

This issue of the *Natural History Bulletin* introduces some new features. Although it is not radically different in appearance, it has some changes designed to increase the appeal of the *NHB* to more of the Siam Society's members and other general readers—educated people interested in nature, environment and conservation. The new features include commentary-type articles on environmental issues, accounts of noteworthy recent events, letters to the editor, and more frequent editorials.

A recurring comment by society members, most of whom are not scientists, has been the stuffy and technical nature of most of the articles printed in the *NHB*. While I sympathize with their desire to have a more interesting and readable journal, there is not a lot I can do to make the *NHB* into a popular and entertaining magazine without destroying its function as a scholarly journal. The *NHB* is basically a scientific publication which follows the format that scientists the world over have found most suitable in presenting detailed documentation and convincing scientific evidence. It is an extremely conservative format designed to satisfy a technical readership and not to promote sales on news stands or please nonscientists. Even scientists don't bother to try to read many technical articles, particularly taxonomic descriptions, outside their own specialties. What can we do, however, to satisfy the legitimate needs of more of our dues-paying members?

The editors have already made some concessions to nonscientists during the past few years, by encouraging articles dealing with conservation and environmental matters as well as pure science, and by printing more color illustrations than are justified by scientific considerations alone. These sometimes add considerably to printing costs but the council has not complained. We now intend to go a bit further, by adding features that will encourage people, particularly scientists, to address environmental issues of interest to all educated persons. The first "commentary", in fact, was printed in the previous issue, and it did not fail to excite some readers and raise a few eyebrows. We will also print all reasonable letters to the editor about any relevant issue. We also hope to print more reviews of recent publications and events. These efforts, however, will only be successful as long as the editors and other informed persons volunteer to write more reports and reviews.

In order to be able to carry out the increased workload entailed by this expansion of the *NHB*, the previous editors have expanded the editorial board to include more distinguished scientists from a greater variety of institutions and disciplines. But it must be noted that all editors contribute their time free, and are motivated primarily by a desire to improve science in Thailand and promote greater environmental awareness and responsibility.

Thus, the *NHB* is attempting to satisfy to a greater degree the demand for a more popular journal on environment and conservation, while preserving its hard-earned scientific credibility and function. There is no other journal in Thailand that serves as a regular outlet for new biological discoveries in nature, scientific surveys or ecological research, and I believe that we should at all costs preserve this tradition, which began with the publication of the first issue of the *Journal of the Natural History Society of Siam* in 1914.

Unfortunately, however, there is still no other national level publication that serves as a conservation news magazine, a forum for discussion of environmental issues or an inter-

esting and attractive natural history magazine for laymen. These media niches are almost entirely unoccupied in Thailand, though several NGOs now publish their own conservation newsletters, and several magazines with more general appeal now frequently print articles on nature subjects. Could the Siam Society fulfill this need by publishing another, less technical magazine? Many members think that it could, and perhaps now is the time to start discussing the possibility seriously. I hope that members will let us know their wishes and ideas—just contact or write to anyone on the council and let them know what you think.

*Warren Y. Brockelman*