

Preface

Freshwater resources are becoming ever more important as the 21st century unfolds. Human use, and abuse, of freshwater resources is growing, almost uncontrollably, with potentially dire consequences for biota dependent on freshwaters. Alongside concerns about freshwater (ab)use, the need to conserve and protect biodiversity is gaining attention worldwide. Freshwater fish are among the most threatened taxa worldwide with a large percentage of species assigned to some level of danger. In many parts of the world freshwater fisheries are an important source of food protein for local populations. Freshwater fish are thus of especial importance among the aquatic biota as they serve the dual roles as major sources of food protein and as sentinels of the health and vitality of freshwater ecosystems.

An earlier special issue of *Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management* (Volume 4 Issue 4 2001) on the state of freshwater fish habitat science and management in a small set of countries, showed that many freshwater problems were widespread. The papers in that issue further opened our eyes to the extent to which freshwaters and freshwater fishes are pivotal renewable resources throughout the world and suggested the need to examine the situation globally. Herewith we are inaugurating a series of invited papers to cumulatively assess the global health and prospects of earth's freshwater fishes entitled "*Freshwater Fishes and Fisheries of the World: Biodiversity, Health, and Habitat*". Papers are being solicited singly and in regional groups from local experts to obtain current assessments for all parts of the globe. Those papers will be published first here in *Aquatic Ecosystem Health and Management* as they become available, and then later a global synthesis of the extensive fish and fisheries information will be published in a book under the *Ecovision World Monograph Series* of the AEHMS. We intend by means of this series of special issues, and the book(s) to raise awareness of freshwater fishes, their biodiversity, health and habitat around the world, and to draw greater attention to the common challenges they face from human developments and activities, and to profile novel approaches to solving the many problems confronting freshwater fishes.

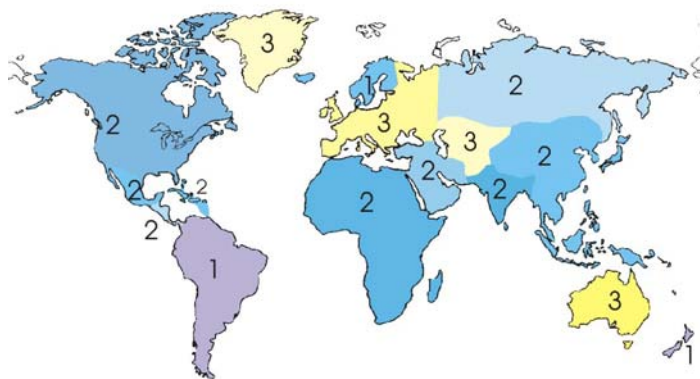


Figure 1. Geographical regions of the world. (1) Regions shaded in purple are regions that are completed. (2) Blue regions are where the Regional Editors are confirmed. (3) Regions in yellow have no Regional Editors.

Table 1. Geographical regions listed by Regional Editors and Co-Editors.

Geographical Region	Regional Editors	Status
North America	N. E. Mandrak O. Gorman	In progress
Mexico	S. Contreras B.	"
Caribbean	D. Martin	"
South America	W. Junk	Complete
Europe	To be determined	
Greece	D.C. Bobori	Complete
Scandinavia/Baltic	H. Lehtonen	In progress
Russia	N. Bogutskaya A. Naseka	"
Africa	F. Roest M. van der Knaap	"
Middle East	F. Krupp	"
Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma)	S. Ghosh Y. S. Yadava	"
Southeast Asia/Asia Pacific	Y. Taneguchi	
Australia	To be determined	
New Zealand	R. M. McDowall	Complete

It is exciting that many regional editors and contributing authors have already committed to this project; however, editors and authors are still needed for some regions (Table 1, Figure 1). We encourage those interested in participating in this project to contact us.

We are honoured to have contributions by Robert M. McDowall, D.C. Bobori and P.S. Economidis to inaugurate the series:

- *Fish, fish habitats, and fisheries in New Zealand.* R.M. McDowall.
- *Freshwater fishes of Greece: their biodiversity, fisheries and habitats.* D.C. Bobori and P.S. Economidis.

Early next year, in a special issue being coordinated by Wolfgang Junk, we will feature a series of papers profiling the major river basins of South America.

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