

EDITORIAL

Letter of Transmittal

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Every manuscript submitted to an editor should have a cover, or transmittal, letter. Aside from the common courtesy involved, the cover letter contains important information. Its function is to inform the editor about important aspects of the history of the typescript. The information is potentially important and not to be considered lightly. Because there is strong evidence that many authors blatantly ignore the "Information for Contributors," there is reason to indicate what might be included in the transmittal letter.

Authors must make a firm declaration about prior and duplicate publication. Manuscripts submitted to *The Auk* must not be submitted elsewhere (duplicate submission) and the material should not duplicate substantially that published previously. Remember, any material published in *The Auk* is under copyright to the AOU. Any published material (text, graphics, tables) that is under copyright must be accompanied by appropriate release forms. The single exception is

short quotations, which must be cited accurately. Acknowledgments to substantial contributions of unpublished information (pers. comm.) should be mentioned separately. If appropriate, authors should state that care of captive animals meets current federal, state and local standards and that the proper permits were held for any wild birds involved in the work.

Each of the co-authors should sign the transmittal letter. This verifies that they have at least read the manuscript. Co-authors presumably make a substantial contribution to the work. Each co-author should endorse the conclusions. When appropriate a statement of financial or other relationships that might lead to a conflict of interest should be mentioned.

The reasons for these demands are simple. Editors expect open and full disclosure of all facts that bear on acceptance or rejection of a manuscript. The issues are ethical. The integrity of science depends on the integrity of individuals. Scientific publishing is a form of communication. Authors communicate with readers. Editors, if they do their job properly, facilitate this communication. The entire process must reflect a model of ethical, mutually respectful, and intellectually sound principles.

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