

# Letter from the Editor

## "The Times They Are A-Changin'"

*"Come gather 'round people, wherever you roam,  
and admit that the waters, around you have grown,  
and accept it that soon, you'll be drenched to the bone.  
If your time to you, is worth savin',  
then you better start swimmin', or you'll sink like a stone,  
for the times they are a-changin'."*

—Bob Dylan, 1964



**THE PHOTOGRAPH** on the front cover of this issue of *Human–Wildlife Interactions* (HWI) is a horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus* spp.). This genus has been identified as the wildlife reservoir for COVID-19. COVID-19 is one

of an estimated 5,000 coronaviruses that naturally occur in bats. Because the virus is fairly stable, scientists studying the COVID-19 outbreak suspect that there were many more individuals infected with the disease for several months that were exhibiting mild symptoms, before more severe cases raised public alarm.

China's burgeoning wildlife markets, which sell a wide range of animals, are believed to have created the perfect storm for the transmission of viruses to humans. These markets exist because of the cultural demand for the products. China has since banned these markets. But, because eating wildlife has been a cultural tradition in China for thousands of years, the ban will not immediately change these practices.

Decker et al. (2012), in an article published in Volume 6, Issue 2 of *HWI*, discussed the potential ramifications of increased transmission of wildlife-associated diseases on human perceptions of wildlife and their conservation. Basically, how will humans view wildlife if wild-life are continually identified as reservoirs for diseases that can be transmitted to humans? And, what can the wildlife professional do better to contribute to these conversations in a meaningful way?

The answer to these questions may be as fluid and dynamic as the times we live in. One thing remains certain in these times of uncertainty—as Bob Dylan penned in 1964—"the times they are a-changin'." Although it has been well "documented that humans value wildlife, as

human populations grow and continue to encroach on wildlife habitats, more people will have direct and negative interactions with wildlife. Thus, we can reasonably expect that their growing concerns will also temper their enthusiasm for conserving wildlife.

There are few published studies that have focused specifically on what messages or how wildlife professionals should be communicating to stakeholders that are concerned about wildlife-associated diseases. To fill this void, Decker et al. (2012) advised that managers should focus on communicating messages that address the role of human behavior in creating the risks as well as their mitigation. Effective risk communication serves to raise public awareness of wildlife-associated diseases, other potential conflicts, and their mitigation without creating fear.

Thus, rather than just communicating the risks in our messaging, wildlife professionals must also communicate actions that humans can proactively implement to mitigate the risks to prevent disease outbreaks and other conflicts. *Human–Wildlife Interactions* exists to help the wildlife professional shape and share messages to the wider public about how to better manage human–wildlife conflicts to improve human–wildlife interaction. In this issue, you will find several manuscripts that will provide new insights into how to better manage human–wildlife conflicts in these times that are a changin'.

Terry A. Messmer, Editor-in-Chief

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### Literature cited

Decker D. J., W. F. Siemer, D. T. N. Evensen, R. C. Stedman, K. A. McComas, M. A. Wild, K. T. Castle, and K. M. Leong. 2012. Public perceptions of wildlife-associated disease: risk communication matters. *Human–Wildlife Interactions* 6:112–122.