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Disciplines are not logical constructs; they are social crystallizations which occur when a group of people agree that association and discourse serve their interests. Conservation biology began when a critical mass of people agreed that they were conservation biologists.
Michael Soulé (1986:3)

Keywords
Conservation history · Origins of conservation · Conservation traditions · Washburn expedition · Resource conservation ethic · Wilderness ideal · Extractive reserves · Conservation science · Arcadian vision · Distinctions of conservation biology

Overview
In this chapter you will learn about:

1. The origins and history of conservation and conservation biology.
2. The conceptual distinctions of conservation biology.
3. The role of conservation biology in the world of conservation.

impassioned plea to his colleagues: with world extinction rates estimated to be at their highest levels in 65 million years, it was time for academics and conservationists to join forces to save threatened and endangered species (Gibbons 1992). Soulé's words sparked both controversy and criticism, but few were left unmoved. That meeting, now ambitiously called the First International Conference on Conservation Biology, led to new beginnings. A landmark publication that would become a foundational statement of the new discipline's identity, *Conservation Biology: An Evolutionary-Ecological Perspective* (Soulé and Wilcox 1980) resulted. A new scientific organization, the Society for Conservation Biology, was created, and a new discipline, conservation biology, was born.

Officially, the formal organization and incorporation of the *Society for Conservation Biology* (SCB) was still years away. As Soulé noted later,

For the record, the Society for Conservation Biology originated about 5 PM on May 8, 1985, in Ann Arbor, Michigan [USA] at the conclusion of the Second Conference on Conservation Biology. An informal motion to organize such a society was approved by acclamation, following reports by chairpersons (Jared Diamond and Peter Brussard) of two ad hoc committees. Those committees met during the conference to discuss the need for such a society and for a journal and I was asked to help from there. With the help of many people and organizations ... we drafted a constitution and discussed matters of policy and publication (Soulé 1987:4).

1.1 Perspectives for an Inquiry Into Conservation Biology

1.1.1 A Remarkable Meeting

In 1978, a group of academic scientists, zookeepers, and wildlife managers attended a banquet at the San Diego Wild Animal Park. There biologist Michael Soulé made an

Reflecting on the motives that drew the first members of SCB together, Soulé remarked, "The Society is a response by professionals, mostly biological and social scientists, managers and administrators to the biological diversity crisis that will reach a crescendo in the first half of the twenty-first century. We assume that we are in time, and that by focusing

The original version of this chapter was revised: Chapter 12 has been moved from page 20, line 4 from bottom. The correction to