



The shoulders of giants

“If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of giants”, Isaac Newton once wrote. The findings and observations of our colleagues and predecessors can inspire us, spark a new idea, or form the basis for new theories or hypotheses. Using the work of others to design new methods or integrate previous findings to reach new conclusions has always been, and still is, common practice in science. For example, Brugge’s article on mustelid diets in the Netherlands, published in *Lutra* 19 in 1977, helped other scientists understand the differences in PCB loads between different mustelid species (Leonards et al. 1998) and thereby comprehend how mustelids coexist (Powell & Zielinski 1983). In the current issue, Oerlemans and Koene review earlier studies on raccoon dogs from the US, Japan and European countries to identify potential issues of concern for nature conservation and public health in the Netherlands. Earlier articles using photography and stereo photogrammetry to determine the heights at which trawling bats fly inspired Van De Sijpe to develop a method to estimate the flight heights of pond bat and Daubenton’s bat using the bats’ calls and their echoes from the water surface.

Other papers in this issue of *Lutra* draw on papers in earlier volumes. With their paper on strandings of caetaceans in the Netherlands between 1998 and 2007, Camphuysen, Smeenk, Addink, van Grouw and Jansen carry on a tradition of reporting Dutch strandings through *Lutra* that was started by van Deinse in 1931 and carried on between the 1970s and 1990s by others,

including van Bree and Smeenk. The most recent article not only reports on strandings of two new species for the Netherlands, the humpback whale (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) and Blainville’s beaked whale (*Mesoplodon densirostris*), but by using previous reports, constructs the numbers of larger whales stranded on Dutch shores from the 1300s to the present, and the number of harbour porpoise from 1970 to the present. The number of stranded porpoises is still rising, probably as a result of changes in their distribution. About 58% of stranded harbour porpoises were by-catches. The authors propose initiating discussions with the fishing industry to explore, develop and implement mitigation measures.

The badger is a good example of how populations can be protected by opening a dialogue between conservationists, scientists and other stakeholders. In recent years a number of badger conservation measures have been implemented; establishing fences and tunnels to mitigate the effect of roads and railways and compensating farmers for damage that badgers cause to crops. The paper by Vink, van Apeldoorn and Bekker, on the expansion of the badger population in Eindhoven cite the national badger censuses previously published in *Lutra* (volumes 29, 35 and 48) to illustrate the increase in distribution and numbers of badgers that has occurred in recent decades as a result of these changes.

To ensure optimal use of the papers that are published in *Lutra*, the Society for Study and Con-

servation of Mammals has, since issue 48-1 (in 2005) published all the papers from Lutra online, which are accessible free of charge. It turns out that many readers find their way to the online Lutra: some papers have been downloaded by more than 2000 people! Lutra online is read by many people in European countries, but also by those farther afield including the US and Japan.

However, the availability of issues of Lutra dating from before 2005 is still limited: they are available in some libraries, and in the Society's archive, but cannot easily be accessed, browsed or searched. To break down this barrier and increase the accessibility and use of all Lutra publications, the editorial board has made all the issues of Lutra available on DVD. Thanks to a subsidy from the 'Stichting Publicatiefonds Lutra', we have been able to scan all of the first 50 volumes of Lutra and convert them into fully searchable digital documents. The DVD will be available in early January 2009 from the VZZ office at a cost of € 10,00. For ordering details, see www.vzz.nl.

The DVD will contain true pearls, such as the first documented case of American mink in the Netherlands (Mededelingenblad 17, Volume 1, 1958: 177-178), the national mammal survey by van Wijngaarden, van Laar and Trommel (Volume 13, 1971), and the special issue on changes in the numbers and distribution of hibernating bats in the Netherlands between the 1940s and 1980s (Volume 22, 1980).

We hope that by making the first 50 volumes of Lutra widely available, the work of our predecessors will continue to inspire present and future mammalogists.

Meanwhile we are happy to announce that Johan Thissen has joined the editorial board. Johan is one of the authors of *The Atlas of European Mammals* (Mitchell-Jones et al. 1999). In this full scale project, one of his tasks was the co-ordination of the data and the editing of the distribution maps. Over the years, Johan has gained much experience in the practice of policy development and decision making for nature conservation, including mammals. He was involved in producing the Second Red List of Mammals for The Netherlands, which is to be published in 2009. Lutra will certainly benefit from Johan's extensive knowledge of various aspects of European mammals.

- Leonards, P.E.G., S. Broekhuizen, P. de Voegt, N.M. Van Straalen, U.A.Th. Brinkman, W.P. Cofino & B. van Hattum 1998. Studies of bioaccumulation and biotransformation of PCBs in mustelids based on concentration and congener patterns in predators and preys. *Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology* 35: 654-665.
- Mitchell-Jones, A.J., G. Amori, W. Bogdanowicz, B. Kryštufek, P.J.H. Reijnders, F. Spitzenberger, M. Stubbe, J.B.M. Thissen, V. Vohralík & J. Zima. *The atlas of European mammals*. Academic Press, London, UK.
- Powell, R.A. & W.J. Zielinski 1983. Competition and coexistence in mustelid communities. *Acta Zoologica Fennica* 174: 223-227.