

Editorial

It is a great honour to be invited to serve the Zoological Society of southern Africa as editors of the journal, and we look forward to working with the editorial board. The *South African Journal of Zoology* has been fortunate to have had editors who ensured that journal issues appeared timeously containing papers of a high standard. We are committed to maintaining these high standards. Bishop (1984) suggests that a good journal editor should have the following qualities: ...'an established record of published research; be currently active in research; be reasonably well organised; have tact, diplomacy and good judgement; have a sense of humour; be at an appropriate stage in their careers'. We hope that between us we have some of these qualities!

We begin our tenure as editors at a time when the future of many South African journals is uncertain. The Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology recently called for a review of South African journals and we await the outcome and recommendations of this commission with some interest. It is likely, however, that within the foreseeable future government support of journals will be reduced (or cease) and journals forced to either end publication or merge. The competition for top quality manuscripts is as intense as ever and mergers may be sensible to ensure a future for South African scientific publications. The question of whether or not to retain the *South African Journal of Zoology* has been debated at length at a number of annual general meetings, and in the most recent survey, society members voted overwhelmingly to retain the journal. Nevertheless, we may be forced to look again at the viability of the journal in the near future. Meanwhile we hope that both society and non-society members will continue to send us their manuscripts.

Southern African journals are undoubtedly struggling to compete against the many overseas publications as well as a number of 'African' journals, many of which are produced by wealthy publishing houses. Researchers and science evaluators now take a keen interest in impact factors. Publishing in a journal with a high impact factor is clearly beneficial when peer review plays such a significant role in both the FRD rating system and in securing research funds. Although no

southern African 'zoological/ecological' publication has an impact factor greater than 0.4, the *South African Journal of Zoology* has, at present, a higher impact rating than other southern African zoological, wildlife and aquatic science journals.

The zoological community and funding agencies of southern Africa should be proud of this journal which has a refereeing system equal to that of overseas journals. There is room for improvement, however, and the international standing (and therefore impact factor) of the *S.A. Journal of Zoology* can only be improved if authors send papers on research which is more than of parochial interest. A journal can only be as good as the manuscripts it receives.

Our major task as Editors must therefore be to ensure that the impact factor of this journal increases. We hope to achieve this in a number of ways. We would like to abolish page charges, although this can be done only with the approval of the society. At present this is unrealistic financially, and if government subsidy is reduced further, it will be even more difficult. Nevertheless we will explore all possibilities.

We will also invite authors to submit mini-reviews, particularly reviews which are of general zoological interest. The journal has also begun to publish issues which contain papers from symposia and we will continue this.

Finally we would like to take the opportunity of thanking our predecessor, Sue Nicolson, for the excellent way in which she has edited the journal for the past seven years. Her advice and help is greatly appreciated.

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Reference

- BISHOP, C. T. 1984. How to edit a scientific journal. iSi Press, Philadelphia. Pp. 138.