

Developments at the *Australian Journal of Zoology* – Editorial 2007

The contribution of studies on Australasian fauna to understanding the natural world has been significant – and the resulting worldwide interest is keen. The *Australian Journal of Zoology* is an important link in the transfer of knowledge and has served the scientific community for over 50 years. It maintains a unique position among zoology journals because of the inherent interest in the Australasian fauna and the vibrant and dynamic international scientific community studying Australasian animals. The Journal aims to remain an important component of the scientific process by encouraging, fostering and promoting developments in evolutionary, molecular and comparative zoology.

The editorial team of *AJZ* is committed to developing and maintaining a close relationship with the scientific community, and to publishing the highest quality papers. To this end, the journal has engaged four Associate Editors to assist the journal with the peer review process and to serve as an additional link between the journal and the scientific community. The four Associate Editors that have agreed to join the journal are Professor Craig Franklin (University of Queensland), Associate Professor Neil Gemmell (University of Canterbury), Dr Raoul Mulder (University of Melbourne) and Dr Phillip Cassey (University of Birmingham). The consummate skills, knowledge and experience of this international group of Associate Editors represent a broad cross section of zoology and reflect the remit of the journal.

For the benefit of our authors, referees and readers, we take this opportunity to describe the editorial structure and processes of the journal.

Editorial Structure and Processes

Peer review aims to ensure the scientific rigour of published papers and is a vital step in the improvement of submitted manuscripts. The editorial structure and processes of *AJZ* are designed to maximise the benefits of peer review and to undertake it in the most efficient manner. Importantly, the Associate Editors extend the depth of critical review and act as important contact points with the community. The role of the Managing Editor is to facilitate and coordinate the review process to ensure consistency in editorial policy and decision-making. With the assistance of the journal, Associate Editors locate referees, obtain reviews and make recommendations for each manuscript. Where necessary, the Managing Editor may also seek the advice of the Editorial Advisory Committee regarding the suitability of manuscripts.

Upon submission of a manuscript, the Managing Editor assesses it in relation to the scope of the journal, the quality of the presentation and the potential interest. Manuscripts deemed unsuitable at this stage are generally rejected within two weeks of submission. For relevant manuscripts, the Managing Editor invites the appropriate Associate Editor to undertake the review process. The Associate Editor suggests at least two qualified referees who are sent invitations to review. Referees are selected on the basis of their knowledge and abilities to comment on the submitted manuscript. Referees are located from around the world – in 2006, referees from over 20 countries reviewed manuscripts submitted to *AJZ*.

Upon receipt of the referees' reports, the Associate Editor makes a recommendation to the Managing Editor based on the reports and the Associate Editor's assessment of the manuscript. The general criteria for the journal are scientific rigour, originality and significance. The Managing Editor considers the available information and makes a primary decision of reconsider after minor or major revision, or reject. In the case of revised manuscripts, the same general procedure takes place; decisions whether to send for re-review are based on the referees' reports, the manuscript and the authors' responses to the reports. Where necessary, members of the Editorial Advisory Committee act as adjudicators.

AJZ has a competitive impact factor among general zoology journals, a broad subscription base, high download count, and a tradition of high-quality refereeing. The long half-life of cited papers (>10 years) demonstrates the longevity and quality of the papers published.

Turnaround times are excellent – the time from submission to first decision averaged 6.5 weeks in 2006 and the time from acceptance to publication averaged 9 weeks. In the last few years the journal has developed markedly; examples of this development include our online submission tool "OSPREY", 'most read' and 'cited by' features, complete archive online and RSS feeds of new content. The journal is now being enhanced by the engagement of Associate Editors. We invite you to submit your best relevant papers to *AJZ* and so join us in ensuring that the journal remains at the forefront of developments in evolutionary, molecular and comparative zoology.

Professor Mark Elgar
Chair,
Editorial Advisory Committee

Dr Dugald McGlashan
Editor

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