Behavioral Ecology

Editor-in-Chief's Report

August, 2008

Introduction

Behavioral Ecology publishes original articles, reviews, and commentary on all aspects of the field of behavioural ecology, encompassing both empirical and theoretical work and covering both animals and plants. *Behavioural Ecology* construes the field in its broadest sense to include (1) the use of ecological and evolutionary processes to explain the occurrence and adaptive significance of behaviour patterns, (2) the use of behavioural processes to predict ecological patterns, and (3) empirical, comparative analyses relating behaviour to the environment in which it occurs.

The editorial structure of the journal *Behavioral Ecology* currently comprises an Editor-in-Chief, nine Editors and fifteen members of the Editorial Board. The Editor-in-Chief is appointed by the Executive of the International Society for Behavioural Ecology and has overall responsibility for managing the editorial process and liaising with the ISBE Executive and the publisher (Oxford University Press). The Editors of the journal, appointed by the Executive of ISBE on advise by the serving Editors, are wholly responsible for deciding whether their allocated manuscripts are suitable for publication. Editors serve for terms of up to five years. Members of the Editorial Board, selected by the serving Editors and Executive of the ISBE, provide advice on manuscripts, and serve for terms of four years.

Editors and Editorial Board

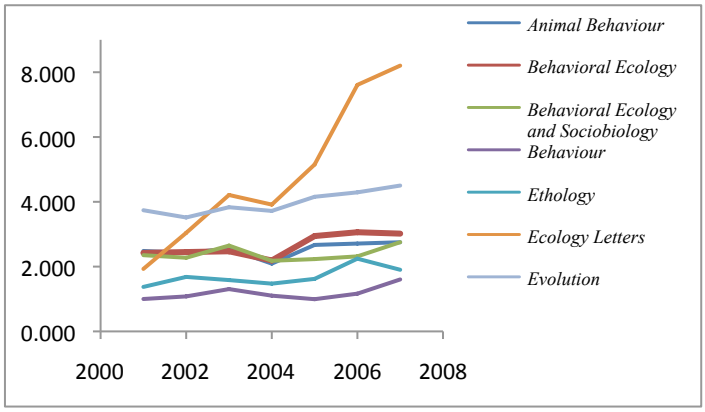
Editors

In 2006, Andrew Bourke completed his two-year term as Editor-in-Chief and Mark Elgar was appointed Editor-in-Chief for a two-year term, now extended for a further two years to August 2010. Four Editors completed their terms over the past two years, including Göran Arnqvist (2007), Ian Owens (2007), Anne Houde (2008) and Naomi Pierce (2008). The generous contribution of these Editors to the journal, not only in ensuring that *Behavioral Ecology* continues to publish excellent papers but also in providing wise advice on issues relating to the journal, is greatly appreciated.

The Executive of the ISBE agreed to increase the number of Editors in 2006, and the journal has subsequently appointed six new Editors: Jeremy Field (2012), Sue Healy (2012), Hans Hofmann (2012), Li Daiqin (2012), Candy Rowe (2013) and Iain Couzin (2013). The combination of these new Editors with Editors Mark Hauber (2010), Rob Brooks (2011) and Will Cresswell (2011) represents considerable diversity of expertise. The membership of the Editorial Board also changed: Anders Berglund, Scott Forbes, Rufus Johnstone, Liselotte Sundström and Joost Tinbergen are thanked for their generous support of the journal. New Members of the Editorial Board include Sigal Balshine, Daniel Blumstein, Hanna Kokko, David Queller and Kerry Shaw. The composition of the editorial team is increasingly representative of the community of behavioural ecologists, including a broad range of expertise, increasing international representation, and credible gender balance.

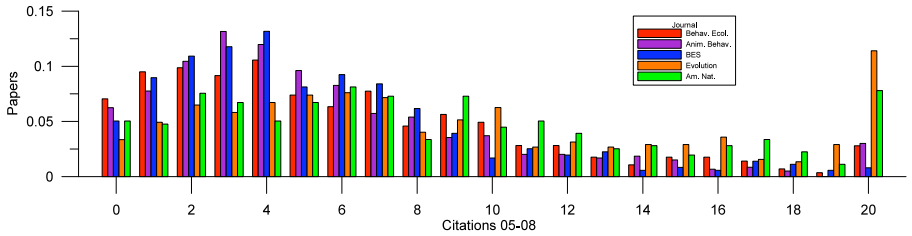
Journal impact

Behavioral Ecology is arguably the leading journal in the field, enjoying a reputation for publishing interesting and rigorous manuscripts. While the meaning of ISI Impact Factors™ is debatable, *Behavioral Ecology* consistently registers the highest impact factor in the field, and the metric for 2007 was 3.018, the highest on record. Nevertheless, comparison with other leading journals reveals scope for improvement (see Figure).



Impact Factors™ are influenced by a combination of citations per paper and the number of papers published. A key difference between the journals

Behavioral Ecology and *Evolution* is that the latter has relatively fewer manuscripts with less two citations and many more papers with citations of 14 or more (see Figure).



An important strategic focus for the journal is to explore ways of publishing more papers that are likely to attract substantial attention, and minimise the number of papers that are like to receive few or no citations. The Forum section of the journal is currently underutilised (four papers in 2007, and three in 2008). A more vigorous program of soliciting short, high-impact papers is likely to increase the journal's Impact Factor, and create additional distinguishing features with our competitors.

Another measure of impact is the frequency with which published papers are reported in the more general media, including *New Scientist* and other general readership magazines and newspapers. Many papers have attracted media attention, and OUP agreed to provide support from their media office to promote papers published in *Behavioral Ecology*. This has proved successful, with the latest paper on butterfly 'eyespots' by Martin Stevens and colleagues attracting considerable attention. We should continue to adopt this more pro-active approach to ensuring that the general public gain access to the science published in *Behavioral Ecology*.

Editorial processes

Completion times

The mean time to make decision over the two-year period August 2006 to July 2008 was 47 days, although there is some variation among editors. This completion time has declined markedly, and is 35 days in the period August 2007 to July 2008. It is likely that it will be shorter still in the year August 2008 – July 2009.

Decision outcomes

Impact of authors

While manuscripts have been submitted from across the globe, there is variation in the outcomes according to the domicile of the lead author (Table 1). While some regions remain under-represented in terms of published papers, substantial change has occurred and in the right direction.

TABLE 1. Outcome of submissions according to domicile of lead author

Continent	Submissions	Outcome			Proportion accepted
		Accept	Immediate reject	Reject	
Africa	12	4	4	4	0.33
Australia & NZ	84	30	22	32	0.36
Canada & USA	320	119	87	114	0.37
Europe§	452	141	111	200	0.31
Latin America	31	6	12	13	0.19
South Asia†	8	1	5	2	0.13
South East Asia	36	9	16	11	0.25

§ includes Israel and countries east to Russia; † includes India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka

There is ongoing interest in whether the process of double-blind reviewing removes any potential bias in the referees' evaluation of manuscripts. Comparisons across journals with different reviewing processes are hampered by a lack of information on relative acceptance rates for males and females. A preliminary analysis of editorial decisions for the period 2002 – 2005 reveal no evidence of systematic gender bias in the acceptance rates of manuscripts submitted to *Behavioral Ecology* (Table 2). Males and females are similarly likely to have their manuscript accepted (χ^2 = 1.41, p = 0.24). However, there is a significant gender affect when a distinction is made between immediate rejection and rejection after review (χ^2 = 11.36, p = 0.003). This arises because the percent of manuscripts rejected without being

TABLE 2. Outcome of submissions according to gender of lead author

Continent	Submissions	Outcome			Proportion accepted
		Accept	Immediate reject	Reject	
Female	352	106	42	204	0.30
Male	731	225	142	364	0.31

reviewed is almost twice as high for males (39%) than females (21%), while the rejection rate following reviewing tends to be higher for females (58%) than males (49%). Further analyses using a more extensive time frame and controlling for multiple submissions from the same author are required before drawing too many conclusions from these differences.

Impact of Editors

Each Editor takes sole responsible for deciding the fate of manuscripts, including whether it will be sent out for review. These decisions depend on the judgement of the editor, and when a manuscript is reviewed, editors will be advised by, but not bound by, the reviewer's recommendation.

The outcome of editorial decisions for manuscripts over the past two years (August 2006 – July 2008) was 27% rejected without review, 41% rejected after review and 32% accepted. While there is some variation among the Editors in the proportion of papers accepted, the general similarity is encouraging. Ongoing dialogue among the Editors will minimise the variation in editorial decisions. The acceptance rates have remained relatively constant over the past four years, but with increasing numbers of submissions (1329 in the two-year period 2004-2006; 732 in the period 2006-2007; and 914 in the period 2007-2008), either the rejection rate must increase or the journal must publish more papers. The former option will increase our impact factor.

Mark A. Elgar
Editor-in-Chief, *Behavioral Ecology*
August, 2008