

ESA HISTORICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE

(ESTABLISHED 1944)

NEWSLETTER

*Resources for the history of the Ecological Society of America
and the history of ecology and allied sciences*

No. 6

July 2016

History-Themed Highlights of the Annual Meeting, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, August 2016

Among the many interesting sessions in the program, we profile here a few that have a historical perspective or that discuss uses of diverse types of historical records, with links to the program descriptions for those interested in more detail.

Thanks to the organizational efforts of Juliana Mulroy and Zoe Nyssa, HRC is sponsoring a linked Organized Oral Session and Organized Poster Session:

[OOS 10](#): The Importance of History and Historical Records as Ecologists Confront the Anthropocene. Tuesday, August 9, 8:00-11:30 a.m.

[OPS 1](#): Uses of and Access to Historical Data as Ecologists Confront a Rapidly Changing World. Tuesday, August 9, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

Also of Interest for Their Historical Content Are the Following Sessions:

[SYMP 2](#): Historical Ecology and Novel Ecosystems: Lessons from the Past for a Changing Future. Monday, August 8, 1:30-5:00 p.m.

[SYMP 5](#): Human Ecology, Human Economy: Towards Good Governance of the Anthropocene. Tuesday, August 9, 8:00-11:30 a.m. [This conflicts with our OOS, unfortunately.]

[OOS 19](#): Leveraging the Power of Biodiversity Specimen Data for Ecological Research, Wednesday, August 10, 8:00-11:30. See also iDigBio's wiki for more session information:
https://www.idigbio.org/wiki/index.php/Leveraging_the_Power_of_Biodiversity_Specimen_Data_for_Ecological_Research_at_ESA_2016

Two Special Sessions Explore Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Earth Stewardship:

[SS 2](#): A Sense of Place. Monday, August 8, 10:15-11:30 a.m.

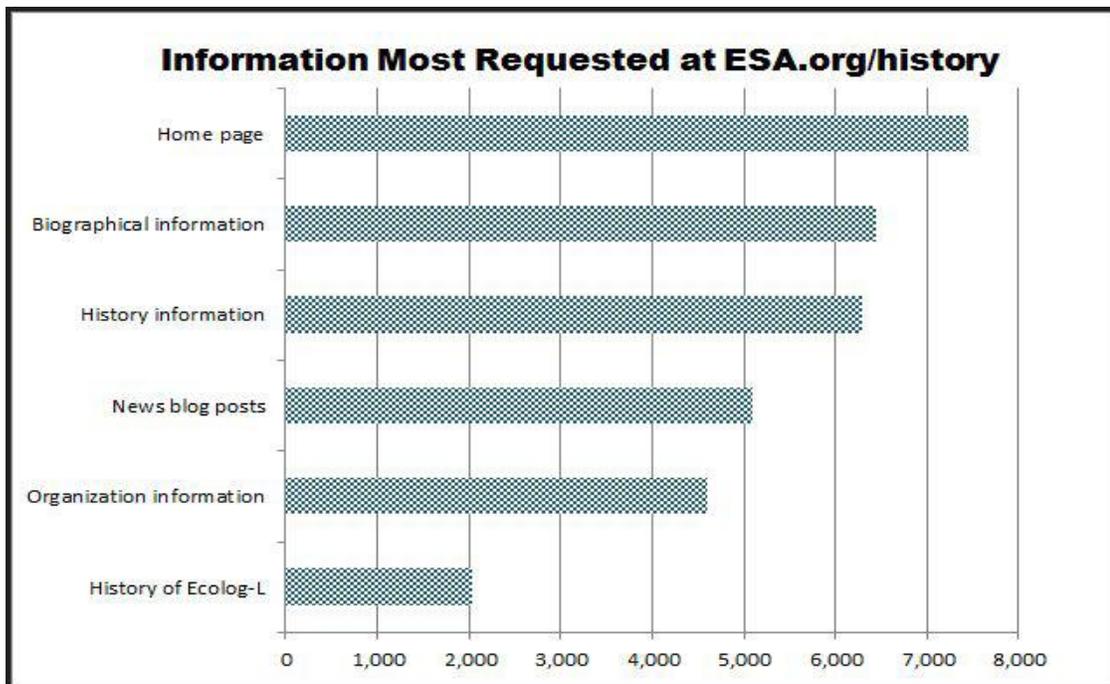
[SS 9](#): What is the Place of History in Novel Ecosystems? An Exploration of How Ecological Knowledge Generated through Experience, Observation, and Traditions Can Contribute to Ecology and Earth Stewardship in the Anthropocene.

ESA's History is a Mouse-Click Away!

By Sally L. White, Webmaster

The ESA History website [<http://esa.org/history/>] is managed by HRC and has grown enormously in the past two years. We offer here an overview of its contents. Our core team, Sally White, Doug Sprugel, and Susannah Tysor, assisted by others, have enriched the amount and variety of information available.

The following chart summarizes the key types of information site visitors are seeking as of early May 2016. Biographical information (more than 200 posts and pages) makes up most of the site, but historical information and organizational data are also well represented. The most popular single page, apparently, is our repost of the History of the Ecolog-L Server!



Doug's retirement last year and Sally's in January have given each of them more time to work on developing new content. We've outlined below some of the great new material appearing regularly on the site. Susannah Tysor, our technical support staff, is not retired! A PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia, she has been responsible for keeping the gears going smoothly and fixing those glitches that trip us up now and then. Her background work on the complex structure of the website is critical to making information available.

Biographies and Microbiographies

Thanks to major efforts by Doug Sprugel, whose "microbiographies" of plant ecologists outline the pedagogical careers of 146 notable plant ecologists, the Biographies category makes up the largest segment of the site.

Doug's updated genealogical poster [<http://esa.org/history/genealogy.pdf>] is now online and interactive, with each name linked to a microbiography. What a great way to explore the founders of ecology and their connections! Read more about that project at the Pedagogical Genealogy and Microbiographies page:

[<http://esa.org/history/biographies/pedagogical-genealogy-and-microbiographies/>]

In addition, Doug has been retrieving Resolutions of Respect from the Bulletin and making sure they are accessible online [<http://esa.org/history/biographies/obituaries-and-resolutions-of-respect/resolutions-of-respect/>]. Resolutions provide a wealth of biographical data as well as great stories in ecology!

Archives “Roadmap” in progress

We have launched a guide to archival holdings [<http://esa.org/history/archives/archives-directory/>] of ESA past presidents, a first step in constructing a roadmap that has been our goal for some time. Thirty-six presidents are now listed, and we’ll be expanding the list beyond presidents soon as well. Please let us know if you are aware of locations of archived papers so we can continue to build this list.

Our Archives pages and guidelines are being updated. With help from University of Georgia archives staff we have uploaded a sampling of the fascinating stories hidden in the ESA archives. Please explore these Highlights of ESA Archives [<http://esa.org/history/archives/highlights-from-esa-archives/>] to learn more.

More on Women and Under-represented Groups

In March, we joined Women’s History Month, adding several new profiles of women [<http://esa.org/history/tag/langenheim-research/>] based on material collected by Dr. Jean Langenheim in the 1980s and 1990s. Dr. Bill Dritschilo, ecologist and author of several books on important people in ecology including Frank Egler and Rachel Carson, contributed excellent profiles on Dr. Beverly Rathcke [<http://esa.org/history/beverly-j-rathcke-challenging-dogma-training-students/>] and Dr. Frances James [<http://esa.org/history/james-frances-c/>]. We would love to have more volunteers working on these profiles!

Thanks to a nudge from new ESA webmaster Gordon Potter, we were able to retrieve long-lost personal accounts [<http://esa.org/history/category/biographies/personal-accounts/>] which ESA’s Education and Diversity Section developed a decade or more ago. Forty of these have been retrieved, and many more will be posted in coming months. Many of them share examples of the career paths of ecologists from under-represented groups, displaying ESA’s commitment to improving the diversity of the organization.

Organizational History

In documenting ESA’s organizational history, the website builds on a great tradition established by Bob Colwell and Bob Peet and others back in 1995. Seventy pages provide extensive data tables of ESA officers, chapter and section officers, award winners, journals and journal editors, and annual meeting information. All of these are linked directly from the main menu. Tables are sortable by field, and data are downloadable in a variety of formats.

Exploring History of ESA and Ecology

Last year’s centennial was a huge impetus toward building the history website. We are making an effort to capture good historical material wherever it occurs. From some of the Society’s founding documents and the 1976 Burgess history [<http://esa.org/history/esa-history-by-bob-burgess/>] to more recent summaries by Kiyoko Miyanishi, we strive to keep important records accessible to members as well as the interested public. We are also collecting lists of external references such as book-length biographies and histories of ecology. All such materials are available under the category “Historical Review.” [<http://esa.org/history/category/historical-review/>] Consider getting involved and helping us grow: Our goal is to be a primary resource linking you to information on history of ESA and the field of ecology.

Contact us at hrc4esa@gmail.com (Sharon) or subversivescience@gmail.com (Sally). Please follow us on Twitter (@ESAhistory) to stay up-to-date on what's new on the history website and help us spread the word about this great resource.

Understanding the Anthropocene, with the Aid of Japanese Monks and Finnish Merchants

Understanding novel ecosystems created during the Anthropocene requires a deep historical approach and the use of many kinds of historical records. Most human-created records of climate extend back only to the start of the Industrial Revolution, and it is rare to find long-term observations of climate before the 1840s. A recent interdisciplinary study by Sapna Sharma, John J. Magnuson, Ryan D. Batt, Luke A. Winslow, Johanna Korhonen, and Yasuyuki Aono is an intriguing example of how long-term records created by humans can help us understand climate change before and after the start of the Industrial Revolution.

These records come from two sources in Japan and Finland. At Lake Suwa, Japan, Shinto priests have been recording at least since 1443 the dates when the lake surface completely freezes. These observations are linked to religious beliefs. When the lake freezes an icy ridge forms, which is taken to mark the passage of a male god crossing the lake to visit a female goddess at her shrine on the other side. The ridge is known as Omiwatari or “passage of the gods” in Japanese. The event is the occasion of purification rituals at her shrine and a celebration. The starting point and direction of the ridge also is used to forecast the harvest, temperature, and precipitation for the year. It was a challenge to determine how reliable such records are. Changes in the Japanese calendar made the data hard to interpret in certain years. In some years the date of the ceremony was substituted for the dates of ice freeze. It was important therefore to understand how the records were created, and decide which years to use and which to discard. The historical records showed clear evidence of warming temperatures after the start of the Industrial Revolution. The number of extreme warm years, when the ice did not form, has been increasing over time.

In Finland, records have been kept since the late-seventeenth century of the date of ice break-up on the Torne River, on the border of Finland and Sweden. A Finnish merchant, Olof Ahlbom, started the records in 1693 for economic reasons. The town where he lived, Tornio, was important for trade, transportation, food, and recreation. Ahlbom fled between 1715 and 1721 because of the Russian occupation, but returned after the occupation and continued the record-keeping. Both Finns and Swedes monitored weather and time of ice break-up, and there were even competitions held to guess the hour and minute of the annual spectacle. As a result we now have multiple sources with observations and ice break-up dates for each year. These records also provide evidence of warming trends, with earlier ice break-up after the start of the Industrial Revolution. The authors of the study concluded that both data sets suggested that global processes were driving these long-term changes.

For more discussion of the Lake Suwa study, with current and historical photographs, see this [National Geographic post](#) on April 26, 2016, about “Lake Suwa’s Shinto Legend,” posted by Lisa Borre, Senior Research Specialist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies.

Reference: S. Sharma, J. J. Magnuson, R. D. Batt, L. A. Winslow, J. Korhonen, & Y. Aono, “Direct observations of ice seasonality reveal changes in climate over the past 320-570 years,” *Nature Scientific Reports* **6**, Article number: 25061 (26 April, 2016). doi:10.1038/srep25061.

The HRC newsletter is a quarterly and welcomes contributions from HRC members and friends. Please send Newsletter items to Sharon Kingsland at sharon@jhu.edu