



Celebrating Our Past & Looking to Our Future

2015 Annual Report



View the entire Annual Report online: http://esa.org/ar_14_15/

Table of Contents

Celebrating Our Past & Looking to Our Future 2014-2015 Annual Report.....	1
Welcome.....	3
Letter from the President.....	4
Letter from the Executive Director	5
Public Affairs Highlights	7
Science Program Highlights	9
Education And Diversity Programs.....	11
Communicating Research	13
Highlights 100th Annual Meeting–Ecological Science at the Frontier: Celebrating ESA’s Centennial	14
Financials.....	15
Annual Report Credits	15



Welcome

We hope you enjoy viewing our accomplishments of the past year. To access the complete Annual Report, please visit http://esa.org/ar_14_15/

The Ecological Society of America is the world's largest professional organization of ecological scientists. ESA's 10,000 members work in academia, government and in the private sector to improve society's understanding and stewardship of life on Earth. Members' work addresses threatened and endangered species, alternative energy, sustainable agriculture and fisheries, emerging diseases, climate change and many other important issues.

The Society works to broadly share ecological information through policy and media outreach, education and diversity initiatives and projects that link the ecological research and management communities and help integrate ecological science into decision-making. ESA also organizes scientific conferences and publishes high-impact journals.

Letter from the President

I was pleased and honored to serve the ESA as President during much of its Centennial year. It was impressive to see how all the activities that have been in the planning stage for the past few years came together this year, including special issues of the journals, dedicated work by the Historical Records Committee, and many special events at the Annual Meeting in Baltimore. A highlight was the video birthday message from President Obama, congratulating the ESA for its longevity and what we do. That meeting was one of our best attended, with about half of the membership there to present their research, learn from colleagues, network, and enjoy the city. The closing social event, at a brewery and featuring several food trucks and a band, was a rousing success that had several times the usual attendance.



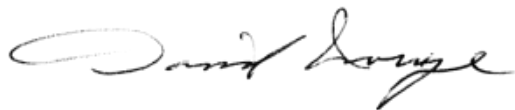
I undertook a project this past year to strengthen ties between the ESA and the other ecological societies in the world. I was fortunate to be able to attend annual meetings of the Ecological Society of Japan, the Ecological Society of Mexico, the joint annual meeting of the British and French Ecological Societies, and the European Ecological Federation, to hear about the research their members are doing, and interact with them. At our own Annual Meeting, I hosted a dinner meeting for representatives of many of the world's ecological societies, and expect that this will be a continuing tradition. These societies have many similar goals, opportunities, and challenges, and it's good to be able to share ideas and solutions. Perhaps the youngest society is the nascent Mongolian Ecological Society, and their representative presented the ESA with a very nice painting of the steppe habitat and its inhabitants.

This year ESA resolved one of the greatest challenges of its history: how to respond to the dramatically and rapidly changing world of scientific publishing (e.g., how many of you no longer have personal subscriptions to ESA journals?). The Governing Board realized that it had to change the model of self-publishing that worked for us for many decades, but was no longer viable. We hired a consulting group to advise us, interviewed several of the major scientific publishers as potential partners last spring, and this large effort will culminate with our journals being published as of 2016 with John Wiley & Sons. It's sad to have to close the Ithaca-based publications office whose staff have served the society so well for many years, but our new partnership will bring new opportunities related to digital publishing, and we hope will increase our international subscriber base.

I was a participant in the SEEDS program's 2015 Leadership Meeting in Maryland this spring, and was very impressed with the student participants and the ESA's SEEDS program staff. It was also my pleasure to host a SEEDS field trip to the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory, where my research is based, and mentoring some SEEDS students there. If you haven't already done so, consider working with these students as mentors,

partners at the Annual Meeting, or in other ways. These young students are an important part of the future of ecology in this country.

Members of the Governing Board have a better opportunity than most ESA members to get to know and appreciate the staff who are crucial to keeping this society running, and making it so successful. The science program, education and diversity program, and public affairs program are all outstanding and helping ESA members and our field in many ways. They offer many opportunities for professional development that you should take advantage of to advance your careers, whether they are in academia, consulting, education, government, policy, or other fields. Your participation will ensure our society remains vibrant as it enters its second century.



President David Inouye (August 2015–August 2016)

Letter from the Executive Director

Katherine McCarter welcomes ecologist at the Centennial Meeting Opening Plenary.

ESA marked the midpoint of its Centennial year with an Annual Meeting that was both a reflection on our past and exploration of the future. What an honor it was for me to welcome registrants to this historic meeting in Baltimore, Maryland! The event was marked by a video greeting of congratulations from President Barack Obama, which was received with excitement and pride by all those assembled and later by those viewing it from our website. Other videos debuted in Baltimore, the Student Section produced a series of four animated video shorts that extracted the important messages from several classic papers in ecology—one of which was shown at the Scientific Plenary. [Ecology in a Changing World](#), was produced just for the Centennial to celebrate the role of ecologists in society while looking to the future of the profession became available for viewing after the meeting on the ESA website and will be relevant long after the Centennial year. Representatives from over 15 ecological societies from around the world, ranging from the Ecological Society of Mongolia to the ecological societies of New Zealand, Australia, Argentina and Brazil, joined ESA to celebrate its Centennial.



We can be proud of our Centennial celebration—the history of ESA, current scientific findings, and speculation about the future all came together in an exciting meeting.

Leading up to the annual meeting many of our sections, chapters, and committees all traced their historical pasts and delved into their futures. Of special note were the timelines developed by the Historical Records Committee that recorded ESA milestones and reflections of Past Presidents. The ESA journals ran a series of Centennial papers and a recap of some of the most important papers from ecology's past. This year also saw the launch of ESA's second open access journal, *Ecosystem Health and Sustainability*, published jointly with the Ecological Society of China.

ESA's Centennial year ushered in a dramatic change for ESA. After self-publishing its journals for most of its history, ESA will now have a publishing partner. Beginning in 2016, John Wiley & Sons will publish ESA subscription and online journals as well as the *ESA Bulletin*. This transition is expected to allow ESA to enhance its journals with upgraded technology and to better serve its authors, reviewers and editors. All ESA members will have free access to the journals in 2016. This move, necessitated by the changing market for scientific journals and the demand for ever more sophisticated technology, means that while ESA will continue to own its journals and exercise editorial control, the production will move to our Wiley. As a result, ESA will close its Ithaca publications office and say a heartfelt thank you to many of the staff who produced our journals with skill and devotion over these many years. This is a bittersweet moment in our history as the Society takes steps to ensure its future.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge that what makes ESA so amazing is not only that it has thrived and grown over 100 years, but also that its community of members—you—have supported ESA with your knowledge, your dedication to ESA's mission, with your dues and donations, and most precious of all, with your time by joining our sections, chapters and committees; your time as authors, reviewers and editors; and through the numerous other ways you volunteer your expertise to your professional society. You have made ESA a strong and vibrant professional society. Thank you!



Katherine McCarter



Public Affairs Highlights

“Science for Policy and Policy for Science”

Every year, ESA engages in science policy to inform policy affecting the ecological community and fosters support for research and STEM education. ESA broadens its impact by joining with other scientific associations through membership in coalitions.

Policy Letters

Over the past year, ESA leadership weighed-in by signing over [thirty letters](#) on a variety of issues and legislation relevant to the ecological community. Our Rapid Response Team members serve as scientific experts that assist leadership to inform policy positions.

Policy Updates and Analyses

Every two weeks, a succinct [Policy News Update](#) is available to members summarizing relevant federal policy issues.

Graduate Student Policy Award

The Biological Ecological Sciences Coalition program, orchestrated by ESA and the American Institute of Biological Sciences, brought 5 ESA Graduate Student Policy Award (GSPA) winners and 24 other young scientists to Washington DC.

Coalition for National Science Funding Capitol Hill Exhibition

ESA joined 37 organizations to participate in the 21st Annual Exhibition and Reception of the Coalition for National Science Funding (NSF) on Capitol Hill, entitled “Investments in STEM Research and Education: Fueling American Innovation.” Rapid Response Team member Karen Lips, (University of Maryland) represented ESA.

Media and Community Outreach

ESA works to bring the research presented in our meetings and journals to the attention of journalists through in-house press releases and tipsheets and collaboration with press offices at the home institutions of our authors and members.

ESA Social

With a following that has grown to over 20,000, [@esa_org](https://twitter.com/esa_org) enjoys a lively presence on Twitter. We follow the Twitter feeds of more than 1,000 ecological scientists, as well as educators, journalists, and policy makers, to keep abreast of news and trends in the community. Filters and Altmetrics tools help us track the ways in which ESA publications are shared online.



Science Program Highlights

Our Science Office staff carry out a broad range of activities in support of the ESA membership, the scientific community, and public agency scientists and decision makers.

Advancing Ecological Science

For the past 22 years, ESA's Science Program has provided support for the ESA [Panel on Vegetation Classification](#). During this time, the Panel has developed the complete scientific content of the US National Vegetation Classification (USNVC). The Panel maintains [VegBank](#), the USNVC open-access vegetation plot database. The [USNVC](#) **promotes** standardized assessment of vegetation, **facilitates** collaboration on inventory, mapping, and management across jurisdictional boundaries, and **provides** a common system to which users contribute and improve. The Panel also leads outreach activities to engage USNVC users.

Ecology for Community

Sustaining Biological Infrastructure

In 2014 ESA's Science Program launched the [Sustaining Biological Infrastructure](#) (SBI) training initiative with NSF support to give scientists skills in business planning, marketing, and communication skills necessary to innovate and sustain research infrastructure. From June 9-11, ESA held its second "Sustaining Biological Infrastructure: Strategies for Success" course. The course was a resounding success with 22 participants reporting increased confidence levels in skills such as understanding and communicating financial information, putting together a business plan, communicating with stakeholders, and approaching private funding sources. More SBI courses are planned in 2016.

Issues in Ecology

Produced by the Science Office, [Issues in Ecology](#) uses commonly-understood language to report the consensus of a panel of scientific experts on issues related to the environment. The audience for *Issues in Ecology* includes decision-makers at all levels.

Solutions for Sustainability

The [Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES), created by the United Nations and other international partners, strengthens the role of science in policy and public decision-making on biodiversity and ecosystem services. This year, the Science Office assisted the U.S. government by identifying expert nominees. The United States was represented by ten American experts and one young fellow.



Education and Diversity Programs

Growing Partnerships for Quality Ecological Education

ESA develops strategic programs to increase diversity within ecology-related professions and to improve the quality of ecology education at all levels.

Over 100 educators, scientists, and program specialists from 22 states, Canada, and the UK attended the 2nd Life Discovery – Doing Science Biology Education Conference.

ESA joined the Professional Societies Alliance for Life Science Education ([PSALSE](#)) in 2014 to lend its voice to the [Vision and Change in Undergraduate Biology Education](#) efforts. This resulted in collaboration with the Society for Conservation Biology and others on a [new initiative](#) to understand the changing career needs in environmental biology education.

Widening the Circle and Creating Strength



SEEDS (Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity and Sustainability)

SEEDS is ESA's flagship award-winning education program to diversify and advance the ecology profession through hands-on opportunities for undergraduates. The [SEEDS](#) program **promotes diversity within the ecology profession** to ensure environmental understanding and a sustainable future.

SEEDS Partnerships for Undergraduate Research (SPUR) Fellowships

The SPUR Fellowship program, with funding from the National Science Foundation and our partners, supports four students to conduct an independent ecological investigation with guidance from a mentor scientist at three field stations. As part of the Fellowship program,

students participate in SEEDS Leadership Meetings and will present their research at the 2016 ESA Annual Meeting in Ft. Lauderdale Florida.

SEEDS Field Trips and Leadership Meeting

Ecology field trips are the cornerstone for freshman and sophomore students to learn about ecology first-hand. Students spend four to seven days at an ecologically significant site, such as a field station, research laboratory, or national park, learning about the science of ecology, exploring career options, and seeing the practical applications of ecology. Students find out more about what ecologists do through hands-on experiences with professionals, receive training in specific areas, and build networks with students and professionals.



Communicating Research



Scientists around the world publish their research in ecology and environmental science in ESA's scientific, peer-reviewed journals: *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, *Ecology*, *Ecological Monographs*, *Ecological Applications*, *Ecosphere*, and *Ecosystem Health and Sustainability*. ESA's publication *The Bulletin* continues to provide interesting items and updates about ecological science for members.

This year, ESA and the Ecological Society of China (ESC) launched ESA's newest journal, *Ecosystem Health and Sustainability* which seeks to highlight ecological research taking place in regions of rapid economic growth and industrialization around the world. *Frontiers* debuted the series *Natural History Notes* in 2015. Each open access article showcases the natural history of particular organisms – their morphology or behavior, their habitats, or their roles in food webs and ecosystems.

Recognizing the importance of strengthening its publishing program, in 2015, ESA selected John Wiley & Sons as a publishing partner for its family of journals. This partnership provides additional capabilities and expertise to ESA's publications strategy, processes, and global reach, along with greater ease of use and discovery by authors, editors, and readers.



Highlights 100th Annual Meeting–Ecological Science at the Frontier: Celebrating ESA’s Centennial

Over 4,700 ecologists gathered in Baltimore, Maryland in August to celebrate ESA’s 100th birthday and share ecological research. The 100th meeting of the ESA was a milestone moment in the history of our scientific organization. It was a moment to take stock of the future of ecology, its relevance to the future of the biosphere, and the role of humans as planetary stewards. At the beginning of the Scientific Plenary, the short film, *Ecology in a Changing World*, debuted along with a surprise video greeting from President Barak Obama.

Awards & Giving Back

Given at the Opening Plenary, Senator Ben Cardin was the recipient of the [Regional Policy Award](#) for his advocacy for Chesapeake Bay restoration, water infrastructure improvements and addressing the multifaceted impacts of climate change. ESA donated \$23,000 to offset the associated environmental impacts of the meeting to Baltimore’s [Parks & People Foundation](#).

Awards

ESA presented nine [awards](#) recognizing outstanding contributions to ecology in new discoveries, teaching, sustainability, diversity, and lifelong commitment to the profession.

Eminent Ecologist Award: Eric Pianka

Eugene P. Odum Education Award:
Nathaniel Wheelwright

**Commitment to Human Diversity in
Ecology Award:** Mary McKenna

ESA Distinguished Service Citation: Alan
Covich

Whittaker Distinguished Ecologist Award:
Inderjit Singh

Honorary Membership Award: Stuart Bunn

W.S. Cooper Award: Carissa D. Brown and
Mark Vellend

George Mercer Award: Marcelo Ardón,
Jennifer L. Morse, Ben P. Colman, and Emily S.
Bernhardt

Murray F. Buell Award: Nina Lany



Financials

ESA's 2015 financial audit was conducted in January of 2016. Please check back to the Annual Report website in early March to view the financial statements. To request a complete audit report, please contact ESA's Washington DC office.

Annual Report Credits

Editorial Staff

Creative Director and Managing Editor

- Alison Mize

Associate Creative Designer and Editor

- Liza Lester

Visual Design and Information Architecture, Programming and Development

- Toni Kulmala

Ecological Society of America

1990 M Street NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036

ESA website: www.esa.org

Annual Report website: http://esa.org/ar_14_15/

