President’s Column
By Robert Voeks

Some Good News on the Environmental Front

Most of my course offerings, as past or previous students can attest, involve the problems and prospects of the plant kingdom. Oh, I package them using different labels—global environmental issues, biogeography, tropical rainforests, even ecotourism—but in the final analysis, I invariably spend way more time than necessary exploring the plant world. And, with pretty minor exceptions, the state of our photosynthetic relatives, temperate and tropical, is pretty bleak. Whether its temperature change forcing the migration of rare endemics, invasive organisms choking out native species, people harvesting non-timber forest products to the point of extinction, or farmers abandoning crop landraces in favor of transgenics, the take home message is that the environment is going to hell-in-a-hand-basket, and that there is not much we can do about it.

I’m guessing that many of us who teach geography are in the same dilemma. As environmental Cassandras, we are compelled to impart the dismal dimension of our science to our students who, not surprisingly, increasingly exhibit signs of (Continued on page 5)

2011 CGS Conference in the Owens Valley

Experience the tremendous diversity of the Eastern Sierra landscape and catch the East side topophilia from locals and experts from near and far. From the Mono Basin to the Owens Lake bed, from the Sierra to the White Mountains, learn about the altered and pristine, the rocks and water, the birds and the bighorn, and the human and environmental history that ramifies far beyond the region.

Contrary to Mark Twain’s account, Mono Lake is not lifeless: With a simple food chain of algae, brine shrimp and alkali flies, it is one of the most productive environments on Earth.
THE CGS IS LOOKING FOR A NEW EDITOR FOR THE CALIFORNIA GEOGRAPHER

Our friend Dolly Freidel, of the Geography and Global Studies Department at Sonoma State University, and current Editor for the California Geographer, is resigning after several years in the position. She has more than ably upheld the quality of manuscripts that represent our field of endeavor, and we all owe her a considerable debt of gratitude.

This means that we need to find a new Editor. The new editor should be a geographer who has a reasonable level of expertise in California geography, one who has published sufficiently in peer-reviewed journals to understand the process, and one who is familiar with and preferably supportive of the California Geographical Society. The position of Editor is critical to the quality of CGS journal, and the journal in turn reflects considerably on the quality of our Society. Being an Editor of a peer-reviewed academic journal also carries a certain amount of prestige and will be a nice addition to any geographer’s CV. Furthermore, this position has a modest stipend.

Job Description, Editor, The California Geographer

1. Solicit contributions via email announcements (various email lists, e.g. apcg-l, geogfem, etc.), announcement in newsletters, direct invitations to authors of papers at meetings, letters to Department chairs, etc.
2. Respond to requests for information regarding publication opportunities. Review submissions and offer a prompt response to authors if the papers are not appropriate for the journal or are not of appropriate quality to be sent out for review.
3. Contact potential reviewers asking if they are willing and able to review a paper.
4. Identify two reviewers for each paper to be sent out for review. Send papers out to reviewers via email attachment, including all figures, captions, etc. plus directions to reviewers and review sheet. Make sure that all documents are anonymous. Give reviewers approximately three weeks to review the paper, or more if they need a bit more time. Notify author that paper has been sent out for review.
5. When review returns, evaluate responses along with editor’s view. Decide whether paper should be published.
6. Notify author(s) of decision regarding whether paper is accepted, accepted with revisions, revised and resubmitted, or rejected. Include an anonymous copy of each review, along with letter or email explaining what needs to be done to paper and timeline for revised document to be returned (if appropriate).
7. Once final draft of paper is received, thoroughly proof and edit as necessary.
8. Submit final draft plus all figures and captions to copy editor.
9. When final pdf is received from copy editor, do final proof and return any corrections to copy editor.
10. Submit boilerplate (front and back material) for issue. Notify copy editor of number of copies to be printed (both membership numbers plus institutional copies). Choose color and type of paper to be used for journal cover. Each year is a different color.
11. Once printed, all copies are returned to Editor. Editor obtains membership list in excel format to create printed mailing labels to members. Editor purchases labels, envelopes, and stamps (if necessary), gathers a group of students to assist with filling and labeling envelopes, and arranges for journals to be mailed. Editor mails box of institutional copies to Institutional Subscription board member.
12. Editor arranges for invoice from copy editor to be sent to Treasurer. Editor submits invoice for expenses (mailing, envelopes, labels) plus stipend to Treasurer.
13. Stipend to Editor per year: $1250.
CGS Annual Conference Raffle: We need your help!

At the conference banquet, the CGS will be raffling off gift baskets and other unique items that showcase attendees’ campus or region of California. Funds raised during the raffle are applied toward student scholarships and travel awards. Besides being lots of fun (you had to be there!) the generosity of our members made last year’s raffle very successful -- we raised almost five hundred dollars for student awards. Please consider donating a gift or item from your part of California to support this very important cause. CGS volunteers will be at the conference registration table Friday and Saturday to collect donations. Please contact Zia Salim at zsalim@mail.sdsu.edu for more information.

ATTENTION STUDENTS

Don’t forget!
April 4th

is the deadline for paper and poster abstracts as well as scholarship applications. For more information go to www.calgeog.org

Call for submissions

The editor of the Bulletin continually seeks to increase the variety of news and information published on its pages and to diversify the contributors. If you have a submission idea, want your Geography Department featured, would like to share a travel experience, or discuss your thoughts about the discipline, please feel free to contact Crystal LoVetere. cl@clovetere.com
Bishop, California in the spectacular Owens Valley will be the location for the California Geographical Society’s 65th Annual Conference. We cordially invite you to attend!

Whether this will be your first time to the Owens Valley or your 20th, you can most certainly learn more and experience more in this amazing local. As usual, the conference will bring in experts and specialist on the region to conduct guide tours and fieldtrips, paper presentations will be enlightening, and a weekend with like-minded geographers will be entertaining!

**HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS:**
Best Western Hotel Spa Lodge in Bishop, CA
Call 760-873-3543 to reserve your room. Book quickly as this is a busy season for Bishop and mention CGS for a special rate.

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**Fieldtrips and Highlights:**
- Mono Lake Canoe Tour
- Owens Valley Petroglyphs
- Mammoth Mountain
- Mono Lake Tufa
- Murals of Bishop Walking Tour
- Big Horn Sheep

You will find more accommodation options and fieldtrip information on the CGS web site: www.calgeog.org

**IMPORTANT REGISTRATION INFO:**
To register for the conference and fieldtrips go to www.calgeog.org. In an effort to be more efficient and to reduce paper usage, all registration will be online!

**Guest Speakers**
Dr. Scott Stine, Geography and Environmental Studies, CSU—East Bay, will give the Presidential Plenary talk. The title of his talk is "Rethinking Sierran Exploration: Lessons from Joseph Walker and Zenas Leonard".

Dr. Paul Starrs, Department of Geography, University of Nevada—Reno, will present the Friday night Keynote address. His talk is titled: "California Agricultural Geography at its 21st Century Frontier"
INTRODUCING NEW NORTHERN CALIFORNIA STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

Hello California Geographers,

My name is Romi Rosen and I am pleased to join the CGS board as the Northern California Student Representative. Both California and geography are important parts of my background and identity. I have lived in various parts of the state and received a strong formal geography education here as well.

I earned my bachelor’s degree in Geography/Environmental Studies from UCLA, a major that allowed me to bridge my interests in nature, science, and culture. I continued at UCLA, receiving my master’s (also in Geography) in 2005. After that, I took a not-so-brief detour and explored the sociology of science and medicine at UCSF, leaving with a master’s in 2009 with a desire to return to geography. Now, I’m back in the discipline in which I feel most at home, and am in my second year of doctoral study in Geography at UC Davis.

My research centers on the representation and construction of “global environment” through text and images in the popular press (specifically, magazines). I hope to bridge the traditions of physical and humanistic geography through “biogeographical iconography” – a “scientifically informed” means of qualitative inquiry.

Apart from my academic interests, I enjoy spending time with my family, taking very long walks (Davis is well-suited for this!) and cooking. I look forward to seeing you all in Bishop this April!

Romi Rosen

President’s Column (continued from page 1)

environmental battle fatigue or, worse, are turning towards the dark side—environmental denialism. Surely there is some good news to report?

Well, there is, but in many cases, it’s often a bit convoluted. Such is the case with the Iban of Sarawak, Malaysia (Borneo), with whom I’ve been working recently. Fiercely proud and independent, the Iban represent the largest ethnic group on this huge, Muslim-dominated bookend of the Malay Archipelago. Most have been engaged until very recently in traditional subsistence agriculture, employing long-fallow slash-and-burn rotation of the dipterocarp rainforests. Their principal crop is hill rice, which includes hundreds if not thousands of distinct landraces (varieties). They also cultivate myriad other crops, native and exotic, in their swiddens and home gardens, and extract a cornucopia of wild foods from the surrounding forests and fields. I have begun exploring, along with a linguist colleague from the UK and a remote sensing specialist in my department, how the process of globalization is affecting Iban culture and environment.

Like almost everywhere else on the planet, Borneo is modernizing at a frantic pace, and young people in particular are drawn to the bright lights of western materialism.

Our research questions are pretty straightforward: Are the Iban abandoning their traditional lifeways (=cultural erosion)? Are they reducing dependence on long-
In order to explore these questions, we are examining the status of two Iban longhouses (communities): one that has experienced considerable modernization in recent years; the other that has not. The first is situated on a main road, and relies increasingly on nearby markets for sale of village rice and extractive forest products. A number of longhouse residents have wage-earning jobs, gas-powered generators, and even television. They also have access to modern medical care as well as schools that children attend on a daily basis. Most have converted to Catholicism. The second longhouse is in an isolated area, separated from the nearest town by several days of walking and travel by longboat. Village rice is mostly oriented towards local consumption, although some is destined for distant markets. There is neither electricity nor ready access to schools or medical facilities. Young men often travel to distant cities for temporary wage earning jobs, but most return to farm and raise families. Residents maintain their traditional belief system, including rituals that govern planting regimes and maintenance of spiritual rice varieties.

Our preliminary results support some of our initial hypotheses, but not others. The most important of these is that the Iban in the more modernized village have dramatically reduced their reliance on rice varieties compared to their less modernized relatives. The average family now cultivates between 4 and 10 varieties, a small fraction of earlier numbers. None of these are "padi pun", that is, rice reserved for religious purposes. They have abandoned all rituals surrounding rice, although now some take seed rice to the local Catholic priest to be blessed. Some rice is saved for family consumption, but nearly all now goes to the shops in the nearby town for sale. Moreover, as the children in the modernized village now attend schools, their knowledge is derived from books rather than from participant observation. They know little about the useful species in the surrounding forests, and in fact see little reason for learning about them. The answers to three of the four questions are: yes, cultural erosion is taking place; yes, genetic erosion of landraces is occurring; and yes, ethnobotanical erosion if happening, especially among the younger generation. Dismal results all, at least in terms of culture and the environment.

The situation with forest cover, however, came as a surprise. People living in the modernized village have been receiving fertilizer free of charge from the Malaysian government, which is keen to increase national rice production. Malaysia is a net importer of rice, and this clearly does not sit well in a country whose staple is rice. As a result, all the surveyed families have shifted their rice growing activities from the primary and secondary forests to the sedge-dominated wetlands in low lying areas; intensive wet rice production has completely supplanted slash-and-burn hill rice efforts. Although we are just beginning to analyze the data using Landsat remotely-sensed images, early observations suggest that deforestation has dramatically decreased in the more modernized area. Forest succession is occurring, associated wildlife is returning, and carbon is increasingly being sequestered in the vegetation rather than released into the atmosphere. Whether the ‘wins’ of tropical forest recovery in this region of Borneo offset the 'losses' of cultural, genetic and ethnobotanical erosion remain to be seen. But for my students who are accustomed to hearing Cassandra’s sad song, this will be received as good news indeed.