
Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the independent *Biology Letters*. I am pleased to be Editor at the beginning of what is sure to be an internationally important journal in the biological sciences.

Biology Letters was launched as a supplement to *Proceedings of The Royal Society B* at the end of 2002, and published its first on-line article at the beginning of 2003. In this short time *Biology Letters* has developed a strong reputation across the broadest scope of organismal, population and evolutionary biology, very much in the mould of its parent journal. In view of its success, the decision was taken to separate the two journals to ensure that *Biology Letters* could fully expand and develop its own identity as a leading publication in the biological sciences.

To enhance the position of *Biology Letters* as a leading rapid publication journal for the biological sciences, we will work hard to ensure a rapid turnaround for all papers. Currently, we publish papers on-line around 100 days after receipt, with a decision provided to authors within, on average, 55 days. Our times from peer-review through to publication are kept low through having full on-line submission and peer-review. However, we can always do better, and I hope to see these times reduced as *Biology Letters* breaks out as a standalone journal.

We have put together an impressive international editorial board, with wide-ranging expertise, to ensure that the breadth of papers we receive and publish continues to develop. I look forward to developing the scope of the journal with the board, and expect that the board will grow along with the journal. Although we hope to continue to be a natural home for short ecological, behavioural and evolutionary biology papers, we also wish to expand the journal into further reaches of biology. The areas in particular that we are hoping to encourage in this journal include plant sciences (with an emphasis on genetics), neurobiology and genomics. We feel that these fields require a journal for short papers that can achieve a rapid turnaround, as well as high visibility once the papers are published—we have already had a number of papers highlighted in *Nature* as well as receiving extensive coverage in the wider media.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with *Biology Letters* so far: in particular, Professor Neill Alexander for his careful editorship of the journal while it was still a supplement to *Proceedings B*. This has ensured that the journal is already attracting a large number of high quality papers across the biological sciences.

Finally, a thank you to all the staff at The Royal Society for their hard work since the start of *Biology Letters*, including all in editorial, production and marketing, as well as the powerhouse behind any journal—the referees, who play an essential, but thankless, role in any peer-reviewed journal.

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