



EDITOR'S MESSAGE

What Taxa Are Appropriate for the *Journal*?

Over the years, we have been asked frequently by authors if their manuscript is appropriate for the *Journal of Wildlife Management*. Indeed, journal fit is one of the most important questions authors should consider when selecting an outlet. Our response most often focuses on the management and/or conservation implications of the study, a requirement for the *Journal*. Our guidelines to authors (Block et al. 2011) and previous editor's messages (Chamberlain 2008, Thompson 2010, Merrill 2015) also emphasize this aspect. Although we usually are faced with issues related to the *management* emphasis of the *Journal of Wildlife Management*, questions regarding what taxa we include as *wildlife* arise. We hope to suggest some clarification (and dispel some myths) about what taxa are appropriate for manuscripts accepted for publication in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

The *Journal's* direction on subject matter broadly states that submitted articles should contribute to the "scientific foundations of wildlife management" (Block et al. 2011). We reiterate that "the link to management of wildlife resources must be clear and concise." This requirement fulfills a major mission of The Wildlife Society (TWS). The Society aims to produce products that "allow solutions to wildlife conservation and management challenges to be anchored in science" (TWS 2015). Merrill (2015) addresses key reasons for why the *Journal* emphasizes management implications as part of every manuscript consistent with other calls for evidence-based management and conservation (Sutherland et al. 2004).

In contrast to the detailed descriptions of overall subject matter, the *Journal* leaves the topic of subject taxa almost entirely unaddressed. In this issue, Grodsky et al. (2015) raise the issue of the scarcity of invertebrate-focused papers in wildlife journals. In addition, we have received several emails from authors inquiring whether we accept articles from certain taxa such as fish, marine mammals, or herptiles. Grodsky et al. (2015) point to a definition of wildlife that they found in TWS's strategic plan for 2008–2013, which states wildlife are "not humans, domesticated animals, or plants" and specifically includes "insects and other invertebrates, fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals" (TWS 2008). This definition is in agreement with legal definitions of wildlife (e.g., the Lacey Act in the United States). Admittedly, the *Journal's* instructions to authors do not relay TWS's definition of wildlife and may even unintentionally obfuscate the list of accepted study taxa.

To avoid overlap with TWS's sister organization, The American Fisheries Society (AFS), the *Journal* does not focus on fish even though they are specifically defined as wildlife. This bias likely has historical roots. The American Fisheries Society, first called the American Fish Culturists' Association, was established in 1870, some 60 years prior to the establishment of TWS. In the early years, AFS published

the *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* along with monographs and special reports, which covered a diversity of topics on fish health, taxonomy, and policy resolutions of AFS. Early issues of the *Journal* included a number of articles on fish management. However, in 1981, ASF initiated the *North American Journal of Fisheries Management* to provide relevant information for managers (Moffitt 2001), which has since become a major outlet for submission of manuscripts on fisheries management.

The *Journal* translates the fisheries exception as, "Fisheries manuscripts are discouraged unless information is part of an account that mainly concerns terrestrial vertebrates" (Block et al. 2011). We submit this statement has been interpreted as the *Journal* limits submissions to only those that research terrestrial vertebrates. However, a quick look through recently published articles in the *Journal* reveals that we publish research on species across ecosystems and phyla including marine mammals (e.g., dolphins: Conn et al. 2011, seals: Hoover-Miller et al. 2013, whales: Christiansen et al. 2015), other animals that primarily use aquatic systems (e.g., sea otters [*Enhydra lutris*]: Gregr et al. 2008, sea turtles: Blanco et al. 2012, freshwater turtles: Sung et al. 2015), and research that focuses on invertebrates (e.g., arthropods: Benson et al. 2007, Spanish moon moth [*Graellsia isabellae*]: Chefaoui and Lobo 2007).

It is true that we have a skewed taxonomic representation in the *Journal*. In 2014, the *Journal* published 64 mammal (44%), 72 bird (50%), 5 reptile (3%), 1 amphibian (1%), and 0 invertebrate research articles (2 articles focused on multiple taxa). However, this skew largely reflects submission rates by taxa; in 2014, original submissions were composed of 53% mammal, 31% bird, 5% reptile, 3% amphibian, and 2% invertebrate research articles (all other submissions either included various taxa or no study species). We cannot assess whether we receive fewer submissions for some taxa because authors prefer to submit these articles elsewhere, because authors do not feel that these taxa are welcome at the *Journal*, or because of taxa biases in conservation research funding (Gratwicke et al. 2012).

The *Journal of Wildlife Management* remains committed to publishing rigorous scientific research with direct implications toward the management or conservation of wildlife (except fish). Specifically, in addition to research focused on terrestrial vertebrates, we also welcome studies using aquatic vertebrates and invertebrate species that have recommendations for improved management and/or conservation of wildlife (in line with comments made by Grodsky et al. 2015). In recent years, we have enlisted Associate Editors that expand our scope of expertise to handle this broad range of taxa. We hope that the material contained within the pages of the *Journal* lead to action that strengthens our ability to manage and conserve wildlife populations. But just for the

record, we also support conservation of fish populations and are confident that fisheries journals are expertly working toward the same goal with their focal taxa. Indeed, it is our like-minded emphases on providing scientific and evidence-based management that unite rather distinguish our Societies.

—Allison Cox
Content Editor

—Evelyn Merrill
Editor-in-Chief

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