

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

When the editorship of a journal changes hands, a new editor may feel the temptation to initiate sweeping changes. At first glance, this might seem to have happened with this issue of *The Auk*. A new cover design, prompted by economic and readability considerations, is most evident. Readers who are attentive to details of style will also note a curious mixture in the contents of this issue, a consequence of the overlap in editorial responsibilities. Most of the material in this issue, in fact, was reviewed, accepted, and edited by my predecessor.

But these manifestations of change are only superficial; the body of *The Auk*, its contributed papers, will retain the breadth of coverage, the topical interest, and the scientific quality that have been built during the decade of careful editorial guardianship of Oliver L. Austin, Jr. Oliver's help and insight have been invaluable in producing a smooth editorial transition and in introducing a neophyte editor to the art of scientific publishing. Thanks, Oliver.

The major challenge facing *The Auk* is the publication of the most important of the vast amount of interesting work being done with birds today without producing unrealistic delays in publication, which may make significant studies rather dated by the time they finally appear. A quick survey of the acceptance dates on articles published in this issue indicates an average period of 17.5 months between acceptance and publication. Add to this the 4–8 months between initial submission of a manuscript and its acceptance, and it becomes evident that this publication delay is a major problem. I am determined to reduce this delay to a more acceptable level. The only realistic way to accomplish this is to become more selective in the material that is accepted for publication. Unfortunately, this means that some worthy material must be denied publication in *The Auk*. An alternative might be to publish a larger volume of material, but this is expensive. The recent increase in dues barely keeps pace with the inflationary increases in publication costs, and our ability to publish more material is now tied closely to voluntary contributions from authors to support publication costs (see announcement below).

I hope that both professionals and amateurs working with birds will continue to submit their best work to *The Auk*. While it may be somewhat more difficult to obtain acceptance of a manuscript, once accepted, publication will be more rapid. For our readers, this should provide material of even greater interest and timeliness.

POLICIES ON PUBLICATION COSTS IN *THE AUK*

As is true of most scholarly and research publications, *The Auk* is expensive to produce, and membership dues in the A.O.U. do not completely meet costs. We therefore expect authors of papers accepted for publication to contribute to the costs of publication through the use of institutional, grant or contract, or other funds available to them for this purpose. Ability to contribute to publication costs does not enter into the editorial decision regarding the acceptability of a manuscript.

Following acceptance of a manuscript, the Editor will correspond with the author to determine an appropriate voluntary contribution to assist in publication costs. Members of the A. O. U. without access to funds for this purpose may indicate this to the Treasurer, and the A. O. U. will then meet the basic publication costs. Authors of longer papers are especially encouraged to help defray the costs of publication; it is unlikely that papers of more than 16 printed pages can be published without some significant contribution. After reaching an agreement with the Treasurer, authors will be billed for a contribution to publication costs after galley proofs have been approved. If authors are able to completely subsidize the costs of publication of a paper, it will be published in the next available issue of *The Auk* following approval of galley proofs.

Some other costs of publication entail charges that are fixed and cannot be waived. These include the costs of alterations or redraftings of figures, changes in proofs not correcting printer's errors, changes made necessary after type has been set because the printer could not interpret the intention of the author because of illegible manuscript, excessively complicated or numerous tables or figures, or inclusion of color plates. These charges will be billed to the author by the Treasurer following publication.