

*RELIGION, NATURE, AND CULTURE
NEWSLETTER*



*Special inaugural
conference issue*

**Vol. 1, # 2
(June, 2006)**

Note from the Editors:

With the gathering momentum of activities and initiatives sparked by the Inaugural Conference, the interim officers agreed to continue with the regular publication of the ISSRNC *Newsletter* on a twice-a-year basis (April and November issues). The *Newsletter* has thus become the voice of the Society and will contain all news that is of importance to the Society in this critical phase of initial growth. The *Newsletter* will be available both online and in a limited number of hard copies.

Besides the topical information related to the Society, the *Newsletter* features a resource section on opportunities, calls for papers, and listings of new, relevant work in the field. In future issues, there will be a section with slightly longer entries of 'new work by members,' in which paid-up members will have the opportunity to tell people about their new book article, projects, etc.

Finally, along with the topical information, we envisage that the *Newsletter* will have a series of thematic contributions, in which different members may be asked to write essays on a given theme. Such essays could be brief introductions to the area, and include resources at the end. Thus while we are all interested in the field as a whole, each of us has expertise that others do not but can share through the essay section.

We welcome any further suggestions from members.

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International Society for the Study of Religion Nature, and Culture Society Established

Bron Taylor (University of Florida)
ISSRNC Interim President

The International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture was established at its April 2005 Conference at the University of Florida. The Conference, “Exploring Religion, Nature, and Culture”, drew more than 150 scholars, including about three dozen from Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. Its featured speakers included Stephen Kellert, Carolyn Merchant, Kocku von Stuckrad, and many others.

The Society’s stated mission is “to promote critical, interdisciplinary inquiry into the relationships among human beings and their diverse cultures, environments, and religious beliefs and practices.” By creating a habitat for scholars from diverse disciplines and regions, society planners hope to foster new insights and collaborative projects exploring evolving connections and transformations between environments and the religious dimensions of human cultures.

An affiliated *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture* will begin publishing in 2007 and is intended as a forum for this interdisciplinary conversation. Journal editors are now considering special issue proposals and articles for possible publication. Information about the society and journal is available online at www.religionandnature.com.

Scholarly inquiry into the religion/nature nexus is not new, of course, and has been unfolding quite well up until now without such a society. For generations, humanities scholars and social scientists have examined natural symbols in religious texts and

rites, or analyzed the “worship of nature” found in some (usually) small-scale societies that have not been overwhelmed by civilizations spreading world religions. But as more scholars assumed a more scientific approach to the study of religion, new approaches and fields of inquiry were needed.

One such approach considers how natural habitats give rise to consciousness in general, and religious beliefs and practices in particular – the case of nature shaping religion. The emerging fields of evolutionary psychology and cognitive science, for example, explore how our evolutionary genome, or the ingestion of certain plants or gases, can influence and precipitate religious perceptions. This area of inquiry can draw on a diverse number of fields, as was evident in the teaming-up of a classicist and two natural scientists who researched the Delphic Oracle and argued, after finding hallucinogenic ethers in the caves at Delphi, for a partially naturalistic explanation for that famous prophetic cult.

Another approach draws heavily on disciplines recently labeled “historical ecology” and “ecological anthropology”, as well as on ecology-informed religious studies and other disciplines. This approach explores the role that religions have played or might play in transforming ecosystems – the case of religion shaping nature.

For many, as environmental degradation has intensified and caused ever-greater suffering, this sort of question has assumed increasing urgency. This is in no small measure because over the last few decades,

religion (both in general and in its particular forms) has been accused of fostering beliefs and behaviors that damage ecosystems and harm their inhabitants. Alternatively, religion has been proffered as an essential partner in the global quest for environmental sustainability. Because evidence is available to support both hypotheses, “religion and nature” may well be an emerging field that will have to do much with the flourishing of life on this planet. If so, it is ultimately an academic field that has both practical and ethical importance.

Whatever aspect of the nature/human/culture nexus is under examination, it is clear that these relationships are far too complex to be explored adequately within the confines of any single, or even many, disciplines. It is this conviction that has given rise to the society idea.

Happily, much scholarship produced in recent decades can be easily dropped into this interdisciplinary stew. The American Academy of Religion spawned its religion and ecology group in 1990, and since then has provided habitat for this discussion, as has the Forum on Religion and Ecology, producing an important multi-volume series. Philosophers and ethicists, environmental historians, ecological and environmental anthropologists, literary “eco” critics, cultural studies theorists, sociologists and political scientists, as well as conservation biologists and other natural scientists, have all focused attention on the religious dimensions of the natures they study.

The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature represents an effort to assemble and introduce the fascinating range of this interdisciplinary ferment. As work on it unfolded, and the richness and complexity of the already available research was revealed, it became apparent that new venues would be

needed to continue the discussion. Thus, the idea for a society and a scholarly journal were hatched, and the enthusiastic and generous response of scholars from diverse disciplines around the world suggested that the time was ripe to create a scholarly habitat for those wishing to work in an interdisciplinary way toward an understanding of the religion variable in nature-human relations.

All of those involved in the work of the society welcome scholars’ interest and participation. Further information and online membership registration are available via the society link at www.religionandnature.com.



Critical Intersections in the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture: Reflections on the Inaugural Conference

Kristina Tiedje, (University of Lyon 2 France),
ISSRNC Interim Executive Secretary

It has been a busy and productive year for the wide-ranging group of hard-working volunteers preparing for the Inaugural Conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture, which was held at the University of Florida in Gainesville, Florida, in April 2006. Intended as a venue for scholars from different disciplines and from different countries to present work, engage in extended discussions and collaborate on interdisciplinary projects, the conference provided space and time to reflect on the nexus of religion, nature, and culture and advocate for an interdisciplinary field of study concerning these issues.

With over 150 presenters and 200 attendees, the conference turned out to be a tremendous success. Approximately thirty presenters were from outside of the United States, including from places as far away as Indonesia, Africa, and Australia. Many additional presenters engaged phenomena beyond U.S. borders. During two featured plenary sessions, renowned scholars from the Humanities, the Social Sciences and the Physical Sciences presented methodological and theoretical reflections on the three main tropes—religion, nature, and culture—suggesting the practical relevance and interdisciplinary intersections of scholarly interests to understand the complex relationships between humans, religions and the Earth's living systems. Keynote presentations were delivered by Stephen Kellert (Yale University) and Carolyn Merchant (University of California, Berkeley). Additional presentations were rich and varied thematically and regionally. These in-

cluded presentations by: Marc Bekoff (University of Colorado), Penny Bernard (Grahamstown University, South Africa), Bron Taylor (University of Florida), Nina Witoszek-Fitzpatrick (Oslo University, Norway), and Kocku von Stuckrad (University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands). The complete, final program, with abstracts, is available via the Society link at www.religionandnature.com.

It was clear that for many of those present, understanding the intersections between religion, nature, and culture is especially critical during this time of dwindling biocultural diversity. Many of us are concerned with a simple, yet indispensable and pressing question: How might humanity achieve greater social equity as well as environmental sustainability? The context of threatened habitats and increasing cultural homogenization makes such concerns ever more pressing. The emerging field may contribute to the intensifying efforts around the world to counteract the loss of cultural and biological diversity by envisioning a new interdisciplinary model based on a spiritual, humanistic, social, and ecological framework.

The conference demonstrated that scholarly engagement with these closely linked domains of human experience is needed and may have a real world impact through holistic exploration of the interrelatedness, interactions, and reciprocal influences of religions, environments, and cultures. Numerous papers grounded in fieldwork directly addressed questions of the interrelatedness of humans and their diverse envi-

verse habitats.

Indigenous and other local peoples, who have long been silenced by more dominant voices and social forces, are now demanding that their agency to reshape their futures be acknowledged. Spiritual practices and cultural activities often but not always go hand in hand with ecological restoration projects. While many local peoples are committed to the protection of their environments with or without external help, many also recognize that collaboration with academic and other professionals may bring potential benefits to their communities. Scholarly attention and interdisciplinary exchange is invaluable to the mutual understandings and true collaboration needed to face common threats to the world's biocultural diversity. Yet, the answers remain difficult and complicated due to the economic, political, and social variations.

The pressing issue of the Earth's sustainability makes an even greater case to endorse the critical and scholarly inquiry of the complex intersections among religious beliefs and practices, humans and their diverse environments. This was only the first step to promote greater interdisciplinary exchange and provide a home for scholars from a variety of disciplines to bring this field to the next level. The next steps include, first elections to establish and legitimize the Society leadership, fundraising to make to Society sustainable, raising membership, planning the 2007 conference, and publishing academic work in the associated Journal for the Society of Religion, Nature, and Culture.



The Challenges of the Conference

Kocku von Stuckrad (University of Amsterdam)
ISSRNC Chair, Board of Directors

The inaugural conference of the ISSRNC in April was a great success. The response was overwhelming and the panels revealed a cornucopia of possible approaches to issues of religion, nature, and culture. This start is certainly encouraging and promising! If the Society retains its openness and inclusive character, I am sure that it will have a bright future. At the same time, I am curious about how the Society will deal with the challenges that also emerged at the inaugural meeting. One of these has to do with interdisciplinarity. Participants with a background in anthropology and theology by far outnumbered natural scientists, sociologists, political scientists, cultural historians, and—yes—even historians of religion. Another challenge has to do with the integration of competing approaches and scholarly identities. In many panels I sensed an unspoken agenda that is an element of US discourse on religion in general: a belief that “religion” is basically good, and where it is bad—read: not environmentally minded—it is our task to improve it. This intermingling of theological involvement and scholarly reflection contrasts in an interesting way with, for instance, European approaches to religion. Maybe this has to do with the religious wars that have shaped European cultural landscapes and identities during the past 500 years (from the Thirty Years War in the seventeenth century to the civil war in Ireland and the recent wars on the Balkan) and fostered a scholarly self-understanding that insists on an agnostic and critical approach to religious truth claims. At the risk of oversimplification, we can state that following the enlightenment movement Europe has developed a secular and thus distanced and non-

religious way of talking about religion, whereas the American civil religion tends to fuse religious language with political agendas. This resulted in two scholarly climates that present us with different attitudes regarding the study of religion, nature, and culture. If the Society wants to become a really international and interdisciplinary community, it will be essential to address these differences in an open dialogue and debate. I am confident that we will succeed in this endeavor.

Acknowledgements

This conference would not have been possible without the generous support of the following programs and organizations.

From the University of Florida:

The Graduate Program in Religion and Nature

The Division of Sponsored Research

The School of Natural Resources and the Environment

The Land Use and Environmental Change Institute

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

The International Center

The Center for European Studies

The Department of Religion

The CLAS Ethics Chair

The Vada Allen Yeomans Women's Studies Endowment

The France-Florida Research Institute

The Center for African Studies

The Center for Jewish Studies

Tropical Conservation and Development

Latin American Studies

The Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions

External Support was provided by:

FOREST (The Florida Organization on Religion, Environmental

Science, and Technology)

The Metanexus Institute.

Immediate Work Ahead: Nominations and Elections Committees

Mark Peterson (University of Wisconsin Colleges) & Forrest Clingerman (Ohio Northern University)

The first ISSRNC conference gave many participants an opportunity to see the productive synergies that can come from such interdisciplinary outlets. One of the most important parts of retaining and building on the momentum already created is effective leadership. Thus, a Nominations Committee and an Election Committee were formed at the inaugural conference to help make this possible.

The Nominations Committee membership was selected from the floor of the business meeting on April 9th, 2006. The task of the committee, as per Article 13, section 2 of the bylaws, will be to prepare slates of nominees for the elected offices of the Board of Directors, and then recommend to the President and Board of Directors prospective Chairs of Standing Committees. More importantly, the task of this initial nominations committee will be to offer a slate of candidates to establish the first Board of Directors, replacing the Interim Executive Committee as per Article 25.

The Society is now approaching an important milestone: the first election of officers. This process provides an opportunity for members to influence the goals and development of the Society, making participation in these elections quite important.

To this end, the Election Committee encourages nominations for the Society's Officers, Board of Directors and Members-at-Large of the ISSRNC. More information on elected positions and the organization of the Society can be found on the Society website. There are 12 positions that need to be filled:

Officers:

President
President elect
Secretary
Treasurer

At large members:

Natural Science
Humanities
Social Science
Interdisciplinary

Although the following committees chairs are appointed, non-voting positions, according to the bylaws, they are very important as well. So the nomination committee, the interim executive committee, and the future Board of Directors, would like to see your recommendations both for these committees and suggestions for who might be recruited to serve as their chairpersons.

Committee chairs:

Membership
Publications
Program
Development

Please send nominations (including self-nominations) to either Forrest Clingerman (f-clingerman@onu.edu) or Luke Johnston (lukej@ufl.edu). Your nomination should include the name of the nominee, the position for which you are nominating, and contact information (preferably an email address). The deadline for nominations is 30 June 2006. Nominees will be asked to provide a brief statement of interest for voters, which will be made available to members. Online elections will be held during the first two weeks of September, with the new officers assuming leadership of the Society shortly thereafter.

Society History and Development

By Bron Taylor (University of Florida) and Terry Terhaar (Yale University)

Background and Accomplishments

The turnout and success of the inaugural meeting was gratifying to the many individuals who organized the gathering and developed the needed infrastructure for the Society. In addition to the meeting that is described elsewhere in this newsletter and online, here is a recap of our accomplishments so far.

An open-invitation meeting was held in early September 2005 to review and agree on the Society's mission statement, bylaws and other matters essential to the formation of a scholarly society. Drafting the mission statement to reflect the values and beliefs of our diverse potential membership took careful work, but a strong consensus supported the following statement: The society's stated mission is "to promote critical, interdisciplinary inquiry into the relationships among human beings and their diverse cultures, environments, and religious beliefs and practices." Meeting attendees also undertook the formation of an interim executive committee to guide and to establish the Society.

Within weeks of the September meeting, the notion of a Spring 2006 inaugural meeting proved feasible as the idea received numerous, generous pledges of support from sympathetic programs and institutes at the University of Florida. Conference staffing responsibilities were divided among a number of graduate students in, and affiliated with, the Religion and Nature program at UF. The energetic and affable interim executive director Luke Johnston took on the lion's share of the work. Conference co-chairs Rick Stepp and especially Laura

Hobgood-Oster fielded questions and evaluated proposals. The Religion Department's able office manager, Cecilia Rodriguez, tended to fiscal details. Almost like magic, the conference was successfully organized.

Organizing the conference required that we establish an efficient administrative hub. Toward this end we built a database to manage society memberships, conference participant information, and those working on and interested in the journal. We also used a grant for essential office equipment to secure a computer, color printer, photo and video-editing equipment, and financial management software. In January 2006, we submitted the necessary Federal Internal Revenue Service paperwork, including the agreed-upon bylaws, to secure non-profit status as a charitable, educational organization.

From the original announcement of the Society to its inaugural conference, many individuals have worked to build the fledgling organization's administrative capacity. (Many who learned of the conference wanted to attend but were unable. They expressed hope there would be another conference soon.) Because many people helped develop administrative capacity and expressed the desire for new programs and activities, we feel we are ready to take the Society to the next level.

Next steps.

In order for the society to flourish, to become economically sustainable, and to especially fulfill its international vision, a number of additional steps need to happen.

And we need the support and direct participation of all who are interested in promoting the society's mission in order to accomplish these goals

Here are some of the next steps as we currently see them. Please consider how you might help with these tasks, tell us about your ideas for next steps, and guide us in their implementation.

Build a permanent Board of Directors. Participate in the upcoming elections by serving on the nominations or elections committee, or run for the Board. A nomination committee and elections committee is responsible for formally establishing the Society through its first elections. Committee and board membership is open to all members. (See the details above). As with all society actions and activities, it is critical that this be a transparent and open-door process.

Build membership. By the time you read this memo, there will be approximately 100 dues-paying society members. We need to triple this number as soon as possible. If everyone who attended the conference joined, we could increase membership by 50% or so. If 25% of the people who contributed to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* and are not already members joined, we could add another 100 members. 300 members in 2007 seems like an attainable goal. But it will really take word-of-mouth and friendly peer-encouragement to meet this goal. People need to understand that when they join, they get more than an inexpensive journal; they contribute to the building of their own field through the support of professional staff devoted to enhancing its growth, visibility, and resources. New members should recognize that there is strength in numbers; the larger the organization, the more likely the Soci-

ety will be able to gain important grants and other funds.

Build internal donors by securing more "founding members." Grantor institutions want to see that members support an organization before funding it. "Founding memberships" to the society are \$250.00. After reimbursing Equinox press for the cost of the discounted journal, over \$200 can go to Society development. Twenty founding members would generate over \$4,000. If we increase regular and founding memberships at these levels, we can achieve a realistic fundraising goal of \$10,000 for the next 9 months. Combined with the \$2,500 balance we currently enjoy, this amount would enable us to retain the part time services of an Executive Director, who could orchestrate a major grant writing initiative.

Build institutional memberships and establish a consortium of institutions supporting the Study of Religion, Nature, and Culture. Those interested in pursuing this idea should contact **Bron Taylor** <brontaylor@religionandnature.com> who is developing this strategy.

Build capacity by hiring an Executive Director. This is critical as those who have led this initiative so far cannot continue all administrative duties on a pro bona basis. Making this position real is the first step toward building a flourishing society. But to get there, we need to raise money through the steps outlined above.

Program planning and proposal writing. Successful educational organizations partially succeed by raising funds through grant writing. Funders examine proposals to gauge how methodical and thorough an organization has been in its planning process. The design and success of proposals

often depends upon effective program planning. Members who have development expertise, fundraising ideas, and/or enthusiasm should contact **Terry Terhaar** <tterhaar@pacbell.net> who currently guides the development committee. Program planning and development is a team activity. Members with fundraising and grant writing talents please volunteer to help, even if it is proof reading grants written by others.

Develop a budget. Budgets are program tools, financial planning tools, and a form of managing expenditures. Developing an organizational budget allows the society to set priorities for programs, services, and staffing. Most grantor organizations want to see projected organizational and program financial needs.

Build standing committees. The strength of the society will reflect the initiatives undertaken by its various committees. See the Society's bylaws on the web, which summarizes these committees, and consider volunteering.

Establish Programs. One of the most important committees is the Program Committee. Deciding on the next conference venue, time, and organizational teams is one of the most important responsibilities. (See Society webpage for further information).

Contribute to the Publishing Program. You can do this by submitting to, reviewing for, or securing your library's subscription to the society's journal; or you can help with the envisioned, and more contemporary and "real time" online, *Newsletter*. Finally, you can help envision and organize other publication projects yet to emerge. (See Society

webpage for further information).

To summarize, let us stress, that for the Society to succeed and flourish, we really do need your help, large and small. Let us urge everyone who receives this newsletter to become a member if you have not already done so. Also, please consider paying now for 2007, or making a special donation toward the executive director position. Even more important, gently yet strongly encourage others to join. We need your friends and colleagues in the field to make our organization strong and vibrant.

There is no more important phase of any non-governmental organization than its start up phase. Many start and soon fade into oblivion. If you believe this is an important field, and the time has come for it to blossom into a higher profile area of scholarly inquiry, help us survive, grow, and evolve! Contact the individuals listed in this newsletter for more information on how to volunteer. And consider making a tax-deductible donation as well.

ANNOUNCEMENT: NEXT CONFERENCE OF THE ISSRNC

THE NEXT CONFERENCE OF THE ISSRNC IS CURRENTLY BEING PLANNED FOR LATE 2007 OR EARLY 2008, AND A LIKELY LOCATION WILL BE MORELIA, MEXICO. A CALL FOR PAPERS WILL BE ONLINE BY MID-SEPTEMBER, 2006, AND SENT OUT TO ALL MEMBERS AND INTERESTED PARTIES.



Membership Profile

Robin M. Wright (Coordinator, Membership Committee)

As of this writing, the Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture has a total of 97 members, a thread away from the three-digit mark. Of these, 69 are regular members, 21 students and 5 founding members. For a Society that first opened its doors to membership applications at the end of last year, this is a remarkably good start. A quick look at the members' profiles show that 15% are international members (from Canada, Japan, Finland, the Netherlands, France, Egypt, Australia, Switzerland, Nigeria, Mexico, and England). At the April Conference, this international diversity became all the more visible with presenters and audience from Brazil, Venezuela, South Africa, Malaysia, and Germany.

The vast majority of members and participants represented the Social Sciences, Hu-

manities, and Interdisciplinary Studies. Very few were affiliated to the Natural Sciences. This is an area where outreach should certainly be done in the future. Within the Humanities, there was a tremendous diversity of interests reflecting the vitality of the field and the myriad ways in which the relations of religion and environmental studies are conceptualized, such as: environmental ethics, eco-spirituality, deep ecology, eco-theology, neopaganism, and the outdoor religions. Fascinating contributions came from the anthropologists at the conference demonstrating how the study of indigenous ontologies has deepened in recent years. In short, the wide gamut of interests represented by the Society's members – even in its very early stages – holds great promise for a brilliant future.

Persons interested in becoming members

should visit the website www.religionandnature.com where there is an online membership form. Alternatively, one may apply for membership by downloading and filling out the forms and mailing them in to the Society. We especially urge Board of Directors members to send in their dues. Membership dues are according to income, and the dues schedule is online. We do request that all prospective members include brief statements of their interests in the Society, as these will be important for a future Society directory. Members also need to indicate whether they consider their scholarship closest to the social or natural sciences, humanities, or interdisciplinary studies, so everyone will be afforded an opportunity to vote for a corresponding at-large Board of Directors member.

You may also help the Society grow by informing your friends and colleagues of the Society's mission and accomplishments. It would be particularly interesting if members would take the initiative to make some kind of outreach to the religious community, or people engaged in religious environmentalism who should know we exist even if they may not wish to come to our meetings. Our books and conferences and speakers might be resources for them.

Student Presence Strong at Inaugural ISSRNC Conference

Luke Johnston, (Graduate Program in Religion and Nature, UF) Interim Executive Director, ISSRNC

The number of students that attended the inaugural conference of the International Society for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture reflects the great momentum carrying this emerging interdisciplinary field forward, and attests to its breadth. Approximately one fifth of the conference participants were students, which bodes well for the field's future. Besides participation in the conference, graduate students were intimately involved in the planning and execution of all facets of the conference.

Many thanks should go to the University of Florida's cohort of Religion and Nature graduate students, who navigated many of the details required for such an international gathering. Eleanor Finnegan directed the production of programs and

nametags with the help of Sarah Spaid. Gavin Van Horn helped to secure the venues for conference presentations, and manned the information desk for significant chunks of time. Joseph Witt's tireless efforts ensured that these information/membership desks were constantly staffed with smiling students. Sam Snyder was responsible for planning the canoe trip on the nearby Santa Fe River, in which many of you participated. Bridgette O'Brien coordinated the transportation to and from the conference venues, no small task. Bradley Ackroyd helped to ensure that conference updates and schedules were put online in a timely manner. Of course, all these helpers also benefited from interacting closely with well-known scholars in their field, establishing what will hopefully develop into long-term relationships.

In conversations with student participants, by far the most common sentiment expressed was sheer excitement at the energy and enthusiasm emerging from this new, interdisciplinary field. This next generation of religion and nature scholars had a great opportunity to see history in action, as the boundaries of this interdisciplinary field were fleshed out in its first international conference. Hopefully, the input of student energy can continue to energize the study of religion, nature and culture.



Undergraduate Reactions to the Inaugural Conference

Bridgette O'Brien (Graduate Program in Religion and Nature, UF), Conference Organizing Committee

The University of Florida's undergraduate students from Religion 3938: Myth and Ritual course (administered by Robin Wright) were not only much appreciated volunteers who assisted with the conference infrastructure, but were also required to attend a presentation and write a response paper about their experiences. These student papers included a wide range of insights into the different presentations and they offered a unique perspective from the point of view of students who were not previously aware of the unfolding dialogue between religion, nature and culture. Our hope is that, by sharing some of these student perspectives, all conference participants and those who could not attend will be able to better appreciate the richness that this experience provided for the scholars, students and community members who attended.

Many students' papers reflected a genuine appreciation for being required to attend the conference. As Lindsey Messick wrote, "I attended the first night of the conference and I have to say that I did not expect to see as much diversity in the attendees. I was very intrigued by the people who had trav-

eled from across the world to see this conference at the University of Florida. The atmosphere was very interesting with all of the cultures and languages in one room. It made me realize how fortunate we are to have so many amazing educational programs right here at our school that these people would come all the way here to see it." Similarly, Melissa Ayvaz wrote about her experiences listening to the Sacred Place panel. "Listening to the various perspectives revolving around the same topic was useful to get a feel for how the contemporary academic community works with concepts of Space and Place. I really appreciated the assignment and feel privileged to have been able to attend."

In addition to the genuine appreciation expressed by the students, some students also shared varying personal insights that were inspired by the conference speakers. For example, in her reflections on the panel about *Aquatic Nature Religions* Kelly Deuerling wrote, "while I do not personally have a water sport that I can view as a religion, I certainly feel the same sense of awe that the panelists have at the water. I believe that this sense of spirituality derives

from the respect and wariness I have toward the power that water wields.” Similarly, Robert McGlynn wrote “that there is something fundamentally frightening about the idea that animals we routinely harm may also experience the same emotions we do,” in response to Mark Bekoff’s presentation titled “Animal Passions and Beastly Virtues: Cognitive Ethology a the Unifying Science for Understanding the Subjective, Emotional, Empathetic and Moral Lives of Animals.”

Finally, in addition to the genuine appreciation and thoughtful personal insights offered in the undergraduate papers, they also highlighted some of the benefits of this conference. As Szelenia Gray wrote in response to Bron Taylor’s opening talk about *A Green Future for Religion and Earth?*, “regardless of whether or not one agrees with Dr. Taylor’s optimism, the consequences of our world’s inability to develop a consciousness of sustainability inspire the hope that the observations offered by Taylor’s work show just a glimpse of the benefits afforded by religion and nature’s interaction.” Similarly, Chase Livingston reflected on how conferences like this can “help us find the missing link that can make people, on a mass scale, to see themselves in relation to the world around them and that they are a part of it [and] not just a small concentrated vacuum of space”. Merideth Main reiterated her peer’s sentiments when she wrote, “conferences such as these have the potential for providing an arena in which genuine dialogue between the social sciences, biological science and indigenous people take place”. Based on the kinds of reflections these undergraduate students shared, it is safe to say that the inaugural ISSRNC conference established a precedent for dynamic conversations that will launch this field in new and exciting directions as the discourse continues, as new

networks are established and as students and scholars innovatively brainstorm about how to continue collaborating in novel ways.

Resources and announcements:

The following is an incomplete list of information that readers of this newsletter might be interested in. We would like for this ongoing newsletter to be a forum for grant/fellowship opportunities; “calls for papers” for publications and conferences that are related to “religion, nature, and culture”; and listings of relevant new work in the field – books, articles, websites. If you would like to contribute, please send the information to the editor of the newsletter at rowright@religion.ufl.edu.

American Academy of Religion, Religion and Ecology Group

Stay tuned to the AAR Religion and Ecology Group’s web-site for more information on their sessions at the 2006 AAR in Washington, DC. For more information, visit: <http://www.religionandnature.com/aar/>.

American Association for the Advancement of Science: DoSER Group

For information on upcoming events sponsored by the AAAS Dialogue on Science, Ethics, and Religion, visit: <http://www.aaas.org/spp/dser/index.shtml>

For more resources and information on conferences on Religion and Ecology, see: **The Forum on Religion and Ecology:** <http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/>

Society for Human Ecology

For information on the October 2006 conference of SHE, visit:

<http://www.societyforhumanecology.org/>.

University of Leiden, Netherlands

For information on the October 2006 Conference, “Religion, Science, and Public Concern: Discourses on Ethics, Ecology, and Genomics” visit: <http://www.rspc-conference.nl/index.html>.

International Association for Environmental Philosophy

For more information on the October 2006 IAEP Conference, visit: <http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~toadvine/IAEP/IAEP2006CFP.html>.

American Society for Environmental History:

For more information on the 2007 ASEH conference, visit: <http://www.h-net.org/~environ/ASEH/home.html>.

European Society for Environmental History:

For more information about the 2007 ESEH conference, visit: <http://eseh.ruc.dk/>

American Anthropological Association:

For more information about the Anthropology and the Environment section of the AAA, visit: <http://www.eanth.org/onlineresources2.php?resource=programs.php>.

Other Journals of Interest

As well as Eco-Theology/Journal of Religion, Nature and Culture, the following journals may be of interest to readers:

Worldviews: Environment, Culture, and Religion: http://www.brill.nl/m_catalogue_sub6_id9007.htm

Environmental Ethics:
<http://www.cep.unt.edu/enethics.html>

Human Ecology:
<http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/anthro/ecology.html>.

Journal of Political Ecology:
<http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/ej/jpe/jpeweb.html>

Zygon Journal of Religion and Science:
<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0591-2385>

Theology and Science:
<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/14746700.htm>.

