

Notes from the Editor

July 10, 2023

Our second issue of 2023 contains a number of interesting articles on a variety of taxa. The first article investigated the impacts from the Deepwater Horizon oil spill on black skimmers, a seabird in the same family as gulls and terns. Although black skimmers live in the southeastern U.S., the lessons learned from studies such as this can be applied to the types of environmental disasters that scientists in CDFW's Office of Spill Prevention and Response (OSPR) regularly handle. The researchers, one from OSPR and two from Oikonos Ecosystem Knowledge, a not-for-profit environmental organization based in Santa Cruz, found evidence in over half of the birds they examined of atrophy and dehydration, as well as organ damage. The authors concluded that animals impacted by oil spills should be examined for internal as well as external damage to understand the comprehensive effects of a spill and stressed the importance of timely examination of animals for internal damage. The second article in the issue also focused on the impacts of pollution on birds—this time on microplastics in raptors. The researchers in this study from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo examined the carcasses of four raptor species from central California finding microplastics in every bird they necropsied. The most abundant and prevalent plastics found were microfibers and microbeads, respectively.

The third article in this issue is a note from frequent journal contributor Jeff Alvarez of The Wildlife Project along with scientists from Westervelt Ecological Services and the Sonoma Mountain Ranch Preservation Foundation. The authors studied the impacts of the Mosquito Fire—California's largest fire in 2022 that burned over 31,000 ha in Placer and El Dorado counties—on the survival of California red-legged frogs, listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. The authors found that populations of the species survived this high-intensity fire, likely as a result of behavioral mechanisms since red-legged frogs have co-evolved with fire.

The final two articles in this issue focus on fish. The first, from CDFW staff in the Bay Delta region, focuses on the stress response of delta smelt during fish salvage. The authors found that the fish experienced stress in all parts of the collection, handling, transportation, and release process and that wild smelt had higher levels of cortisol and took longer to recover compared to cultured smelt. The last article examined the parasitic infection of Chinook salmon in the Feather River authored by a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service scientists along with researchers from the California Department of Water Resources and the Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission. The authors determined the prevalence of infection was about 50% of the fish sampled and is lethal leading to carcasses that produce billions of spores moving downriver each winter. Infection by the *Ceratonova shasta* parasite is likely one of several factors that limit Chinook salmon recruitment in this area.

I have two new editors to introduce this issue. Margaret Mantor earned a B.S. from the University of California Davis (UC Davis) in Animal Biology and a PhD from UC Davis in Geography with an emphasis on biogeography and animal communication. Her doctoral dissertation focused on vocal communication of California ground squirrels and how communication varies on a geographic scale. Margaret has worked at CDFW for 10 years, within the Habitat Conservation Planning Branch in both the Lake and Streambed Alteration and CESA Permitting Programs. She is now the supervisor for the CESA Permitting Program.

Kate Morozova holds a B.S. in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from University of Connecticut and an M.S. from Ludwig Maximilian University in Germany in Evolutionary Biology, Ecology and Systematics.

During her education and early career, she specialized in small mammal biology and behavioral ecology. Kate worked as a field technician for the National Observation Network, specializing in fauna sampling protocols, before joining CDFW. While at CDFW, she supported the Lake and Streambed Permitting team and monitored bats for early signs of white nose syndrome. Currently, she is part of the California Endangered Species Act Permitting team, specializing in restoration permits, such as Safe Harbor Agreements and Voluntary Local Programs.

Unfortunately, we have lost a few great editors: David Wright, a retired annuitant in the Wildlife Branch; Lauren Damon, formerly of our Bay Delta Region, has taken a job with the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta Conservancy; and Kevin Flemming of the Watershed Restoration Grants Branch will be retiring soon. We thank them for their service as Associate Editors and wish them luck in their future endeavors!

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