

Wetlands for the Future

Editors

A.J. McComb and J.A. Davis

**Gleneagles Publishing
Adelaide**

Preface

A.J. McCOMB and J.A. DAVIS

In November 1996, 427 delegates assembled at the University of Western Australia for the Fifth International Conference on Wetlands to be held under the auspices of the International Union of Ecologists (INTECOL). Delegates came from 35 countries, and contributed 378 papers and poster presentations. These were summarised in a book of abstracts available at the Conference (Anon., 1996). The present work includes invited plenary addresses, and papers presented at a number of symposia and 'special sessions' which addressed selected, discrete areas of research and management.

A number of other symposia and special sessions will be published separately, as special numbers of specialist journals, as will the proceedings of a satellite workshop on the use of wetland plants to treat wastewater.

It should be made clear that the topics presented at symposia and special sessions were chosen in response to suggestions from the international community of wetland scientists, and for that reason deal with topics of current scientific and management significance.

That said, it should be emphasised that there are many other topics of interest to wetland scientists and managers which were in many cases discussed at the conference, but which happen not to be emphasised here, as a conscious decision was made to restrict the published Proceedings to the contributions listed above. Thus the coverage of topics is less extensive than in the proceedings of the preceding International Wetlands Conference (Mitsch, 1994).

Each manuscript was peer reviewed (normally by two reviewers) and the resulting 57 chapters were assembled into 9 Sections, in a reasonably logical order, but one which did not follow at all closely the order of presentation at the Conference.

After an introductory section dealing with more general aspects of wetland science and management, including plenary addresses, there follows a section on wetlands in areas of low rainfall, a topic of particular relevance to the host country, of which such a large proportion of its surface area receives low and erratic rainfall. Attention then shifts to coastal systems, before moving to deal more specifically with wetland function. Then follow chapters with a more methodological slant: biomonitoring and remote sensing. Finally are presented chapters on the creation and rehabilitation of wetlands in disturbed areas, subjects of considerable research and management interest at the present time.

Despite an ever-growing awareness of the values of wetlands, human demographic and political pressures are such that wetlands are still disappearing or being degraded,

worldwide, at an alarming rate. However, this conference provided a positive counterbalance to this gloomy scenario. The breadth and depth of presented papers clearly demonstrates that our knowledge and understanding of wetland systems and processes is increasing. Not only is our understanding of fundamental processes increasing but, as the contents of this book clearly indicate, our approaches to wetland monitoring, creation and restoration are also rapidly advancing. The transfer of this information into printed form, as given here, and in the other publications arising from the conference, is another step towards the better appreciation, protection and restoration of our global wetland resources.

References

- Anon., 1996. INTECOL'S International Wetlands Conference: Conference Programme and Book of Abstracts. Murdoch University, Perth. ISBN 064629278.
- Mitsch, W.J. (Ed.), 1994. Global Wetlands, Old World and New. Elsevier, Amsterdam, 967 pp.