

**An Editorial**

**T**his is the third issue of The George Wright FORUM and while a retrospective may be premature, still a comprehensive look at what has so far appeared in these pages suggests that this little journal—like all human group efforts—is tending to take on a life of its own.

In the beginning, we could only set the stage. "Dedicated to the protection, preservation, and management of cultural and natural parks and reserves through research and education," we said. That was our stated mission. A reading of the first three issues suggests some pervasive undertones to this clarion chord—considerations that run straight through every subject herein dealt with and on into the innermost lives of each of us who participates in The George Wright Society exercise.

One of these pervasive notes—the moral responsibility that human dominance carries with it—is implicit throughout. So far, it has not been attacked head-on, but its central position is clear as various authors discuss such diverse subjects as "park populations," the role of parklands in achieving what the founding fathers dubbed "domestic tranquility," and the ethical (as opposed to materialistic) motivation behind such movements as the newly formed American Farmland Trust and the Man and the Biosphere's genetic diversity preservation program.

All these subjects, and any others that deal with human use and/or management of cultural and natural parklands, carry within them the solemn—in some cases the dire—responsibility of being human, of "knowing better" than to do much of what we do, and of needing to deepen our "knowing" and to disseminate it more widely.

Whether the message such knowledge carries is couched in the invitational terms of "care" or the threatening terms of "consequences," the public has a right to know what can happen to a world where enormous human abilities to manipulate are coupled with cavalier disregard for basic life support systems over "the long haul."

In Ireland, during the dark ages when knowledge fell into disrepute and disease and ignorance reigned unchallenged, sparks of the light of learning were carefully (and secretly) tended in certain monasteries. Today, although knowledge is rampant almost to the level of "noise," *ENLIGHTENMENT* seems again to be on the wane. At the same time, mounting populations and shrinking resources pose their own kind of threat to prudence and reason.

In this setting, the world's parklands have an opportunity and a responsibility to play a somewhat similar rôle to that of the Irish monasteries: to maintain, to preserve, to use wisely, to study and disseminate as widely as possible the information gleaned—in the interests of "the long haul."

*Jean Matthews*