

EDITORIAL

Publishing the best original research in animal ecology: looking forward from 2013

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In a world where impact factors and journal rankings are pored over by prospective authors and publishers alike, 2012 was an excellent year for the *Journal of Animal Ecology* as our impact factor rose to 4.937. However, maximizing a journal's impact factor should not be the only focus of editors. The primary role of the *Journal of Animal Ecology* is to publish papers that animal ecologists will find novel and thought-provoking and which advance the broader field of animal ecology. Over the last 81 years, the journal has published some of the most influential research in animal ecology, and we remain dedicated to publishing papers that challenge current ideas and shape the field. This is certainly evident in the articles we have published over the last year; whether it has been unravelling the ecology of wildlife diseases, tracing the movements and mapping space use of animals or disentangling the myriad interactions that shape animal communities and ecosystems, topical, cutting-edge research has occupied space in every issue. This coming year will be no exception, and we hope to continue receiving such high-quality work.

As ever, the journal's focus and emphasis is on work using data and analyses to quantitatively test theory or to develop new ideas. Reports of advances in both the way data are collected and the way they are analysed continue to provide exciting research avenues for the future that we wish to include in the pages of this publication. And that is true for all areas of animal ecology research; we welcome submissions ranging from molecular to macro-ecological studies. This range is reflected in the breadth of expertise on our Editorial Board. Our Associate Editors, along with the many kind reviewers who freely gave their time to assess the manuscripts submitted to the journal, did a fantastic job in making 2012 the success it was. We look forward to another prosperous year ahead.

During 2012, we saw various personnel changes within the journal's editorial office. Jenny Guthrie, our Managing Editor for 10 years, left the employ of the British Ecological Society following a restructure of the Society's publications team. Jenny played a critical role in developing the journal over the last decade, and much of its current success is due to her eye for detail and hard work. The restructure has seen the appointment of Peter Livermore as the journal's Assistant Editor and Liz Baker take over as Managing Editor of both the *Journal of Animal Ecology* and *Functional Ecology*. The transition from the old to the new structure has gone very smoothly and the current team is thriving on pushing the journal forward.

Submission rates to all international ecological journals are rising as the research output from countries around the world increases not only in quantity but also in quality. In such an environment, amidst a wealth of excellent literature, a publication must clearly define the boundaries of its scope, and prospective authors should bear this in mind when preparing a submission to the journal. The journal aims to publish only novel and exciting papers that will appeal to researchers across the field of animal ecology; that is, by advancing current ecological theory and generating insights that extend beyond the study system in question. While we appreciate the value of papers describing aspects of the ecology or life-history of a single species or that verify previously known insights in a new system, we believe that these are more likely to reach their target audience if published in the more specialized literature. Nearly 85% of submissions to the journal unfortunately have to be rejected, some because they are not appropriate for the scope of the journal and others because the work is worthy of publication but not in the *Journal of Animal Ecology*, where there is only space to publish the most interesting and important work in the field.

In 2013, there will be many new developments on the journal. We are trying something new for the *Journal of Animal Ecology*: publishing special features. Special

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features will consist of a group of papers linked by a theme that is of broad and current interest to animal ecologists. The papers will report novel animal ecology insights, and will be linked together through a brief introductory editorial. Our current aim is to publish two special issues a year.

Also during 2013, we will begin to encourage authors to archive the data associated with papers published in the journal. Progression in the field, whether in developing new ideas or challenging old ones, depends upon the accumulation of reliable data. We believe that permanently archiving data from research published in the journal will allow researchers to mine, share and ultimately maximize the potential of these data sets. The following statement will be included in the journal's *Author Guidelines* from the beginning of the year.

“Data are important products of the scientific enterprise, and they should be preserved and usable for decades in the future. The British Ecological Society thus expects that data (or, for theoretical papers, mathematical and computer models) supporting the results in *Journal of Animal Ecology* papers will be archived in an appropriate public archive, such as Dryad, Treebase, NERC data centre, GenBank, Ecological Archives or another archive of the author's choice that provides comparable access and guarantee of preservation. Authors may elect to have the data made publicly available at time of first online publication or, if the technology of the archive allows, may opt to embargo access to the data for a period up to a year after this date.”

The journal's recent success has been due to many factors; however, we believe that much of this can be attributed to the content in the journal for which we have developed a strong reputation. Thus, we will continue to publish high quality, relevant reviews, instructive ‘how to’ papers and thought-provoking forum articles. If you wish us to consider a review paper, a ‘how to’ paper or a forum article, please contact the journal prior to submission. Review papers on a topic not recently reviewed, should be synthetic, while ‘how to’ papers should explain in plain English, with examples, how to use a specific

methodology to address important ecological questions. ‘How to’ papers on technological or statistically challenging but useful tools are particularly welcome. Once again, we invite you to contact us with ideas that you have.

Last year was a big year for the British Ecological Society with our sister journal, the *Journal of Ecology*, celebrating the publication of its 100th volume and this year, 2013, the Society itself celebrates 100 years of ‘advancing ecology and making it count’. As part of the journal's and Society's centenary celebrations, the *Journal of Ecology* is publishing a paper by Bill Sutherland and colleagues listing 100 pressing questions in pure ecology (Sutherland *et al.* 2013). This paper will serve as a useful historical perspective listing the topics that researchers in the early 21st century found most pressing, but we advise circumspection in its interpretation. We envisage that the next 100 years for both the journal and the Society will be as successful for them as the last 100 have been.

The highlight of the Society's 2013 centenary celebrations will be the INTECOL meeting in August, during which the *Journal of Animal Ecology* is sponsoring a symposium on a key area for the journal, Disease Ecology. The symposium is titled ‘Multilevel Processes in Disease Transmission: Blending Models and Data’ and will include presentations by experts from around the world.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who support the journal by reading the papers we publish and seeking to include their own work here. The demand for high-quality papers in animal ecology is increasing, and the *Journal of Animal Ecology* will continue to provide a leading outlet for these, striving to be the journal of choice for readers and authors alike.

Reference

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