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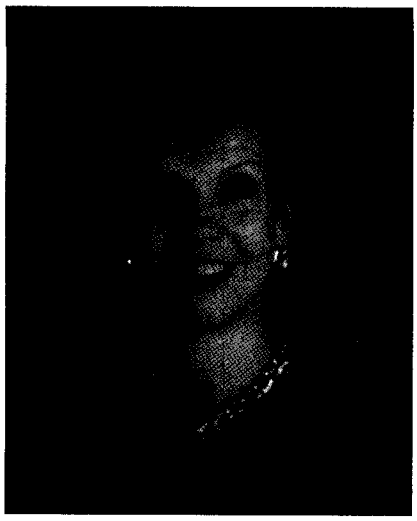
Diana H. Wall, ESA President 1999–2000

A more polite term for workaholic is over-achiever, and Diana Harrison Wall could easily serve as the type specimen for both words. Her ability to multi-task is a great boon for the Ecological Society of America. That characteristic drive has also been essential to Wall's own personal success, since it pushed her to persevere during the lean years when a woman's place was NOT in the field or laboratory. Diana is a very strong role model for young ecologists through her enthusiasm for science, her remarkable scientific achievements, and her leadership skills. In addition to advising her many graduate students, Diana-as-role-model has been featured in many news media, including PBS TV shows such as "Horizons" and "Discovery," *National Geographic* magazine, and the New York *Times*. She is highlighted on the ESA Web site: "What Do Ecologists Do? Focus on Ecologists."

Diana's list of achievements would stop a train, and include chairing the DIVERSITAS–International Biodiversity Observation Year 2001–2002, and the SCOPE (Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment) committee on soil and sediment biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. She is past president of the AIBS, the Intersociety Consortium for Plant Protection, and the Society of Nematologists. She is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Society of Nematologists, a Distinguished Research Professor at the UC-Davis Bodega Marine Laboratory, and is among the first cohort of Aldo Leopold Research Fellows. She has served as chairperson or member of many scientific national and international boards, including the Board of the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, the NRC National Committee for Soil Science, and the NRC Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology. Diana has taught for 1 year at Cal State Fresno, and spent 1 year at the National Science Foundation as Associate Program Director for Ecology. The majority of her professional career was at the University of California, Riverside, where she was a "soft-money" researcher from 1976–1991, fully funded by competitive grants. Diana is one of the few scientists funded from all programs in the NSF Division of Environmental Biology (systematics to ecosystems).

Diana has been director of the Natural Resource Ecology Laboratory (NREL) at Colorado State University since 1993, but her day job is Associate Dean for Research for the CSU College of Natural Resources. One doesn't "direct" ecosystem ecologists—that would be like herding nematodes, and Diana has instead successfully fostered interdisciplinary teamwork, integrated research, and a strong feeling of camaraderie that enables NREL scientists to address pressing environmental issues that affect global society today. The secret ingredient Diana brings to all her leadership roles is discretion—choose the right people to do the work, listen to and respect what they have to say, and build programs out of the wisdom of the group. This is a very different management approach from that of most administrators, who more often err on the side of the dictatorial, but one that works through mutual regard and drive (there's that word again) to put the science of ecology to work for the future of global sustainability.

Diana's childhood is the envy of most ecologists: biology teacher mother, supportive history professor father, lots of hollows and mud in the Kentucky hills and the North Carolina piedmont to dig around in. She found herself interested in biological interactions near the Kentucky River, and carried this interest with her to college. As a college senior, she scored so high on the SAT and other tests that the University of Kentucky Biology Department immediately offered her a job as a botany laboratory instructor–teaching assistant. In her first year she won the designation as best lab instructor. Her major gradu-



ate professor had a hands-off philosophy that worked well for Diana. "He let me explore, and let me find out that I have a creative mind. He had the patience to let me try experiments that didn't work, so I could learn from that process." From degrees in biology and plant pathology, Diana's interests have broadened to encompass soil biodiversity, and the important role of soil animals, particularly nematodes, and how they affect ecosystems and society. Through her research and her leadership roles, she is among the luminaries revealing how soil biodiversity contributes to healthy, productive soils, and the consequences of human activities on soil sustainability.

Because soil fertility is central to human society, much of Diana's research has focused on managed ecosystems. She and her students have worked on citrus and avocado groves in California and alfalfa fields in Colorado. Diana also explores the broader contribution of soil biota to the functioning of ecosystems and to global change. She has looked at the role of elevated CO_2 on soil organisms of the shortgrass steppe and the ecology of soil organisms in hot deserts of the Southwest. Currently she is PI on a multidisciplinary project looking at the relationship between soil biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. The project, with fieldwork carried out at the Konza Prairie and Cedar Creek LTER sites, brings together soil ecologists, ecosystem scientists, modelers, molecular biologists, and systematists, and is undertaken in conjunction with a program in the United Kingdom. Diana's breadth of knowledge and personality were key elements in getting the diverse group together and making the project run smoothly.

For the past decade, Diana has worked in the Dry Valley region of Antarctica, and for six of these years she has been part of the McMurdo LTER. These very simple ecosystems enable biotic interactions to be explored without confounding factors (e.g., vascular plants). Diana and her students closely examine the soil organisms that have astonishing adaptations for survival. Her pioneering work in the late 1970s showed that anhydrobiosis was a survival mechanism for all species of soil nematodes in hot deserts, countering the theory that anhydrobiosis occurred in only a few specialized nematode species. Her laboratory's recent work comparing survival strategies in Antarctica and other ecosystems has extended anhydrobiosis as a general survival mechanism for soil nematodes.

A small bonus of research conducted during the Austral summer is that Diana flies to Antarctica every year on the day before her birthday. By crossing the International Dateline she manages to miss her birthday completely. It's a well-known fact that ecologists retain their youth and vigor far longer than, say, accountants, but Diana has possibly discovered the key to immortality. Unfortunately for the rest of us, there are a limited number of seats on the plane to Antarctica.

The rigors of Antarctic field work, extensive international travel, and juggling the positions of Associate Dean, NREL Director, President of ESA, and head of international committees, understandably requires great physical stamina and determination, something Diana has in abundance. The extensive mileage on United Airlines has added to her list of prestigious awards—a 100k flier every year. In her "spare" time she has run literally hundreds of races over the years, and even placed first in a half–marathon. She is a regular at the Bolder Boulder, pacing Tim Seastedt. Diana can be gullible. Tim once got her to run a 10k loop race at 9000 ft elevation by telling her it was all downhill. She complained bitterly when she realized this wasn't the case, but she won a silver medal. Recently Diana has taken up river rafting, and has floated the Grand Canyon and Green Rivers. She takes her spectator sports seriously as well, owning season tickets to the Denver Broncos games, and arranging her schedule to make sure that she can watch the Lakers games and NCAA basketball playoffs.

Diana's primary Presidential goal is for the Ecological Society of America to step up and develop an agenda for future ecological research. As the nation's premier society of professional ecologists, ESA is uniquely positioned to offer advice, support, and counsel to granting and management agencies of North America. Diana will continue to promote the science of ecology as essential information for policy making. In this, she extends the tradition begun by earlier ESA presidents of positioning the Ecological Society of America as an invaluable resource for solving environmental problems. With Diana Wall leading the Ecological Society, the Millennium is off to a good start.

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