

A Note from Our Executive Director

Jennifer Palmer

Dear GWS friends,

WE FIND OURSELVES IN A PERIOD OF TIME where understanding human dimensions and our connection to nature is an ever-evolving process, yet one that is essential to the protection and management of the places we love. It has often been said that *Homo sapiens* tends to be the least studied animal when it comes to parks but as you will learn from this issue of *The George Wright Forum*, that is rapidly shifting. Today, social scientists work together to help us better understand who is visiting our parks, what inspires people to explore our protected areas, and how we can best manage our resources with the increasing demands on our natural world.

Each of us has our own unique relationship with nature—some of us choose to live amongst the trees every waking moment we can, while others feel more at home in a city and could never even fathom a minute in true wilderness. Some people go to parks for peace, solitude, and connection, while others view these places as a playground for recreation or adrenaline. Regardless of what calls us to the outdoors, protected places around the world offer us the chance to connect to nature in many ways. Yet managers and researchers are increasingly challenged to navigate this expansion of human use while protecting the ecological balance of these spaces. As social scientists take a closer look into the history, economics, anthropology, and cultural assumptions of our parks, they continue to explore new approaches and solutions to the complex issues we face today and will continue to face tomorrow.

On behalf of the George Wright Society, I would like to sincerely thank all of the contributing authors of this issue for their unique voice, vision, and ability to look at the human/nature interface through such an insightful lens.

Kind regards,



Jennifer Palmer, Executive Director
George Wright Society

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