

EDITORIAL

Ecology under Fire: Ecological Science in a Post-truth World

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We have all witnessed the eroding trust of science and scientists in today's world. The impact of this has profound implications for everyday life. Failure to trust science weakens the fabric of society, whether it involves global climate change, environmental oversight and regulation, or even our understanding of the origin of pandemic diseases. The field of ecology is critical to informing all these disciplines. Thus, as ecologists we stand at a crossroad in this fight for the truth in a post-truth world.

The recent distrust and misperception of the scientific enterprise stems from the widespread dissemination of false, exaggerated, misleading, and/or biased information. Much of this “fake” information comes from groups and organizations with political and/or financial agendas that are often at odds with the facts. The fake news (propaganda) spewed by these groups has created a circumstance where their own “self-declared expertise” is too often

accepted at face value by the media and the public. This further weakens and diminishes trust in reputable science and in the scientists performing the research. One tactic of these various groups is to tarnish the reputation of the scientists involved in publishing work that is contrary to their agenda and ideology. This tactic of attacking the science and scientists is nothing more than a form of scientific bullying^[1]. These attacks come right out of the playbook of the “Merchants of Doubt” written by Oreskes and Conway (2010)^[2]. The doubt-mongers chip away at the edges, focusing on minor issues, amplifying scientific uncertainties, and, most perniciously, attack the motivations and honesty of the scientists involved^[3].

So, what can we do as ecologists? Ecology as a scientific discipline is critical to our understanding environmental change in time and space and in establishing the foundations upon which policies in natural resource man-

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agement and conservation planning are based. Further, our evidential knowledge of global climate change impacts is based almost exclusively on long-term ecological monitoring data coupled with experimental studies. Thus, we must work tirelessly with regulators and policy makers alike to assure that the best scientific data, facts, and opinions are used to establish the future directions upon which sound decision-making is forged. Truth not only continues to matter in ecology, but it remains our biggest weapon in the fight for conservation and environmental management in a world of increasingly outrageous, politically motivated mythmaking.

Next, we must fight those that pose a threat to our profession. To quote Ray Bradley “We must resist all those who seek to suppress scientific results that do not fit their preconceived ideas, and we must defend those whose reputations are attacked...”^[3].

Lastly, it is imperative that we as ecologists accurately, transparently, and ethically translate and disseminate our findings through the peer-review process^[4]. It is also imperative that rigorous fact-checking and sustaining the highest standards of professional integrity remain an essential component of the peer-review process. Thus, we have an unprecedented opportunity as professional ecologists to use the publication of our findings as a tool in the fight for truth. In this vein, the journal *Research in Ecology* aims to promote the latest discoveries and insights in

the field of ecological research while building a reliable platform to address and evaluate ecological issues. We look forward to receiving your submissions and advancing the truth in the field we all love.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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