

Editorial

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As we begin the second decade of the twenty-first century, we here at *Evolution: Education and Outreach*, bolstered by our success over the past three years, are excited about what lies in store for the coming year of 2011.

We kick off the new year with a Special Issue on the Evolutionary Studies (EvoS) Consortium edited by Rosemarie Sokol Chang, Glenn Geher, Jennifer Waldo, and David Sloan Wilson. Together (with Rose Chang *primum inter pares*—diligently helping the digital editorial process enormously), they have assembled a spectrum of papers that simultaneously expose the approaches of the D.S. Wilson-inspired EvoS consortium approach to undergraduate education—while at the same time injecting some welcome themes of evolutionary psychology to these pages. Thus this issue neatly combines education and science—our foremost goal at *E: E&O*.

The rest of the year is equally promising—with Special Issues on the Settlement of the Americas, Material Cultural Evolution, and Evolutionary Medicine scheduled to round out Volume 4.

We extend a special deep thanks to Anastasia Thanukos whose column “Views from Understanding Evolution” has consistently been a highlight of our first 12 issues in our first three years. We shall miss her great writing and deep insights as she sought, issue after issue, to illuminate the

science in these pages with down-to-earth explanations, practical suggestions, and additional resources for teachers who are seeking to apply the science content to their classroom curricula. We wish her well—and hope that Anna may one day again grace our pages.

We are also glad to welcome Dan Brooks, seasoned veteran of evolutionary biology, who has kindly agreed to write some of his deepest, most personal thoughts on the nature of evolutionary theory in this issue’s “Editor’s Corner.” Together with Ed Wiley, Dan pioneered the application of thermodynamics and information theory to evolutionary discourse—in so doing taking the inevitable hard hits of criticism, but sticking to their guns as they knew in their hearts as well as their heads that they were on a new and important track. Dan has done important work for us on our editorial board all along, and of course honchoed our “Teaching Phylogenetics” Special Issue to round out last year’s Volume 3—and we are grateful that he has taken the time to write this month’s “Editor’s Corner.”

So here is a special plea: We are keenly aware that the very nature of the modern scientific enterprise—with its emphasis on grant-driven research—has sharply cut back opportunities for thoughtful people to think more theoretically about the deeper implications of their work. We view the mission of this journal as in part an attempt to redress this balance: scientists and educators are just as smart and thoughtful now as they ever were—but the outlets for reflective ruminations in the form of well-informed essays is far more restricted than it was back in the 1970s and 1980s when the likes of Dan Brooks (and one of us—NE) were able to express ourselves freely. HEY YOU OUT THERE—OLD VETERANS AND YOUNG HOTSHOTS ALIKE—WRITE SOME “EDITOR’S CORNERS” FOR US!!!!!!

Finally, a word about our cover for Volume 4. Our readers will know that each volume has the same image on

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each of its four issues: a Galapagos tortoise for Volume 1, Charles Darwin for Volume 2 (his bicentennial!), and a terrific image juxtaposing a modern human and a Neanderthal skeleton, with a thumbnail human evolutionary tree, for Volume 3 (thanks to Ian Tattersall, a great supporter and contributor!). Volume 3, #3 was our Special Issue on Human Evolution.

This year, the Special Issue on the Settlement of the Americas drives our cover for Volume 4. What could be more dramatic than a parallel set of footprints of the now extinct giant ground sloth *Megatherium* side by side with the footprints of a human being? The trackways are preserved in 12,500-year-old sediments exposed at Pehuen Co, along the shoreline of Bahia Blanca, in Argentina. Other sets of

trackways, some 5,000 years younger, preserved some 15–20 km east of Pehuen Co, record only a few large species (such as guanaco and rhea—still members of the modern fauna)—and otherwise only a prodigious number of human footprints. Darwin missed these footprints when he was there in 1832 and 1833; had he seen them, he might have suspected that humans caused the extinction of *Megatherium* and so many other mammal species—which in turn would have changed his earliest thoughts on extinction—and evolution—of the native species of Patagonia. His earliest evolutionary thoughts would most certainly have been different. The photograph was graciously supplied by Dr. Teresa Manera—whose husband, Roque Bianco, originally discovered these footprints in 1986.