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Editorial

This issue marks a major milestone for *Biological Conservation* as we have reached our fortieth birthday. Starting slowly with only four issues a year, we now publish over 350 papers a year. Our success mirrors the increase in activity within the field of conservation biology, and currently our submissions have risen to almost 1200 a year. *Biological Conservation* has, therefore pioneered the science of Conservation Biology, and has provided clear leadership particularly in the area of the applied implementation of conservation activity.

During this period *Biological Conservation* has been led by only four editor-in-chiefs, the founding editor Nicolas Polunin (6 years), Eric Duffey (25 years), Brian Davis (5 years) and myself (5 years). Interestingly, the last three have all been staff members at Monks Wood Experimental Station, the pioneering UK research station in conservation biology. However, 2008 marks my retirement from the editor-in-chief's position although I will remain an editor for 2008. I am delighted to announce that from this issue, Richard Primack will take over this role. Richard is a leading conservation scientist, having produced two major textbooks (Primack, 2004, 2006) and has been an editor of *Biological Conservation* for the last 3 years.

I saw my period as editor-in-chief as being one of consolidation and planning for the future. One of the important new developments was the transfer to, and implementation, of electronic submission. This has been one of the most important developments for journal publishing and in my view this transfer has worked smoothly and now brings a much better service to editors and hopefully also to authors. It has reduced the average time from initial submission to acceptance to less than 30 weeks. There are many benefits to electronic manuscript submission, manuscript transmission between authors, editors and referees much faster, a rapid transmission of accepted papers direct to the publishing department, a clear audit trail of all editorial decisions, and a centralized back up of all material. There are also additional benefits for authors through free web-based color reproduction, electronic archives for the reproduction of complex 3-D graphs, computer programs and movie clips, and of course the archiving of large datasets.

However, in addition to this the journal has also expanded the range of types of paper that it accepts. In addition to the standard journal papers we have always welcomed both short articles and longer reviews. More recently we have introduced a "Letters to the editor" section (Marrs and Primack, 2007) to

develop a forum for discussion. Here, we welcome both positive and negative comments on papers published in *Biological Conservation*, and we hope that the positive ones will be of especial value in stimulating debate. The first letters have already appeared (Heinen, 2007; Inouye, 2007). We also plan to publish Systematic Reviews; these are a relatively new idea, brought in from the medical field and pioneered by one of our editors – Andrew Pullin (Stewart et al., 2005; Roberts et al., 2006). Thus, I feel that the journal has a very bright future under the leadership of Richard Primack.

I would like to finish by stating how much I have enjoyed leading *Biological Conservation*, I have met many interesting scientists, expanded my own knowledge of conservation biology and read a very large number of interesting papers. It has also been a pleasure to work with a dedicated and superb team of publishers, editors, editorial board and reviewers. Any journal must stand or fall by the quality of editing and reviewing. Here, I must thank all those who act as reviewers for *Biological Conservation*, they have been an immense help to me, providing excellent advice, in a timely manner (usually). The editorial board play a special part here, often providing an initial view of paper suitability, and helping to provide a balanced and expert view on papers, where reviewers provide opposing opinions. The editors do an immense job, as they handle over 200 papers per year each, and have to make very difficult decisions. They do so with immense professionalism and I would like to thank them for the support they have given me over the last few years. Special thanks go to Denis Saunders who retired at the end of 2007. Denis is one of the most efficient people I have ever known, and a real pleasure to work with. Fortunately, we will retain his wise counsel on the Editorial Board. Over the last year, we have expanded the editorial team to include two new editors Richard Corlett from the University of Hong Kong in 2007, and Navjot Sodhi, of the National University of Singapore from 2008. Last but not least are the Elsevier publishing team that have supported me (lately Bas Straub, Nicolette van Dijk, Christine Erb and the EES team), their co-operation, helpfulness and scientific approach to publishing information has been very much appreciated. Julie Millard, the editorial contact for "transfer to print" is just wonderful.

I am sure that this new editorial team led by Richard Primack will maintain the high standards set by *Biological Conservation* into its fifth decade, and continue to lead the science of Conservation Biology.

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