

In the past several months we have encountered what human beings have not experienced for more than 100 years: a real pandemic caused by an unknown virus which causes fatal results to many infected persons. The pandemic of the “2019 novel coronavirus”, or COVID-19, was like an attack by an invader from outer space, as it was very sudden and made people all over the world, including Thailand, panic because of its poorly known profile. As Jared Diamond, evolutionally biologist and author of the book “Guns, germs, and steel: the fates of human societies” already commented, this rapid pandemic was caused not only by the extraordinary infectious ability of the virus, but also by a human invention, the airplane, an innovation of the Wright brothers in 1903. The airplane delivered infected persons to all parts of the world in a short time. The latest world pandemic humans had experienced before this coronavirus was caused by the so-called Spanish flu (1918–1919), but at the time, fortunately, many people were probably spared because there were no airplanes which transported multitudes of people around the world as we have today. Many technological innovations have brought what human beings had never enjoyed before, such as increased security, convenience and productivity. But, as we see from many examples, such innovations come with mostly unforeseen costs—they have forced us to sacrifice many things important to our lives. Tremendous numbers of people have been killed by human innovations such as cars, ships, tanks, fossil fuels, bombs and poison gas. The “conveniences” which have allowed us to travel to remote countries within hours have also “killed” our spare time, now used up by having to cope with the virus and the resulting sickness and deaths. We relentlessly keep innovating things that enhance our abilities, which were given by nature without limitation. The only thing we can do with unknown organisms, especially microbes, is “observe without prejudice”, which is the basic mindset of what we call “natural history”. If we still have the heart to observe and describe phenomena in nature with humility and to search the truth (or what we believe is the truth), like many great biologists have in the past who found new ground-breaking paradigms, we can overcome this calamity. We have also learned an important lesson, that even though we have enough food to eat and places to live, and can communicate via telephone and the internet, we need direct face-to-face communication to maintain our normal mentality and passion. During the past term, although our universities mandated remote teaching through the internet, I (PM) was still able to conduct direct teaching in the classroom with social distancing. As a university teacher, I felt the need to encourage students by meeting and communicating with them directly. As it turned out, I became the person being encouraged by them. I thank them for rescuing my sinking heart and helping me overcome my dismal mood at the time. WYB, who retired from active teaching several years ago, still feels the need to maintain face-to-face contact with research colleagues in order to maintain motivation and enthusiasm for our work. Also, the temporary shut-downs of Khao Yai National Park to visitors have had costly effects on our ability to maintain our research schedule and commitments.

Editorial work on the NHBSS also stopped for several months because of the coronavirus crisis which began in March of 2020 in Thailand. Lack of face-to-face communication with editorial board members has slowed our work. Fortunately, due to the sincere efforts of editorial board members and assistants, as well as reviewers, the NHBSS can still go on. We would like to express our special thanks to all persons who have made this possible. Additionally, one good news is that we have Professor Dr. Masanaru Takai (Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University, Japan) as a new editor for paleontology. As representatives of our editorial board, we would like to say welcome to Dr. Takai.

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