



## Message from the Conference Chair

*C. Leroy Irwin*



As I reflected on what to say in this message I reminisced back several years ago to the beginnings of this conference. We, in Florida, were struggling with the issues of maintaining connectivity for wildlife habitat in a rapidly urbanizing state. As we began to search for information on the subject, we did not find much available. We learned that some activity was happening in Europe. As a result, in 1996 the first International Conference on Wildlife Ecology and Transportation (ICOWET) was held in Florida with international participation. About the same time, the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Center for Transportation and the Environment began a similar national conference on Transportation, Wetlands, and the Natural Environment (Connections '96). These two conferences joined together in 2001 in Keystone, Colorado, as the International Conference on Ecology and Transportation (ICOET).

Shortly after the 2001 ICOET meeting, AASHTO and FHWA sponsored an International Technology Scan Tour on Wildlife Mortality. Representatives of state DOTs, FHWA, federal resource agencies, and non-governmental organizations toured five countries in Europe to see first hand what was being accomplished in Europe to address wildlife mortality and the re-connecting of habitats there. The reports of that scan tour and several presentations at ICOET 2003 in Lake Placid communicated those findings to you in 2003.

In September 2005, nine years after the first ICOWET meeting in Florida, we opened the third ICOET in San Diego, California. The theme for ICOET 2001 was "A Time for Action," and the theme for ICOET 2003 was "Making Connections," and I have no doubt those objectives were achieved. The theme for ICOET 2005 was "On the Road to Stewardship." The stewardship theme emphasized that we have learned many things about the importance of maintaining habitat connectivity, but now, how do we protect and maintain the all-important habitats? I hope that you took away from the 2005 conference a desire to continue to work together to enhance the vital links between ecosystems and transportation systems.

It is gratifying to know that we had far more requests for presentations for this conference than could be accommodated in the agenda. I am sorry that some of you were not chosen to present. We wish to thank the planning committee for their hard work in selecting the best papers. It was not an easy task. I would also like to thank the sponsors — governmental, non-profit, and private — for without your support, this conference could not have taken place. Many environmental agencies, research institutions, public interest groups, and the transportation industry have shared their expertise. It is hoped that by this cross-functional sharing of information a better understanding of the ecological and social relationships will result.

Your hosts, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the University of California-Davis Road Ecology Center, organized two spectacular field trips that highlighted two types of ecological communities in Coastal and Inland San Diego County. Caltrans and the Road Ecology Center were also integral to developing two new special sessions on acoustics ecology, of which the papers or abstracts are contained in these proceedings.

As chairman of the conference I would like to express my appreciation to the Center for Transportation and the Environment for their assistance with organizing and co-sponsoring this conference and to Caltrans and the UC-Davis Road Ecology Center for their hospitality as conference co-hosts.

We met in beautiful Southern California, to share our thoughts, knowledge, and even to celebrate our successes, but let us remember that although we have come far, we still have much to learn and do. The conference has truly become an international, multi-disciplinary event with representatives from 15 nations. I hope that you enjoy these proceedings and use them to move forward to promote the conservation of our natural resources as we develop our transportation systems for the 21st century throughout the world. Make your plans now to join us at The Peabody Hotel and Convention Center in Little Rock, Arkansas, for ICOET 2007 (see [www.icoet.net](http://www.icoet.net) for more information). We hope to see you there!

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