Evolution as Process

Like the organisms many of us study or the organization we work for, our work in resource management and science evolves. Always short on time, staff, and money, we persevere, focusing on what is important–making progress and bringing about results. However slow or gradual the evolution process and however many setbacks we experience along the way, we always seem to march forward making new discoveries, seeing new connections, improving on the way we manage our respective areas of responsibility. This process, this evolution of building on knowledge, applying tools in new ways, of making refinements in what we do is demonstrated throughout this issue.

Two articles discuss different aspects of the survey or questionnaire as a tool to gather information and make advances. In our cover story, Don Riepe and Barbara Toborg report on their use of a survey to investigate the status of management of butterflies and moths in many northeastern U.S. parks. In their case, the survey served as a catalyst for many parks to begin considering these insects in their resource management plans and activities. Information from the questionnaire has also turned into a resource in itself, giving parks access to a network of resource managers with experience in lepidoptera management. Surveys also help us judge the impact of our work on others as the *Park Science* reader survey summary explains. In providing feedback, this survey has created a foundation for making future improvements.

Conferences are a part of this evolution, too. For example, discussions about the NPS "natural process" wildlife management policy at the Ecological Society of America meeting facilitated feedback from supporters and critics as we consider possible refinements of this management approach over the next couple of years. The Tall Timbers gathering in Idaho last spring pulled together an exciting collection of ideas and experiences with prescribed natural fire and may help to further the successful use of this ecologically important management tool in parks.

In her article on natural resources and park construction, Abby Miller explains a refinement in the process to evaluate construction project proposals. Now, the process takes into account multiple benefits to a park, including those related to preserving natural resources. This administrative change represents another significant development in the evolution of carrying out natural resource management work in the parks.

To venture to the next step for each of us certainly requires desire, courage, perspective, and time. As Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "The years teach us much the days never knew." Stay focused, keep pushing, be creative, take chances. The next step may be just within reach.

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