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Learning from restoration successes in New Zealand

This issue features EMR's first *Special Section* – in this case on New Zealand restoration. There are many reasons why a focus on New Zealand is relevant to restoration everywhere. Firstly, it is the location of some of the earliest faunal recovery and reintroduction programmes (largely on offshore islands where pest eradication can be feasible) and secondly, that experience has been translated to the mainland areas of the country, whose comparatively small size and relatively low human population has allowed very encouraging levels of success. What is happening in New Zealand is nothing short of inspiring, not least because it shows what is possible in larger countries if the necessary willingness is present.

Norton and colleagues' overview paper, for example, provides a compelling vision, based on successes to date, of a future where the dominant culture is infused with efforts to continuously improve the ecological function of New Zealand's land and water ecosystems, with strong elements of an indigenous world view emerging as part of the dominant paradigm. This potential acceptance of the validity of a restorative approach to land and water management is not a fantasy, but an emerging reality from which other countries can and should learn.

The term 'restoration' is used by most of the papers in the New Zealand *Special Section* in a broad sense – that is, inclusive of the entire spectrum of environmental repair including ecological restoration, rehabilitation and mitigation of impacts. Although the terminology is different, this concept is consistent with that underlying the *National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia* which emphasizes that the entire spectrum of environmental repair is deserving of attention, not solely sensu stricto 'Ecological Restoration'.

It is ecological restoration in the strict sense, however, that informs what is possible and drives the highest and best standard of work across the board. These highest standards are appropriately applied across Australasia to areas capable of full recovery – but it is the constraints of limited resources and competing land and water uses that usually dictate that in some areas only partial recovery (or rehabilitation) is possible. This 'culture of possibility' in New Zealand – where realism meets idealism – is highly nurturing and an appropriate antidote for the grief and despair that often accompanies degradation.

The range of articles are described in more detail in the guest editors' Introduction, but include examples of environmentally and socially transformative restoration and rehabilitation of urban areas (Clarkson & Kirby), forest reserves, and lakes and riparian areas (Elliott & Kemp, Hamilton et al.; McKergow et al.); serious analysis of the phenomenon of strong community involvement in restoration and monitoring by New Zealanders (Sullivan & Molles). Further, the examples of 'mitigation' work to protect all areas (not least lakes and streams) from further degradation and provide feasibility for future recovery show that improved sustainability efforts can achieve real outcomes over time. These and similar themes will be featured at the joint conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia and the New Zealand Ecological Society in November in Hamilton New Zealand (http://era2016.com/) and the Ecological Society of Australia conference in November–December in Fremantle, Western Australia (http://www.ecolsoc.org.au/conferences/registration-now-open).

Other articles in this issue include Trevor Booth's guide to using online tools to help select potential sources of diverse seed suited to a changing climate; David Baker-Gabb and colleagues' test of a simple method for assessing habitat suitability in temperate grasslands; and Corinne Watts' and colleagues' examination of responses of invertebrates to herbicide in *Salix cinerea* invaded wetlands.

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