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## Policing the planet

Kenneth Mellanby

**Conservation Biology.** Editor David Ehrenfeld. Blackwell Scientific. 4/yr. US \$90, elsewhere \$115 (institutional); US \$60, elsewhere \$85 (personal).

**European Environment Review.** Editor Cynthia Whitehead. Graham & Trotman. 4/yr. £92, \$165 (institutional); £32, \$66 (personal).

IN 1959 the British Nature Conservancy decided that a new research station was needed to work on problems related to scientific methods of wildlife conservation. The following year I was appointed as director of Monks Wood Experimental Station with the task of making that decision a reality. Soon we had nearly a hundred ecologists at work. Substantial scientific papers began to appear, and they were mostly published in the journals of the British Ecological Society. At that time there seemed little difficulty in finding outlets for the publication of our work.

Much more research on similar lines was starting in universities and research stations throughout the world, however, and new journals to accommodate its results were evidently required. *Biological Conservation* was started in 1968 by Elsevier Applied Science, with Nicholas Polunin as its editor. This journal's purpose was to "Disseminate original papers dealing with the preservation of wildlife and the conservation or wise use of biological and natural resources". It clearly met a need, for starting with four issues and 320 pages a year, by 1987 it had an annual output of 16 issues and some 1,400 pages.

Professor Polunin ceased to edit *Biological Conservation* in 1973, and started a further journal, *Environmental Conservation*, published by Elsevier Sequoia. This had a slightly different purpose, namely, "to maintain global viability through exposing and countering environmental deterioration resulting from human population-pressure and unwise technology". However, although it did contain papers dealing with damage to the global environment, and short notes reporting specific incidents, for the most part its longer articles were very similar to those continuing to appear in *Biological Conservation*.

In 1985 the Society for Conservation Biology was established in the United States and decided that it must publish its own journal, hence the appearance of *Conservation Biology*. An article by the society's president, M.E. Soulé, in the first issue, states that its purpose is to try to ensure that "the worst biological disaster in the last 65 million years can be averted". This would suggest that the

journal is more like *Environmental Conservation* than *Biological Conservation*; however, when describing the sort of paper the journal will welcome, Dr Soulé speaks of "Modeling and analysis of population, community, ecosystem and planetary processes" and also "basic field work, including inventories and systematics".

An examination of the first five issues of *Conservation Biology* shows that its pages are mainly devoted to solid ecological papers of up to 8,000 words in length. Although 18 of the 23 members of the editorial board are based in the United States, this is a genuinely international journal, with an apparently increasing number of contributions from India, Africa, Indonesia and other parts of the world. Notwithstanding Dr Soulé's comments about world disaster, the papers are almost all very similar to those appearing in *Biological Conservation*, except that they tend to have a rather higher theoretical or 'academic' content.

There seems no doubt that there was a place in the literature waiting for *Conservation Biology*. With the support of its parent society it is likely to have a viable market even if its other sales are small, but many of its papers are in fact likely to be required reading for ecologists throughout the world. Its price to members of the society is modest, and to libraries and institutions it is what would be expected today for a scientific publication of this nature which is excellently printed and presented.

The first journal considered here is aimed — successfully so — at an entirely scientific audience. The other, *European Environment Review*, has as its subtitle *The Journal of European Community and International Environmental Policy and Law*. It claims to be "an international, multidisciplinary journal which aims to provide a forum for the presentation of information and views on all aspects of environmental protection". It is published in English, French and German.

The journal does contain articles with a scientific basis — on radiation from the Chernobyl accident, on toxicity problems from heavy metals and other chemicals, on water pollution and other environmental dangers — but these are aimed at non-scientists and contain little information not already widely disseminated. The value of this publication, then, will be to administrators and international lawyers, and if it improves their scientific understanding and their knowledge of environmental problems, it is to be welcomed as making the work of scientists involved in these fields less difficult. □

Kenneth Mellanby, 38 Warkworth Street, Cambridge CB1 1EG, UK, was Director of Monks Wood Experimental Station from 1960 to 1974, and founder-editor of the journal *Environmental Pollution*.