

Preface

The two volumes on "Wetlands as a Natural Resource" in the book series Ecological Studies (Volumes 190, 191) are based on the highlights of the 7th INTECOL International Wetland Conference in Utrecht, 25–30 July 2004. This conference brought together about 900 participants from 61 countries, who discussed a very broad range of science-, policy- and management-oriented issues related to wetland ecology and hydrology, wetland conservation and creation, the impact of global change and wetlands as a resource in terms of food, flood protection and water quality enhancement. The participants were from different sectors of society, i.e., science and technology (scientists 45%; PhD students 20%), natural resource management (20%) and policy (15%). There were 38 symposia with invited speakers centered around the nine conference themes. We have given the organizers of these symposia the opportunity to produce one chapter for these books with the integrated content of their symposium. This has resulted in 25 chapters, of which 13 are included in Volume 190 under the heading "Wetlands and Natural Resource Management" and 12 in Volume 191 under the heading "Wetlands: Functioning, Biodiversity Conservation, and Restoration".

With these books, we had the aim to summarize the most important recent scientific results in wetland science, their applications in wetland and water resource management and their implications for the development of global, national and regional policies in the perspective of the ever-progressing deterioration of natural wetlands and the major impacts that future climate change will have. We hope that the integrated content of the chapters on such a wide scope of different fields in wetland science will serve as a valuable source of information, both for professionals in environmental science and natural resource management and for students and young professionals seeking to familiarize themselves with these fields. We also hope that the interaction between scientists from different disciplines, resource managers and policy makers will be stimulated by the content of these publications.

We as editors have worked according to a strict time schedule and we want to thank the authors for their timeliness in producing inspiring manuscripts and the scientists who have contributed to the peer reviews of the chapters for their active and prompt participation, which has enabled us to complete our task more or less according to this schedule. We acknowledge the series editor of the Ecological Studies book series, Prof. Dr. Ulrich Sommer, for his invitation to produce these volumes as one of the outcomes of the INTECOL Conference. We also thank Dr. Andrea Schlitzberger of Springer for her advice and help. We would like to take the opportunity to thank all key people who made the conference into such a success. In particular we want to thank Prof. Dr. Eugene Turner and the other members of the INTECOL Wetlands Working group, as well as the

International and National Scientific Committees for their support. We are most indebted to the team that organized the conference, in particular the inner circle, Fred Knol, René Kwant, Nienke Pot and Miranda Motshagen. The members of the Landscape Ecology Group at Utrecht University are thanked for their enormous efforts during the conference.

These two volumes are the most tangible, durable result of the conference. It is our wish that they will find their way to wetland professionals and students worldwide and will contribute to the wise use and conservation of the still large wetland resources that remain on our planet.

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The Editors

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These two volumes are major contributions from a well-run meeting inspired by the collegiality and good will of the hosts. This meeting sparked professionalism through the expression of the finer parts of Dutch culture and, indeed, of all cultures. The 7th International Wetland Conference, like the preceding meetings, was successful because people care about living systems – i.e., people, landscapes, science culture, political structures, birds, etc. – as they go about trying to make things a little better and a little sooner than when wetlands were first appreciated in their collective minds. The successes from the meetings, exemplified by these two volumes, is partly because they enhance the possibilities for clarity and develop a strong scientific enterprise amidst the interactions of people in neutral spaces and a sometimes strong gradient of personalities and cultures. We never quite know ahead of time what the results of the meetings will be, although it has always been wonderful to see them evolve to closure.

It is humbling to know how small things influence others, which is a lesson in being careful, thoughtful and open. These efforts and successes are an explicit recognition of the interdependency of our discipline interests, but also the fabric of human interactions through politics, science, economics, etc. This interdependency suggests that being involved in wetland science and management is a great way to improve the quality of the natural world, but also society. The world needs, whether it knows it or not, the expertise and clear thinking of experts of general and detailed understanding to contribute to the social good. These two volumes do exactly that. Kudos to the Editors!

R. Eugene Turner, Chair

On behalf of the INTECOL Wetland Working Group