

## EDITORIAL

**Journal of Ecology News****David J. Gibson<sup>1\*</sup>, Amy T. Austin<sup>2</sup>, Richard D. Bardgett<sup>3</sup>, Mark Rees<sup>4</sup>, Andrea Baier<sup>5</sup> and Lauren Sandhu<sup>5</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Department of Plant Biology, Center for Ecology, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL 62901-6509, USA;<sup>2</sup>Facultad de Agronomía, University of Buenos Aires and IFEVA, Buenos Aires, Argentina; <sup>3</sup>Faculty of Life Sciences, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PT, UK; <sup>4</sup>Department of Animal and Plant Sciences University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN, UK; and <sup>5</sup>British Ecological Society, Charles Darwin House, 12 Roger Street, London WC1N 2JU, UK**Journal of Ecology and BES centenary celebrations**

Following a very successful Centenary year for the *Journal* in 2012, we were delighted to help celebrate the Centenary of the *British Ecological Society* in 2013. We kicked things off by publishing in issue 1 of the *Journal* a forward-looking essay “Identification of 100 Fundamental Ecological Questions” by incoming BES President Bill Sutherland and 33 other leading ecologists (Sutherland *et al.* 2013) and an interview with Bill Sutherland was posted on the *Journal of Ecology* blog (see <http://jecologyblog.wordpress.com/2012/12/13/identification-of-100-fundamental-ecological-questions/>) to coincide with the publication of the “100 Fundamental Ecological Questions” paper. As the first academic journal devoted to ecological science, the *Journal* was honoured to publish this important paper. The importance of work published in the *Journal* for the advancement of ecology was also evident in the BES’s publication of a collection of “100 Influential Papers”, which was based on papers nominated from the archives of all 5 of the BES journals. As expected, a large number of papers in the collection were from the *Journal of Ecology*.

We anticipate that both Sutherland *et al.* and the “100 Influential Papers” collection will become compulsory reading for all members of the BES and readers of the *Journal of Ecology*. The questions posed by Sutherland *et al.* are already driving forward new initiatives in the field.

The *Journal of Ecology* blog (<http://jecologyblog.wordpress.com/>) has been very active this past year with a wide variety of interviews, EcoGists (short podcasts), opinion pieces, meeting reports and Editor’s Choice summaries. Associate Editor Scott Chamberlain has carried out a terrific job in setting up and running the blog for the last 2 years, but he has decided to step down from this role. We are extremely grateful to Scott for his tremendous work and enthusiasm for the blog, and wish him well for the future. However, as a result of his departure, we are looking for a new blogmaster. Let us know if you are interested in this position!

The culmination of the *Society’s* Centenary Celebration was the joint meeting hosted with INTECOL in London in

August 2013. The entire editorial team was present (together for the first time, Fig. 1), the *Journal* sponsored a symposium, met with delegates including many of the *Journal* Associate Editors, authors and readers, and generally enjoyed the festivities (see the video “INTECOL 2013” available via the *British Ecological Society’s* YouTube channel).

Below are some of the additional major achievements of the *Journal* during the last 12 months. We also highlight some of the ways in which we will continue to provide our authors and readers with the best possible service, both pre-and post-publication.

**Impact and access**

The ISI<sup>®</sup> 2012 Impact Factor for *Journal of Ecology* reached an all-time high of 5.431, with a ranking of 14th of 136 journals in the Ecology journals listing, and 11th of 195 journals in the Plant Sciences journals listing. Along with our consistently high article cited half-life, which exceeds 10 years (the maximum attainable value), these metrics confirm the *Journal’s* international standing. As it enters the second century of continuous publication since 1913, the *Journal* remains the premiere place to publish groundbreaking novel and innovative research in all fields of plant ecology. While we are very proud of our standing as measured using the Impact Factor, readers and authors can now track the impact of individual papers via article level metrics (ALMs) available as part of the enhanced PDF provided by ReadCube on Wiley Online Library. The post *Accessing Article Level Metrics* on our blog (see <http://jecologyblog.wordpress.com/2013/05/23/accessing-article-level-metrics/>) provides more detail about this new set of impact measures.

**Submissions and the review process**

The *Journal* continues to receive a large number of high-quality submissions. As a result, we are able to select the very best and most exciting papers for publication. We have to reject c. 80% of submissions, and, on average, we reject 48% of submissions without review, for example when a manuscript does not report on a substantial ecological advance, or does not address topical questions or important hypotheses. To be successful, submitted

\*Correspondence author. E-mail: [dgibson@plant.siu.edu](mailto:dgibson@plant.siu.edu)



**Fig. 1.** The *Journal of Ecology* Editorial team taking a break from dealing with reviews of manuscripts at INTECOL. Left to right, David Gibson, Lauren Sandhu, Richard Bardgett, Andrea Baier, Amy Austin, Mark Rees.

papers must be of interest to a wide sector of our readership. Confirmatory studies are unlikely to be successful in the review process. Articles may be highly study specific providing they address general ecological or evolutionary questions, rather than focusing on the details of the system (i.e. particular species, locations or ecological events). We encourage submissions that meet the criteria described above and urge all authors to be realistic about the prospects for their papers before submitting to the *Journal*. We also urge authors to carefully follow the Guidelines for Authors; failure to do so will result in manuscripts being unsubmitted and returned to authors, wasting the author's time and ours.

We now post Accepted Articles (see [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1365-2745/accepted](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1365-2745/accepted)) on Wiley Online Library very soon after a decision to accept is made. These articles have not yet been copyedited or typeset, but have already been assigned their DOI and are thus citable. Time to first decision is currently averaging 29 days from receipt of the submission, with a time to online publication of the version of record on Early View averaging 61 days. We thank the colleagues who have reviewed manuscripts for us during 2013, providing timely and constructive feedback. A list of names of the reviewers is published on the *Journal* website (see <http://www.journalofecology.org/view/0/reviewers.html>). We also thank our team of over 50 eminent Associate Editors, who provide expert insight and recommendations about submitted papers.

## Content

Volume 101 of the *Journal of Ecology* contained Special Features on plant functional effects on ecosystem services (101:1), plant–soil feedbacks in a changing world (101:2) and one on new perspectives in whole-plant senescence (101:3). Special Features are an important part of the *Journal* and allow us to present significant scientific advances in fast-moving and topical fields. Papers in these collections attract much attention, are some of the most frequently read and downloaded in the *Journal* and are invariably highly cited. The *Journal* is always on the lookout for new ideas for Special

Features. Please do not hesitate to contact the Editorial Office via [admin@journalofecology.org](mailto:admin@journalofecology.org) with your Special Feature proposal. Special Features typically include 5 – 10 papers based around a significant theme. However, it is important to emphasize that *Journal of Ecology* Special Features should predominantly consist of original research contributions rather than review existing research in a particular area.

In addition to the usual array of Standard Papers, we also publish stand-alone Essay Review, Forum and Future Direction papers and welcome proposals for contributions in these categories.

Last but not least, four new accounts were published in the *Journal's* long-standing series Biological Flora of the British Isles: *Gunnera tinctoria* (Gioria & Osborne 2013), *Pulmonaria officinalis* (Meeus *et al.* 2013), *Robinia pseudoacacia* (Cierjacks *et al.* 2013) and *Silene suecica* (Nagy 2013). Readers interested in preparing a Biological Flora account should contact the Biological Flora Editor Tony Davy. For the most up-to-date information on both *Journal of Ecology* and the papers that we publish, visit our homepage [www.journalofecology.org](http://www.journalofecology.org).

## Journal of Ecology in the news in 2013

Several *Journal* papers were covered by the media and other high-profile outlets. These include Morales *et al.*'s (2013) paper from the senescence Special Feature that was selected as an Editor's Choice by *Science*, and Rapp, McIntire & Crone's (2013) study on whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*) masting that was featured by the US National Science Foundation and subsequently carried by several websites. Zamin & Grogan's (2013) article on caribou browsing in low Arctic tundra created much interest because of the implications for climate change. The Irish Times carried an article "Gunning for Gunnera" following publication of Gioria & Osborne's (2013) Biological Flora account of *Gunnera tinctoria*. Catering to the public's interest in R-rated themes, the Los Angeles Times carried an article "Mosses lose their sex drive on islands" summarizing Patiño *et al.*'s (2013) paper "Baker's law and the island syndromes in bryophytes".

## The Editorial Board

There have been two important changes to the *Journal's* editorial team in 2013. David Gibson took on the role of Executive Editor following the retirement of Mike Hutchings, and Amy Austin joined the team alongside Richard Bardgett and Mark Rees. Editorial Board members who have stood down during 2013 are Marcelo Aizen, Rob Brooker, Thomas Kitzberger, Peter Klinkhamer and Luis Santamaria-Galdon. We are very grateful for the excellent work undertaken by all of them on behalf of the *Journal of Ecology*. Their efforts, together with those of all our other Board members, ensure that we continue to maintain the highest standards in the science that we publish.

We have recruited a number of excellent and well-known ecologists to the Board during 2013. They are Ignasi Bartomeus, Caroline Brophy, Yvonne Buckley, Walter Carson, Franciska

De Vries, Dan Flynn, Matt Heard, Jennifer Lau, Sandra Lavelle, Andrew MacDougall, Ryan Phillips, Frida Piper, Nicole Rafferty, Melinda Smith, Nathan Swenson and David Wardle. We want to increase the number of women and minorities on the Board to better reflect the representation of these groups in the discipline, so we are delighted that half of these new appointments are women. We are confident that all the new AEs will enhance the *Journal's* reputation for publishing the best plant ecological research. More appointments are in the works, including Associate Editors in the key focal areas of microbial ecology and marine ecology, so stay tuned. We also hope to recruit new board members from Asia and South America to broaden our international reach.

### New initiatives

The *Journal of Ecology* and, in fact, all the *British Ecological Society* journals have recently put in place a new 3-year Development Plan. New initiatives planned by the *Journal* that we are rolling out soon include publication of an annual Harper Review that will be written by an early or mid-career ecologist on a theme emerging from one or more of the “100 Fundamental Questions in Ecology” in Sutherland *et al.* (2013). We will also produce more Virtual Issues honouring eminent ecologists that have a significant body of work published in the *Journal*. The first of these was to honour Mike Hutchings and the next will be a collection of articles by BES luminary Phil Grime FRS. The *Journal* will also continue to publish Virtual Issues on particular topics, which in 2013 included Facilitation and Scaling, International Collaboration, Ecology in South America, Freshwater Ecology and BES Young Investigator Prize winning and highly commended papers.

Two new BES initiatives affect authors publishing with the *Journal*. From 2014 onwards, the Society requires, as a condition for publication, that all data supporting a publication are archived and made accessible to readers. Full details are available in the Author Guidelines available on the *Journal*

website. A second new policy is that while the *Journal* will not republish existing work, we will consider for publication manuscripts that have been posted in a recognized pre-print archive (e.g. arXiv and PeerJ PrePrints). Again, full details are available in the *Journal's* Author Guidelines.

In addition to the blog, the *Journal* maintains an active presence on Facebook, Google+ and Twitter (@JEcology). *Journal* editors David Gibson (@DavidJohnGibson), Amy Austin (@AmyAustin) and Mark Rees (@ProfMRees) regularly tweet about a host of topics including *Journal* matters, as do several Associate Editors. The *Journal* will continue to expand its social media reach, and there is now a *Journal* app available for iPhone and iPad users. Please ‘like’ and follow us! Do you see a *Journal* paper that you find interesting? Tweet about it!

### References

- Cierjacks, A., Kowarik, I., Joshi, J., Hempel, S., Ristow, M., von der Lippe, M. & Weber, E. (2013) Biological flora of the British Isles: *Robinia pseudo-acacia*. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 1623–1640.
- Gioria, M. & Osborne, B.A. (2013) Biological flora of the British Isles: *Gunnera tinctoria*. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 243–264.
- Meeus, S., Brys, R., Honnay, O. & Jacquemyn, H. (2013) Biological flora of the British Isles: *Pulmonaria officinalis*. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 1353–1368.
- Morales, M., Oñate, M., García, M.B. & Munné-Bosch, S. (2013) Photo-oxidative stress markers reveal absence of physiological deterioration with ageing in *Borderea pyrenaica*, an extraordinarily long-lived herb. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 555–565.
- Nagy, L. (2013) Biological flora of the British Isles: *Silene suecica*. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 532–544.
- Patiño, J., Bisang, I., Hedenäs, L., Dirkse, G., Bjarnason, Á.H., Ah-Peng, C. & Vanderpoorten, A. (2013) Baker's law and the island syndromes in bryophytes. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 1245–1255.
- Rapp, J.M., McIntire, E.J.B. & Crone, E.E. (2013) Sex allocation, pollen limitation and masting in whitebark pine. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 1345–1352.
- Sutherland, W.J., Freckleton, R.P., Godfray, H.C.J., Beissinger, S.R., Benton, T., Cameron, D.D. *et al.* (2013) Identification of 100 fundamental ecological questions. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 58–67.
- Zamin, T.J. & Grogan, P. (2013) Caribou exclusion during a population low increases deciduous and evergreen shrub species biomass and nitrogen pools in low Arctic tundra. *Journal of Ecology*, **101**, 671–683.