

EDITORIAL

Ecology Letters has established its leading role in publishing the finest and most exciting work in ecology. This is evidenced by our steady increase in submissions to over 1000/year and by our ISI Journal Citation Index to 7.609 for 2006, making us the highest impact journal publishing original research in ecology. *Ecology Letters* reaches over 7500 institutions worldwide and in 2006 over 250 000 articles were downloaded. In this Editorial, I will discuss three factors that have led to the success of *Ecology Letters*, and provide important guidelines for increasing the chance that your manuscript is externally reviewed and accepted for publication in our journal.

Ecology Letters publishes the most novel research of general importance in the ecological, evolutionary and environmental sciences. Novelty is the excitement generated by how the research transforms the way we think about an important scientific question. Manuscripts submitted to *Ecology Letters* are also assessed for their general applicability to other species and systems, and for their interest to a range of ecologists. Providing this unique service for both authors and readers necessitates high selectivity, and as we expect a continued increase in submissions in 2007–2008, we will increase our page numbers so that we can continue to publish as many of the finest manuscripts as possible.

Ecology Letters recognizes that the growth in both new publications and the cumulative published knowledge in ecology require articles to keep readers informed of the latest, most important trends. Our *Ideas and Perspectives* provide a means to formally present new, critical topics that might otherwise be neglected in article discussion sections, or principally exposed to more specialized audiences in books or edited volumes. Our *Reviews and Syntheses* present learned insights into particularly active areas of ecology, including probing literature reviews and where possible, meta-analyses. The limited page space for these two sections means that publication is very competitive, but potential authors should not hesitate to contact either Nicholas Gotelli (ngotelli@uvm.edu) or Jonathan Chase (el.reviews@biology2.wustl.edu) for proposals of *I&P*s and *R&S*s, respectively.

Ecology Letters is the only ecology journal ensuring that every decision is made within published time limits. Our

current expected time from submission to a first decision is 17.8 days, and papers are typically published on-line 1 month following acceptance. The rigour of our review process and the pressure it puts on referees and editors means that we can only review a limited number of manuscripts submitted to our journal. Most manuscripts not accepted are, in fact, excellent studies, but did not meet the criteria given limited page space – rejection with or without review from *Ecology Letters* should be taken in this light. As described below, the effort an author puts into the preparation of a manuscript and its actual submission, could make a difference in how it is perceived by editors and reviewers.

We strive to provide a fair assessment for all manuscripts, with the intention that our decision is based on the novelty and generality criteria described above. Evaluating these criteria requires two elements. First, the manuscript must be written so as to clearly and accurately communicate all parts of the study. It is unfortunately common that reviewers have difficulty assessing manuscripts for lack of clarity and that, frustrated, cannot provide a quality review and often refuse to assess a resubmission. Secondly, the submission materials must be complete and manuscript lengths respected as per our website (<http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/submit.asp?ref=1461-023X&site=1>). Of central importance is establishing the novelty and generality of the study in the cover letter. We recommend a short exposé of up to one page with citations describing how the study clearly stands apart in its novelty from, past research (including that by the authors). Any recent publications (including those in press and submitted to other journals) by the authors relating to the submission need to be provided as supplementary files.

Ecology Letters' success reflects a collective commitment in which authors send us their finest and most exciting research, and editors and reviewers provide rapid and thorough evaluation. This is what motivates us to produce the fastest and most widely read articles in ecology.

Michael Hochberg
Editor in Chief of Ecology Letters