Foreword

We are pleased to present the 28th issue of the Journal of Ecological Society. As in the past, this issue of the journal publishes papers and articles which integrate various scientific disciplines through a socio-economic approach. Since its inception, the journal has catered to diverse readers including nature lovers, students, researchers, environmentalists and scientists. Considering the different expectations that such an audience imposes, the journal encourages scientific research papers, field reports and opinion articles.

This issue presents two special sections – one on Rocky plateaus and another on Ecological Society's field work in the Panshet catchment. Both the sections have detailed field reports while the Rocky Plateau section also has scientific research papers. The research papers are multi-disciplinary scientific studies which have undergone a double-blind peer review process. The reports are descriptive articles which would normally not be published as research. Reports and miscellaneous articles undergo reviews by the editorial team and relevant subject experts.

We are privileged to have Dr. Aparna Watve as the guest editor for the current issue. Dr. Watve is a senior researcher who has spent several years studying rocky plateaus in the Sahyadris. She has many international publications to her credit and is a faculty at Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Tuljapur. The section on Rocky Plateaus deals with research being done on these ecosystems in the Northern Western Ghats. The last few decades have seen increasing efforts in nature conservation in India. However most efforts are directed to ecosystems which have an observable or tangible benefit to man. Unfortunately the Rocky Plateaus have largely been overlooked by policy makers and conservationists alike. These plateaus have almost no soil cover and do not support farming. This is perhaps the reason why they have been mistakenly labeled as wastelands. Located in the Northern Western Ghats, the source region for many large peninsular rivers, these rocky plateaus are

veritable regions which recharge underground sources with fresh surface water. Considering the vagaries of monsoon in India, this turns out to be a critical ecological service for mankind. However, with utter disregard, many of the large rocky plateaus have been used for windmills, rock and mineral mining and building and construction activities. The report on the Chalkewadi windmill farm takes an interesting approach and examines the habitat destruction and alterations in water flows due to planned and unplanned roads on this rocky plateau.

We are fortunate to have a group of scientists and researchers who have focused their efforts on understanding these ecosystems and their role in the environment. Although some of them are ongoing longitudinal studies, considering the increasing rate and scale of assault on these ecosystems, the Journal of Ecological Society considers it critically important to publish these studies for a wide audience. We are hopeful that our erudite readers will help in spreading awareness of conservation efforts on these rocky plateaus.

The Panshet section presents a comparative report on the socio-economic conditions of the Panshet catchment region. This is based on a field study conducted by the Ecological Society in which a comparison is made with the detailed Panshet study undertaken by Prakash Gole and his team in 1985. Some of the findings in the report are disturbing. The region is highly attractive for urban buyers wanting second homes away from cities. Large tracts are being used up for farm house plots. If human interference continues at this scale in the watershed region, we are likely to lose the last remaining pristine forest patches in this belt.

One of the objectives of this journal is to initiate dialogues between our readers and the authors. We invite your comments and look forward to interactions on the topics in this issue.

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