



## Editorial

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*Proceedings B* 2015: the year in review

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*Editor-in-Chief*

It hardly seems possible that a year has passed since I sat down to write my first editorial as the incoming Editor-in-Chief of *Proceedings B*, replacing Michael Hassell. The first year has been challenging, as I have learned how to address numerous issues that required expeditious but sound decision-making. The academic publishing world is evolving rapidly and at *Proceedings B* we strive to keep pace with the changes around us and understand how they might influence our core mission as the flagship biological research journal of the Royal Society. These efforts are well rewarded and truly a privilege because of the endless stream of high-quality submissions encompassing an enormous breadth of subject material. Research in organismal biology has diversified greatly over the past decade and the wide range of articles that we now publish is one of the most impressive features of our journal.

I am pleased to report that the journal has gone from strength to strength during 2015. The time to first decision has dropped considerably over the course of the year, and the mean time to first decision over the last six months was just 31.5 days. This reinforces *Proceedings B*'s well-deserved reputation for undertaking rapid and efficient peer review while maintaining high editorial standards. In addition, the number of days from receipt to final acceptance has dropped throughout the year and the mean time to final acceptance over the last six months was just 71 days. This is particularly striking given the very large number of new submissions that we receive, which is on track to be around 3000 for 2015. Citation metrics for *Proceedings B* remain strong and the journal currently has an impact factor of 5.05 (placing it 8th in the Journal Citation Reports category for Biology), an *h*-index of 171 and a Source Normalized Impact per Paper value of 1.50.

Over the past year, there have been a number of changes at *Proceedings B*, and we believe these improvements will further increase the attractiveness of the journal to our authors and readers. One important change implemented early in the year, after considerable consultation among the editors, involved rewording the Aims and Scope of the journal on our website. This change reflects, in part, our concern about the submission of articles that were too specialized and focused on single organismal groups, particularly humans. While we still encourage submissions concerned with novel investigations of our species, articles focusing exclusively on humans will only be considered where they have clear relevance to fundamental biological principles and processes, or to other groups of organisms. I hope that the updated Aims and Scope will provide authors with greater clarity regarding the scientific remit of the journal, and the requirements for publication. *Proceedings B* remains a biology journal, and the new wording reinforces our policy to publish articles that are broadly relevant across all areas of biology.

Another significant development at *Proceedings B* was the initiation of a trial integration with *Publons*—a web-based platform allowing reviewers to voluntarily obtain credit for reviews undertaken across different journals. By integrating the journal with *Publons*, we have enabled reviewers to add verified reviews to their profiles more efficiently and therefore receive credit quickly and easily. This has been implemented in response to increasing concerns about 'reviewer fatigue' and a growing demand for increased reviewer recognition, including an acknowledgement of the ongoing contributions that reviewers make to scientific journals. I hope that our reviewers will consider taking full advantage of this integration and use it to receive appropriate credit for providing this crucial service to the scientific community.

As in previous years, the journal continued with the tradition of publishing review articles of general interest to our readers on topical and often controversial

fields. I would like to take this opportunity to encourage potential authors who wish to write interesting, broad reviews to submit proposals to the Reviews Editor, Per Lundberg, via the Editorial office ([proceedingsb@royalsociety.org](mailto:proceedingsb@royalsociety.org)). Reviews in *Proceedings B* must be synthetic in nature and provide new perspectives on a particular field, rather than simply providing summaries of a specific topic. We particularly encourage reviews that provide novel analyses of existing published data. Several stimulating reviews were published in 2015 including the annual Darwin Review, which this year involved an extended evolutionary synthesis by Kevin Laland *et al.* [1], and the CSEE (Canadian Society for Ecology and Evolution) Review for 2015 [2] in which CSEE past president Jeffrey Hutchings discussed thresholds for impaired species recovery in conservation biology.

The 2015 *Proceedings B* Special Feature published at the end of the year was on *Evolution and genetics in medicine*, guest edited by Roy Anderson and Brian Spratt. It featured six articles on this emerging and fascinating topic. The Special Feature rounds off a year of celebrations at the Royal Society marking the 350th year since the launch of *Philosophical Transactions*, which was the first scientific journal in existence and one of the earliest to undertake formal peer review. Another exciting initiative during 2015 was the inaugural *Royal Society Publishing photography competition* run jointly between *Proceedings B* and *Biology Letters*. The competition was a great success receiving over 1000 entries across three categories: Behaviour, Ecology and Environmental Science, and Evolutionary Biology. The winners were announced in November and their images showcased at an event at the Royal Society in London.

In August, I was invited to participate in the workshop 'Meet the Editors' at the European Society for Evolutionary Biology conference at Lausanne, Switzerland along with editors of other mainstream journals, including *Nature*, *Science*, *PLoS Biology*, *Molecular Ecology* and *Journal of Evolutionary Biology*. This event proved to be a very interesting and rewarding experience, with a broad range of topics being discussed based on questions from an audience of several hundred attendees. Of particular note were discussions concerning author appeals of rejections and their drain on editors' time, the pros and cons of double blind reviews, the problems and potential solutions for reviewer fatigue, and ways to ensure balanced gender representation on the Editorial Boards of journals. On this latter issue, I have been working with journal staff at *Proceedings B* to ensure that our editorial board is more representative of our

community of scientists. The journal's board for 2016 includes 28% women—which is higher than in previous years—and a key priority over the next few years will be to increase this proportion.

Perusal of the long list on our website of over 100 members of the Editorial Board of *Proceedings B* never fails to impress me. These dedicated individuals from all over the world form the intellectual backbone of our journal and represent an impressive range of disciplines, experience and academic expertise. *Proceedings B* could not provide the high-quality and rapid peer review expected by our authors without their support. I therefore take this opportunity to thank all members of the Editorial Board for their hard work on the journal's behalf, particularly those whose terms have recently ended and have now retired from the journal. Similarly, I would like to welcome all the new Associate Editors to the board—we have recruited 15 new Associate Editors over the past few months—and I am looking forward to working with you all over the next few years. I am also pleased to welcome back one of our previous Associate Editors, Loeske Kruuk, who specializes in evolutionary ecology and quantitative genetics, and has recently moved from Edinburgh University to the Australian National University. We are delighted that Loeske has agreed to return to the journal to increase our team of senior editors to seven and her return will strengthen our expertise in the genetics and ecology of wild populations.

In closing, I would like to thank all the hard working Editorial Office staff in the London office—Jennifer Kren, Matthew Allinson and Buchi Okerefor—who ensure that the processing and distribution of hundreds of manuscripts each month goes smoothly, and that authors, reviewers and editors receive information in a timely and courteous manner. I am particularly grateful to Rhiannon Meaden, Publishing Editor of *Proceedings B*, for taking a leadership role in the day-to-day running of the journal over the past year. Rhiannon has been an invaluable source of advice in helping me through my first year and has willingly provided data and information that have helped me to make the numerous decisions that are required as *Editor-in-Chief*. Given that 2015 was also her first year in the job this has been especially impressive.

I am confident that 2016 will be another outstanding year for *Proceedings B*, and I would be happy to hear from our readership concerning any issues that might improve the services that we provide and particularly the quality of our journal.

## References

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