

President's Message Board

Dear Friends,

This Notepad presents the first of a series of short reports written by our Regional Representatives. The goal is to offer, not a full report on everything done in environmental history in each area, but an overview of the current trend. Is environmental history developing? Stagnating? What kinds of topics are most studied, or emerging? What major events or initiatives happened recently? Are there any idiosyncrasies worthy of notice? Has ESEH itself taken any initiative? These are the sorts of questions ESEH representatives will try to answer in one page or so.

This attempt meets the purpose we announced last year after the ESEH Board was renewed, to grant ESEH Regional Representatives (RR) more space and responsibility in the Society. We hope it will give you a flavour of the health of environmental history all over Europe. Stéphane Frioux, ESEH French RR, has agreed to open the series. As you will see, his message is likely to delight us!

With best wishes,

Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud, ESEH President

Reports from our Regional Representatives – Stéphane Frioux (France)

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

Since 2007, there has been 'something new under the sun', as regards French environmental history! As John McNeill said in the concluding remarks he offered to an environmental and social history conference held in Paris on 11–13 September, he could not write today, as he did five years ago, that environmental history is weak in France!

A quarterly French newsletter, the 'Bulletin d'histoire environnementale', has been published by the Regional Representative at the ESEH Board. This project was made possible thanks to the cooperation of French environmental historians, ESEH members as well as non-ESEH members, historians as well as geographers or ecologists. You can download it on the site <http://pradis.ens-lsh.fr/article.php?id_article=192>. Currently this newsletter is sent to about 150 people.

The purpose is different from that of a journal. The starting point of this initiative was the fact that many French environmental historians, producing

interesting and innovating research, did not know each other, or only met by chance in environmental history conferences organized abroad, like ESEH bi-annual conferences. By reading the 'Bulletin', they are now able to follow the activity of the ESEH and to keep being informed about the work of their colleagues: bibliographical information, short presentations of research topics, and specific groups (working for instance on forests or wetlands), calls for papers and seminar/conference announcements feed the electronic publication.

This newsletter does not overlap with information provided on the ESEH website. It also advertises events of national interest that cannot be found there and, as some French historians still do not pay as much attention to the practice of English as it would be necessary to establish working relationships or connections with foreign colleagues, it remains useful to use French to convey news to French speakers...

The autumn 2008 issue is the fourth; it underlines the recent increase of scholarly groups working in environmental history and the similar increase of the number of conferences in this field. The last one (both in French and English) took place at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, in September. Focusing on the theme 'Integrating the social and environmental in History', it gathered about 150 people from all over the world. Introduced by Joan Martinez Alier and concluded by John McNeill, it featured more than 20 sessions and 80 papers dealing with topics ranging from agricultural modernisation, leisure or scientific expertise to natural resources management or urban issues, which showed how fruitful it is to mix social and environmental perspectives and methodology in history. (More on this conference in the French 'Bulletin' ...).

Groups and initiatives in environmental history flourish in France, around a wide range of topics. Wild animals (like bears and wolves) and their relationship with humans, wetlands, waters and rivers, risk, environmental knowledge, commons and land use, climate, forest, pollution, are but a few examples of topics that have drawn historians' attention recently. Clearly, environmental history has come out the shadows, and it would take more than a few lines to report on all the work done or in progress. But it is striking that most historians who practise it do not deem necessary to call what they do 'environmental history'. Many even contest their belonging to the field and the use of the word 'environnement'. Explaining this – insofar we are able to do so – would also take more than a few lines! I won't try to do this here and now, but the question is certainly worth exploring.

Anyway, let us hope that the 'Bulletin' will keep working at the same pace as the French environmental history academic community and scholarship. Of course, any suggestions to improve it and any help in its making will be warmly welcome!

With greetings from Lyon,

Stéphane Frioux, French Regional Representative

CFP: ESEH Publication Prize 2009

The European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) welcomes submissions for its Publication Prize.

The prize is intended to identify and encourage innovative and well-written research in the field of environmental history of Europe. It will be awarded for an article published in 2007 or 2008. Applications are welcomed from senior and junior scholars from all countries, even though some preference may be given to junior scholars from Europe. The prize will be awarded at the 1st World Congress of Environmental History, August 2009, in Copenhagen.

The ESEH publication prize is intended for an article on any subject in European environmental history and in any European language. The winner will receive a money prize in the amount of Euro 500 as well as travel grant (if needed) to attend the 1st WCEH in 2009. Applicants are asked to submit two copies of their published article by mail (snail-mail) to the address marked * below. If the language of publication is not English, however, applicants should submit a one-page English summary of their article with their applications.

Complete applications must be received by 30 November 2008. The winner will be contacted at the beginning of May 2009.

Homepage: <http://eseh.org/publicationprize2009>

Send applications to:

*ESEH Publication Prize

Eva Jakobsson

Department of Media, Culture and Social Sciences

University of Stavanger

4036 Stavanger

Norway

The ESEH Publication Prize committee:

Stefania Gallini, Ph.D., Departamento de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia. Email: sgallini@unal.edu.co

Eva Jakobsson, Ph.D., Department of Media, Culture and Social Sciences, University of Stavanger, 4036 Stavanger, Norway. Email: eva.jakobsson@uis.no

Tomasz Samojlik Ph.D., Mammal Research Institute, Polish Academy of Sciences, 17-230 Białowieża, ul. Waszkiewicza 1c, Poland. Email: samojlik@zbs.bialowieza.pl

Visit our website!

We would like to encourage you to visit our society's website: www.eseh.org. You find there regularly updated news items such as calls for papers, announcements of new publications etc.

European Society for Environmental History

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ESEH aims to promote environmental history in Europe, by encouraging and supporting research, teaching and publications in the field. The ESEH maintains its web site at <www.eseh.org>.

Notepad Editor: Martin Knoll

Items for the next Notepad should be sent by 1 January 2009 to the address shown below.

All correspondence should be directed to the secretariat:

c/o Dr. Martin Knoll
 Institut fuer Geschichte
 Technische Universitaet Darmstadt
 Fachbereich 2
 Residenzschloss
 D-64283 Darmstadt
 Germany
 e-mail: secretary.ESEH@geschichte.uni-regensburg.de

Online Access to the current volume of Environment and History is free for ESEH members – ask the Secretary for more details.