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EDITOR'S PAGE

WORKING TOWARD EXCELLENCE

JAMES C. BEDNARZ, EDITOR

Perhaps you noticed that the *Journal of Raptor Research* has gone through a minor adjustment during the last year. Editor Marc Bechard, after a half decade of dedicated efforts to improve the *Journal*, stepped down and passed the awesome responsibility of managing our flagship research publication to me and a small, part-time editorial staff at Arkansas State University. During Marc's tenure as Editor, the *Journal of Raptor Research (JRR)* took on a new look and prospered. *JRR's* impact factor, a measure of the scientific "impact" of peer-reviewed periodicals based on the number of citations compiled by the Institute of Scientific Information in *Journal Citation Reports*, has grown exponentially over the last few years. Although the value of "impact factors" in ranking the quality of scientific journals is debatable, it represents one measure of the exposure that articles published in a particular journal will receive and their potential influence on science. Currently, *JRR's* impact factor is on par with several respected international journals in the disciplines of ornithology (e.g., *Wilson Bulletin*) and organismal biology (e.g., *Wildlife Society Bulletin*). As editor, I pledge to you that the current editorial staff will continue to strive toward publishing the best journal of raptor science in the world.

As I anticipated, the transition of editorial responsibilities from Marc's shop to my lab set us back a little bit. Our new Editorial Assistant, Rebecca Maul, and I received the official authorization from the Board of the Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. to begin processing manuscripts at the end of February 2001. Although we got right to work, we were faced with an instant backlog of manuscripts. In addition, Rebecca and I had lots to learn about the ins and outs of publishing a

scientific journal. Thankfully, we received much help during the transition from Marc Bechard, Joan Clark (the long-time proofreader of *JRR*), the folks at Allen Press, and the Department of Biological Sciences at Arkansas State University. We greatly appreciated this assistance and support during the transition process, that enabled us to produce our first issue (Volume 35, Number 3) only slightly behind schedule.

The second issue of *JRR*, edited and produced by the new editorial office (Volume 35, Number 4), showcased the proceedings of the Second International Burrowing Owl Symposium. It presented a huge challenge for our meager resources. Even though we received outstanding cooperation from Special Editors of this issue, Troy Wellicome and Geoff Holroyd, and the many authors who contributed to this effort, this unique volume represents the largest single issue ever of the *JRR*. Throughout the production of these proceedings, all contributors, cooperators, and the entire editorial team endeavored to produce the best scholarly product possible. All contributions went through thorough reviews and multiple edits, and several submitted manuscripts that were not deemed suitable for publication in *JRR* were rejected to maintain a high standard of peer review. If you have not looked at this special issue of *JRR*, I encourage you treat yourself and review some excellent science on Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*).

As new editor-in-chief, I am currently very satisfied with the quality and format of our journal and have elected to maintain most of the specifications put in place by my recent successors. However, we will continue to tweak things in an effort to improve the presentation of raptor science and better

accommodate both authors and readers. For example, we now publish e-mail addresses of the corresponding author for each article published. This contemporary contact information will, hopefully, further encourage constructive interactions between scientists and conservationists interested in raptor biology. We also have instituted an optional electronic submission procedure (*J. Raptor Res.* 35: 409) that should speed up the processing of manuscripts. Our current priority objective is to accelerate the turn-around time from manuscript receipt to publication. Let me emphasize, however, our current turn-around time in publishing papers is faster than most other ornithological and organismal biology journals: less than 8 months to a final decision on acceptability and most manuscripts are in print within 14 months after the date of submission. In 2002, we intend to reduce these turn-around intervals as much as feasible. You may also see other minor changes in future issues and we welcome suggestions and comments from both authors and readers concerning further improvements to the *JRR* (jrr@astate.edu).

As I have discovered over the past 10 months,

publishing a quarterly, peer-reviewed journal in raptor biology is a monumental undertaking. I want to express special thanks for the contributions of our current staff of Associate Editors: Jim Belthoff, Clint Boal, Cole Crocker-Bedford, Joan Morrison, Juan José Negro, Marco Restani, Ian Warkentin, and Troy Wellicome. Our Book Review Editor, Jeff Marks, and Spanish Editor, César Márquez Reyes, continue to do outstanding work. We currently have two part-time Editorial Assistants, Rebecca Maul and Allie Fowler, who accomplish the tough, day-to-day legwork that gets the *JRR* out on time. Finally, I want to express my appreciation to all the referees, whose thoughtful evaluations make the quality of the *Journal*. Publication of the *JRR* is a cooperative effort involving the entire membership and raptor scientific community, who provide the original research and peer review that fuels the forward progress of science. When we request that you contribute to the quality of the *JRR* by refereeing a manuscript, I strongly encourage you to agree and to take part in this vital process. I look forward to working with all of you in the near future!

