

Environmental

This spring I was alerted by newspaper article to a marvellous TV programme. It was "Springwatch", broadcast by the BBC. For three weeks on air, and on the beautiful website www.bbc.co.uk/springwatch, three hosts followed the outburst of spring in the British Isles. Webcams showed live footage of birds feeding their chicks, and in dramatically beautiful, short documentaries we saw the cubs of otter families on the Shetland Islands playing with lambs. According to the newspaper, this live show drew more viewers in the United Kingdom than did Big Brother, the "reality show" about people.

After years during which urbanisation and growth blinded many to the wonders of nature, and following an initial "green wave" during the eighties and early nineties, it seems that attention is shifting once more towards conservation of the environment and wildlife protection.

Geomatics takes advantage of the wish to preserve the environment; better, it helps preserve more and more. In Colombia, the US National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in co-operation with the Colombian government has mapped an oil pipeline never before mapped because of rough terrain and weather conditions. Using airborne dual-band interferometric IFSAR, orthorectified images and digital elevation models of the 94,000km²-pipeline corridor have been created. Mapping of the Cano-Limon oil pipeline, the GeoSAR Latin American Demonstration Project (GLAD-P), is described by Joseph Allen and James Reis of Earthdata in this issue. Of course, this effort wasn't a project with an entirely environmental goal. But anybody can imagine the dangers of a long and unmapped pipeline: leaks, planned infrastructure projects or buildings sited too near the pipeline the possible cause of disasters.

Our June issue featured an article in which geomatics helped prevent natural and manmade disasters. Zhu Qing, Li Yan and Tor Yam Khoon described 3D Dynamic Emergency Routing, in which GIS software is providing quick and reliable routing of emergency services in case of a calamity in a city; for instance, fire, poison gas, tsunami or bombing. The quicker emergency services reach the site the better when it comes to saving lives and preventing further damage to the environment. The time is right for such software: metropolises grow and grow, and with them the need. Back in May GIM signalled the first land-observance satellite (Daichi) built by Japan and dedicated to earth observation of regions for sustainable development, global disaster monitoring and surveying of natural resources. In short, we can trace a definite trend.

I'm sure that geomatics will become increasingly devoted to environmental causes, much more in the future than it is today. I am happy with this development. That this fascinating field of work I have become familiar over the past few years is playing a major role in protecting the treasures of this planet. Not just in our own backyard but also in regions of great importance for the lives of all on the planet - the rainforests of South-America and the jungles of Africa and Asia.

<https://www.gim-international.com/content/article/environmental>
