

PREFACE

In 2007, former U.S. Vice President Al Gore and an international panel of scientists received the Nobel Peace Prize for providing convincing evidence that climate change is already happening and that it is a threat to the health of the environment. The general public has absorbed this message and is asking its political leaders to provide the policy changes needed to address this issue. Conservation biology is the field that seeks to use such information to study and protect the living world and its biological diversity. The field emerged during the last 30 years as a major new discipline to address the alarming loss of biological diversity. The threats to biodiversity are all too real, as demonstrated by the recent recognition that fully one-third of amphibian species are in danger of extinction. At the same time, our need to remain hopeful is highlighted by increasing sea turtle populations at many locations throughout the world following comprehensive conservation efforts. Governments, people, and conservation organizations can work together to make the world a better place.

University students continue to enroll enthusiastically and in large numbers in conservation biology courses. The first (1995), second (2000), and third (2004) editions of *A Primer of Conservation Biology* sought to fill the need for a "quick" guide for those who wanted a basic familiarity with conservation biology. Like its predecessors, this fourth edition of the *Primer* is designed for use in short courses in conservation biology and can also be used as a supplemental text for general biology, ecology, wildlife biology, and environmental policy courses. It is also intended to serve as a concise guide for professionals who require a well documented overview of the subject but do not require in-depth experimental data or lengthy scientific discussion. *Essentials of Conservation Biology*, now in its fourth edition, is recommended to readers who want this more comprehensive treatment of the subject.

The fourth edition of the *Primer* reflects the excitement and new developments in the field of conservation biology. It provides coverage of the latest information available on a number of topics, including the global hotspots of biodiversity that have been identified as targets for conservation efforts and the latest evaluations of endangered species. It highlights new approaches culled from the literature on topics such as species reintroductions, population viability analysis, protected areas management, and payments for ecosystem services. Readers should enjoy and benefit from the

updated full-color illustration and photo program. Highlighted synopses of major points in the text have been added and serve as useful study aids.

Also new to this edition is an Instructor's Resource CD, available to qualified adopters of the text. The IRCD includes electronic versions of all the illustrations, photos, and tables from the textbook.

I hope that readers of this book will want to find out more about the crisis facing species and ecosystems and how they can take action to halt it. I encourage readers to take the field's activist spirit to heart—use the Appendix to find organizations and sources of information on how to help! If readers gain a greater appreciation for the goals, methods, and importance of conservation biology, and if they are moved to make a difference in their everyday lives, this textbook will have served its purpose.

International editions

In keeping with the international nature of conservation biology, I feel it is important to make the field accessible to as wide an audience as possible. With the assistance of Marie Scavotto of Sinauer Associates, I have arranged an active translation program, beginning in 1995 with a translation into German, followed by a Chinese translation in 1997. It became clear to me that the best way to make the material accessible was to create regional or country-specific translations, identifying local scientists to become coauthors and to add examples from their own countries that would be more relevant to the intended audience. To that end, in the past 10 years, editions of the *Primer* have appeared in Brazilian Portuguese (with Efraim Rodrigues), Chinese (with Weizhu Ji), Czech (with Pavel Kindlmann and Jena Jersakova), French with a Madagascar focus (with Joélisoa Ratsirarson), Indonesian (with Jatna Supriatna, Mochammad Indrawan, and Padmi Kramadibrata), Italian (with Luciana Carotenuto), Japanese (with Hiromi Kobori), Korean (with Dowon Lee, Z. Kim, Y. Sohn, J. H. Shin, and J. C. Chae), Mongolian (with Batbold Otgoid, Samiya Khiad, and Bat-saikhan Tsagaan-aduut), Romanian (with Maria Patroescu, Laurentiu Rozy-lowicz, and Cristian Ioja), Russian, Spanish (with Joandomenec Ros), and Vietnamese (with Pham Binh Quyen, Vo Quy, and Hoang Van Thang). Editions of the *Essentials* have appeared in Arabic (with Mohamed El-Demerdash), Hungarian (with Tibor Standovar), and Spanish with a Latin American focus (with Ricardo Rozzi, Peter Feinsinger, Rodolfo Dirzo, and Francisca Massardo). Editions of the *Primer* for South Asia, Greece, Estonian, Indonesian (second edition), and Japanese (second edition), and the *Essentials* for Romanian are currently in production. It is my hope that these translations will help conservation biology develop as a discipline with a global scope. At the same time, examples from these translations find their way back into the English language editions, thereby enriching the presentation.

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Special thanks are due to my wife, Margaret, and to my children, Daniel, William, and Jasper, for encouraging me to fulfill an important personal goal by completing this book. Boston University has provided me with the facilities and environment that make this project possible. I appreciate the suggestions and enthusiasm of hundreds of Boston University students who have taken my conservation biology courses; their ideas have helped me to find new ways to present this material. And lastly, I would like to express my great appreciation to my coauthors in other countries who have worked with me to produce conservation biology textbooks in their own languages, which are critical for spreading the message of conservation biology to a wider audience.

RICHARD PRIMACK

BOSTON UNIVERSITY
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