Letter to the Editor

To the Editor:

The December *Rangelands* (Volume 28, No. 6, p. 7–14) featured an article entitled “Rangeland Research: Strategies for Providing Sustainability and Stewardship to Rangelands of the World” by Marty Vavra and Joel Brown. It was based on a symposium at the Fort Worth SRM annual meeting two years ago. This research needs symposium traditionally reviews progress and suggests new directions. The assessment is mandated every decade according to our SRM Science and Ecology Division.

I found this report refreshing and informative. Twenty scientists from various backgrounds outlined rangeland research needs and accomplishments under ten broad topics. Topics were general areas of research emphasis and varied from “Livestock and Rangelands” to “Rangeland Policy and Economics.”

I, however, would like to have seen an entirely new topic of research added to this undertaking. This topic would deal with the influence of livestock herbivory on co-inhabitants of rangelands—the indigenous creatures whose habitats they share. Rangeland research has made good progress in grazing strategies for riparian and aquatic habitats as well as practices for restoration. However, I feel we are remiss in not attacking head-on problems involving the effects of herbivory on species already listed or those approaching Threatened or Endangered (T&E) status.

Recent political events suggest the Endangered Species Act is here for the long haul and any reauthorization will emerge without much modification. Research needs as envisioned by SRM should be proactive in this area. Decision makers and managers will need the best science available regarding practices for restoring T&E species.

SRM should forge partnerships that foster cooperative multi-disciplinary research to provide ecological information upon which to build sound recovery plans for at-risk species, especially those potentially linked to effects of livestock herbivory. Adaptive management and/or ecosystem stewardship are not suitable strategies in dealing with such near listed or rare species. This can only come from cause-effect research. And who better than range scientists to provide analysis of biodiversity and evaluate critical habitats?

I feel SRM research should take the lead in investigating the ecological effects of herbivory on T&E components of rangelands. It is time for our membership to recognize this critical need and bring to bear the strengths of our organization to aggressively attack this problem in the coming decade.

Jon M. Skovlin
Cove, OR

Viewpoints expressed above are opinions of the author, who is a certified consultant in range management and in wildlife management and has over forty years of research experience. He is a lifetime member of SRM.