

EDITORIAL

Recalling twenty-three years of Basic and Applied Ecology

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Twenty-three years ago, in January 2000, the first issue of Basic and Applied Ecology was published. Over the past 23 years, the journal has undergone major changes, reflecting both the rapid development of ecology and of scientific publication practices.

Today, 1561 published peer-reviewed articles and 246 book reviews later, Basic and Applied Ecology is facing yet another change. After 23 years at the helm of Basic and Applied Ecology, Teja Tschardt is stepping down as Editor-in-Chief and handing over to Ingo Grass. Twenty-three years at the helm of a journal is a reason to celebrate and to thank the countless editors and reviewers who have fostered the journal's success in the course of the years. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the journal's history and imagine what is yet to come.

Basic and Applied Ecology is the official journal of the "Gesellschaft für Ökologie" (GfÖ) – the Ecological Society of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. As such, it has also been an essential building block for GfÖ's internationalization strategy. Nevertheless, in the beginning, Basic and Applied Ecology was quite controversially discussed in the society – from the reservation to publish only in English (the German summary 'Zusammenfassung' was a compromise) to the criticism that although GfÖ provides a forum

for authors from all over the world, all work and costs remain with the GfÖ. Also, the first submitted manuscripts were often less interesting to an international audience, but too narrowly focused and on topics of limited interest value.

This has changed a lot in the last 23 years – today, publishing in English is the norm and all scientific presentations at GfÖ meetings are given in English. The topics of manuscripts submitted to Basic and Applied Ecology have become much more international and of broad appeal (and so has the GfÖ). Authors of Basic and Applied Ecology come from fields as diverse as Conservation Ecology, Applied Ecology, Community and Population Ecology, Landscape and Ecosystem Ecology, and Functional Ecology. Research has become increasingly collaborative and interdisciplinary, which is reflected in the rise of multi-author papers (and the corresponding demise of the single-author paper of the past). And Basic and Applied Ecology has become a central cornerstone of the GfÖ, which uses the income from the journal to fund its annual meetings, award prizes, and to promote early-career scientists.

Publishing practices also changed dramatically. Initially, the members of the Editorial Board did the reviewing, while now a number of Subject Editors organize this process. Also, in the beginning there was no Managing Editor, which was appointed only after five years – and no online system,

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so correspondence had to be done by mail, resulting in huge volumes of paper files. Needless to say, the beginning was very tedious – especially getting articles for a no-name journal that was not yet registered in the systems and that did not have an impact factor.

Today, all submissions are handled electronically, which allows for much faster decisions and reviews compared to the snail-mail reviews of the past that easily could take a year. This is also reflected in the number of publications: while Basic and Applied Ecology had a moderate start with 2 issues and 19 articles in 2000, a few years later 8 issues and > 80 articles annually became the norm. The latest peak was reached in 2021, with 126 articles. The growing number of articles published and the journal's rising impact factor (starting with 1.58 in 2003, now at 3.74 in 2022) are clear signs of the journal's attractiveness to authors and readers alike. Still, while today's publication practices allow for much more rapid dissemination of scientific findings to a broad audience, there is also ever-increasing pressure on scientists to publish as much and as quickly as possible – and ideally so in prestigious journals with a high scientific impact (factor). At the

same time, finding reviewers (and receiving their reviews on time) has become increasingly difficult, and it is no exception that more than ten potential reviewers need to be contacted before two of them eventually agree.

In 2022, Basic and Applied Ecology changed from a subscription journal to a completely open access journal so that all articles are now freely available for everybody. Given the relatively low article fees and the 20% discount for the members of our society, which is the third-largest ecological society globally, we hope for an ever-increasing interest in Basic and Applied Ecology.

Going into the future, we, the Editors of Basic and Applied Ecology, see it as the key mission to continue to promote an international forum for basic and applied ecology integrating the various disciplines and issues within the broad field of ecology. This includes promoting quality over quantity, and to foster a fair and smooth review process for our authors and reviewers alike. We are looking forward to your most exciting Original Contributions, Reviews, Perspectives, and Invited Views, and we welcome your Comments and initiatives for Special Issues.

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