further, we often are encouraged to pursue research that is fashionable. Which sometimes allow scientists to do research only on animals that are abundant so that the resulting data can be analyzed statistically. For the less abundant animals, we wait until they become more less abundant and then we rush to find out how to preserve these. In Conservation Biology, we attempt to preserve (genetic) variation. Similarly, we should become more tolerant to the different scientific approaches and thus preserve scientific variation. From the basic natural history to sound ecology, everything is equally important if we are to weave a long-lasting and colourful fabric of understanding.

In the RAFFLES BULLETIN, we are attempting to promote good science. May it be a basic building block research as taxonomy or be it a predictive research based on scientific theories. We attempt to promote research both on species and communities, and beyond. By promoting all types of good research in Ecology and Conservation Biology, we would like to build a holistic understanding of biodiversity of this critical region called Southeast Asia.

The RAFFLES BULLETIN is going through a highly successful time. Both the quantity and quality of manuscripts submitted for publication is increasing. In addition, it is attracting international manuscripts relating to the region and on wide-ranging animal groups. In 1997 alone, only about 20% manuscripts were submitted by authors from Singapore (based on the address of the first author). In 1996, a total of 600 pages were published, which we will attempt to match in 1997.

We are striving to rapidly publish high quality papers on the biodiversity of Southeast Asia. Associate editors, members of the editorial board, reviewers, and authors all are making the RAFFLES BULLETIN an increasing success. And, I thank them all for their efforts. I also thank two retiring members of the editorial board (Drs. Khoo Soo Gee and A. Sasekumar) for their valuable time and efforts.

My period as an editor-in-chief so far has been rewarding. I would like to thank Dr. Peter Ng for giving me advice as and when needed. And, to our publication editor, Mr. Tommy Tan, for his essential assistance.

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