

Publications Advisory Board

Committee Members: J. Goheen (Publications Director). *Journal of Mammalogy*: Editor-in-Chief – B. Riddle, Managing Editor – B. Lim; Associate Editors – S. Crimmins, C. Davy, J. Frey, D. Ge, A. Greenville, M. Hawkins, L. Hayes, C. Jacques, K. Mabry, M. McGowen, R. Moratelli, A. Mortelliti, J. Ortega Reyes, J. Pauli, A. Percequillo, N. Pillay, R. Reyna-Hurtado, K. Rowe, J. Scheibe, T. Smyser, T. Tomasi, P. Zollner; *Special Features Editor* – J. Alston; *Associate Editor for Language Coordination* – V. Hayssen; *Mammalian Species*: Editor-in-Chief – M. Hamilton; Associate Editors – C. Cooper, A. Feijó, D. Leslie, P. Owen, U. Pardiñas, S. Solari; *Oxford University Press*: F. McDonald (Lead/Publisher), A. Montgomery (Journal Manager), R. Gaddy (Advertising), S. Larche (ScholarOne), M. Senderling (Marketing), K. Hines (J&J Editorial Assistant).

Mission: The Publications Advisory Board (PAB) oversees the publications of the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM), which includes the *Journal of Mammalogy (JM)* and *Mammalian Species (MS)*. The PAB sets editorial policy for ASM and nominates editors for approval by the Board of Directors. The PAB typically is composed of current editors, who are involved in reviewing and accepting papers and the technical production of the publications. Key publishing partners from Oxford University Press (OUP) are invited to serve as *ex officio* non-voting members.

Information Items:

(1) ASM was to complete a five-year publishing contract with OUP in December 2024. In December 2023, the Board of Directors unanimously approved a new six-year contract with OUP (from January 2024 through December 2029).

Given the switch to online only versions of *JM* in February 2024, I sent postcards to the 94 ASM members still receiving hard copies of *JM* but for whom no email address was on record; 12 individuals responded affirmatively that they wished to continue receiving hard copies. Additionally, I contacted 29 librarians and archivists requesting that archival copies (non-circulating hard copies) of *JM* be housed at their respective institutions. Fifteen agreed to this request; all fifteen are in North America. There is some concern about the lack of geographic diversity for these archival copies. I would welcome suggestions of libraries outside North America that might be willing to house archival copies.

ASM continues to support publishing by members who lack grant or institutional funds through the Hardship Publishing Grants program. Through 1 March 2024, I received and funded 16 applications for grants at an estimated cost of \$3,435. Most have come from authors from developing countries that are suffering economic crises that reduce research funding severely.

(2) **Editorial Staff.** *JM* and *MS* are the most visible products of the ASM. Their success is a direct reflection of the efforts of the editorial teams of both journals, who comprise the bulk of the PAB. We excel through the dedication and efforts of these members, and they continue to display passion for mammalogy and for helping authors present their work as effectively as

possible. I also want to recognize the efforts of the team at OUP, especially Fiona McDonald and Matt Senderling, and recent additions, Anna Katherine Montgomery (OUP Production) and Kathleen Hines (J&J Editorial).

The Associate Editors (AEs) interact the most with authors and reviewers and deserve the Society's thanks for their roles in maintaining the high standard of work in our journals. Effective at the end of June 2024, four subject-matter AEs for *JM*—Liz Flaherty (3 years), Ellen Hines (2 years), Tom Jung (3 years), and Guiming Wang (2 years)—will be stepping down. I am grateful for all their years of service to our publications.

For July 2024, I request approval from the Board of Directors in appointing the following individuals as AEs:

- Loren Ammerman, Angelo State University
- Rob Lonsinger, Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife Cooperative Research Unit
- Adriana Maldonado-Chaparro, Universidad del Rosario (Colombia)
- Bryan McLean, University of North Carolina-Greensboro
- Brock McMillan, Brigham Young University
- Richard Stevens, Texas Tech University

We are fortunate to have outstanding senior leadership at our journals: Brett Riddle (EIC) and Burton Lim (Managing Editor) at *JM* and Meredith Hamilton (EIC) at *MS*. Brett's and Burton's terms end 30 June 2024. Both have communicated to me their desire to be reappointed. Brett, Burton, and I are in regular (at least weekly) communication with regard to *JM* and I have appreciated their mentoring and clear communication. Brett and Burton have been instrumental in our transitioning from print/online to online-only, and also from an older to new format style. Both were major undertakings and I have appreciated their steady hands in ensuring they were completed without major glitches. Therefore, I will advocate for both Brett's and Burton's reappointment to the Board of Trustees in June.

In Fall 2023, Editor-in-Chief Meredith Hamilton indicated her willingness to continue in her position through 2025, for which I was both extremely relieved and extremely grateful. Having 18 years of continuity in the form of Meredith's expertise in such a prominent position is key to the functioning of our journals, and I am extremely grateful. I would welcome volunteers or nominations to take on this important role, to begin in June 2025.

In addition, I want to recognize members of the Nomenclature Committee for their continued assistance navigating taxonomy issues that arise as part of our editorial process for both journals; and Sean Maher, Chair of the Informatics Committee, for his help with social media and publications-related content on the ASM webpage. I am extremely appreciative of Ginny Hayssen for her willingness to continue coordinating both the Buddy System and the translation of abstracts as the AE for Language Coordination, particularly as we attempt to lean on the Buddy System more strongly in effort to expedite our times-to-first decision for *JM* (see below). Finally, I want to extend sincere thanks to Paul Stapp for his patience in guiding me through the first year of this position. It has been a steep learning curve with lots of moving parts, and Paul was generous with his time in ensuring the transition from him to me went as smoothly as possible.

(3) Editorial Policies and Procedures. Given the dynamic nature of the academic publishing landscape, the PAB—and especially the EICs—deal with a wide range of editorial issues regularly. To provide consistent information to authors and editorial staff and avoid confusion, the EICs and I aim to update the *Instructions to Authors* for each journal once per year, shortly after the Annual Meeting, with changes to be adopted with the next volume. I will solicit input from Brett, Link Olson, and Luis Ruedas on this effort.

Brett, Burton, and I meet monthly via videoconference with Fiona and *JM* editorial and production teams to discuss *JM* matters. These meetings have been useful and productive.

(4) Distribution, Availability, and Promotion of Publications. ASM members and readers occasionally express frustration with our publications, including inaccessible and missing articles and Supplementary Materials and errors on proofs and billing. If you encounter any problems, please let me know directly and immediately, and I will try to remedy them as quickly as possible. Some technical matters are handled centrally at OUP or by outside vendors, and are outside of the control of our immediate OUP contacts, so your patience is appreciated.

As in the past, I am requesting funds to publish 30 print copies of the 12 issues of *Mammalian Species*, Volume 54, Accounts 1025-1036. Twenty-eight of these will be sent to archival libraries, and two will be available for purchase. Due to recent increases in paper, ink, and shipping expenses, the estimated cost will rise to \$775.

(5) Publication Statistics. Publication statistics for the *Journal of Mammalogy (JM)* between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Composition of recent issues of *JM*:

| Issue | Feature Articles | Special Feature / Invited Articles / ASM History / Obituaries | Book Reviews | Total Pages |
|--------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------|--------------------|
| 104.3 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 225 |
| 104.4 | 14 | 6 | 1 | 259 |
| 104.5 | 19 | 4 | 2 | 262 |
| 104.6 | 24 | 0 | 0 | 299 |
| 105.1 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 220 |
| 105.2 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 228 |
| Total | 107 | 11 | 4 | 1493 |

The publication target for *JM* historically has been approximately ~2,000 pages per year. We published 1,493 total pages this year, an average of 249 pages per issue.

***JM* handling and production times (Feature articles only in 104.3-105.2; n = 107):**

| Issue | Avg Submission to Acceptance (days) | Acceptance to Publication (online/paper) (days) | Total Time (online/ paper) (days) |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|
| 104.3 | 275 | 91/199 | 366/474 |
| 104.4 | 353 | 79/203 | 432/556 |
| 104.5 | 285 | 62/179 | 356/473 |
| 104.6 | 358 | 49/146 | 407/504 |
| 105.1 | 411 | 66/173 | 477/584 |
| 105.2 | 422 | 57/. | 479/. |
| AVG | 353 | 67/180 | 420/518 |
| 2022-23 (n = 109) | 351 | 62/197 | 415/560 |

For all metrics, and for a second consecutive year, manuscript handling and production times for *JM* Feature articles continued to be much slower than desired. These were attributed to difficulties securing suitable reviewers, the time taken by authors to address reviewer comments, and delays on the EIC’s desk.

Handling times continue to be long, as the 2023-24 issues consisted mostly of backlogged manuscripts submitted during the pandemic and EIC transition. I believe (and hope) that we have moved beyond the backlog at this point, and that the 2024-2025 year will see the average time from submission to acceptance greatly reduce. My goal is to reduce the average time from submission to acceptance from 351 days (i.e., nearly a year) to 240 days (i.e., eight months) by 2026.

Our “time to first decision”—the number of days elapsed between when the requested number of reviewers agree to review, and the AE recommends a decision to the EIC—is satisfactory, at 51 days. This suggests that our AEs are efficient at making recommendations to the EIC once external reviews are secured.

Geographic distribution of corresponding authors of all manuscripts accepted between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024; n =127 accepted manuscripts:

| Location | Corresponding Author (%) |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| U.S. | 60 (45.5) |
| Canada | 23 (17.4) |
| Latin America | 28 (21.2) |
| Europe | 10 (7.6) |
| Asia | 6 (4.5) |
| Oceania | 4 (3.0) |
| Africa | 1 (0.8) |

JM corresponding authors of published manuscripts came from 21 countries on all continents except Antarctica, although most authors (58%) were from the U.S. or Canada. Represented

countries, besides the U.S. and Canada: Latin America (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico); Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom); Oceania (Australia); Asia (China, India, Iran, Japan, Russian Federation); Africa (South Africa).

JM continues to receive many manuscripts from authors outside the U.S. and Canada (53% of 213 manuscripts with final decisions), especially Latin America. However, rejection rates tend to be higher for manuscripts with international corresponding authors (60%) than for those from the U.S. and Canada (23%). Authors whose primary language is not English are encouraged to take advantage of ASM’s Buddy System to improve the presentation of their work so that it can be evaluated on its scientific merits.

Manuscripts (*JM* Feature articles only) submitted, accepted, and rejected between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, including comparable data for three preceding years:

| Category | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Number of manuscripts accepted/provisionally accepted (a) | 127 | 94 | 133 | 154 |
| Number of manuscripts rejected (r) | 86 | 61 | 83 | 130 |
| Rejection rate [r/(a+r)] % | 40 | 39 | 38 | 46 |
| Total Final Decisions (a + r) | 213 | 155 | 216 | 284 |

The number of manuscripts handled by *JM* was again lower than in previous years. The rejection rate (40%) has continued to be historically low.

Publication statistics for *Mammalian Species* between 1 April 2023 and 1 April 2024, including comparable data for 3 preceding years:

| Statistic | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | 2021-22 | 2020-21 |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Total number of accounts published | 11 | 11 | 13 | 13 |
| Accounts in proof | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Accounts with Editor | 14 ^a | 11 ^a | 7 ^a | 17 ^a |
| Total number of accounts with Associate Editors | 2 | 5 | 8 | 13 |
| Number of new accounts submitted and assigned to Associate Editors | 5 | 8 | 10 | 11 |
| Number of new species accounts assigned to authors | 15 ^b | 11 ^b | 16 | 25 |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Total number of accounts in preparation (not submitted) | 103 ^c | 99 ^c | 128 | 148 |
|--|------------------|-----------------|-----|-----|

^a 11 inactive

^b 4 are updates to previously published accounts

^c 37 overdue

For *JM*, I am attempting to reduce our average submission to acceptance times through three efforts. First, we are now able to automate lists of reviewers in ScholarOne (our online workflow software for editing and reviewing). Because AEs had typically been inviting only two reviewers at a time, and because it typically takes five or more invitations to secure two reviewers, the iterative process of inviting reviewers who would decline invitations to review was creating unnecessary lags in the process. By streamlining the invitations to reviewers, I hope to reduce our average submission to acceptance times.

Second, I have encouraged our managing editor and our AEs to desk reject any manuscript for which the writing would take in excess of three hours to edit. Once a manuscript is received by the EIC with an “AE recommends acceptance” decision, the EIC feels compelled to work through it with edits. In cases where poorly written manuscripts are recommended by AEs for acceptance, this will require more than three hours of the EIC’s time, leading to delays in processing other manuscripts at the same stage of review. For foreign language authors, we encourage resubmission through the ASM Buddy System, which is in the process of being automated through ScholarOne.

Third, I have advised our AEs to avoid more than three requests for revisions. Relatedly, the EIC inherited a backlog of 70 manuscripts in 2021 that is now down to below 10. Consequently, and along with the two aforementioned efforts, I believe (and hope) that our average submission to acceptance will decline. My goal is to reduce average time to revision to eight or fewer months within the next two years.

(5) Consolidation of *Journal of Mammalogy* Back Matter. Given the transition of *JM* to online-only, several changes have been made to *JM* back matter. First, *JM* obituaries will be freely available on the journal webpage in downloadable pdf format. The EIC will work with the ASM historians and the ASM publications director to assess whether a recently deceased member might be recognized through an obituary. Any ASM member may volunteer to write an obituary for a deceased ASM member.

ASM History and ASM Resolutions will now be housed under “More Content” under the OUP website. Book Reviews will no longer be published in *JM*.

(6) Exploration of *Mammalian Species* as Living Documents. An *Ad Hoc* Digital Publications Committee was formed to investigate how best to transition *MS* to a format of real-time updatable species accounts for free and open distribution online. This charge was made to advance the ASM's leadership in digital scholarship about global mammals. *MS* species accounts were the immediate target, but with the recognition that by incentivizing efforts to update species accounts the ASM would also be innovating beyond current academic credit models that only "count" publications once. Two key needs to accomplish these goals have been initially identified: (i) how does the current OUP contract relate to the ability of the ASM to either wholly re-serve or edit existing *MS* accounts?; and (ii) how might current abilities for coining DOIs via platforms such as Zenodo enable the ASM to establish a platform for formal "nano-" or "micro-publications" on mammal natural history and biodiversity? Neither of these questions have been resolved, but a Jan 2024 meeting with OUP representative Fiona McDonald helped to frame the initial conversation. The *Ad Hoc* committee plans to meet via Zoom in May to discuss these issues and generate a report prior to the June meeting of ASM's Board of Directors.

(7) Recent updates to *Journal of Mammalogy* Content.

(i) A new manuscript category "Perspective", often in the form of an invited or approved essay from the EIC that is outside of the normal "Research Article" category and without original data analysis.

(ii) A new manuscript category "Commentary", often in the form of a critique of a previously published paper, followed by an invited response from the original authors if they wish to do so. In all cases, the EIC will follow COPE guidelines in handling this (sometimes delicate) process.

(iii) Reinvigorated "Special Features" category, with a new Special Features editor (Jesse Alston) who will work with the EIC on invitation and processing of SFs. We currently have four Special Features in preparation at different stages and have a goal of publishing two per year.

In total, I expect that these categories will increase overall visibility and interest in *JM*.

Action Items:

I request the following changes to the PAB budget relative to 2024:

(i) \$4000 in funding for Hardship Publication Grants. Note that our applications to this fund were below \$3500 in 2024; I want to ensure that this remains well-funded in the event that it is needed.

(ii) An increase in funds for printing and distributing archive copies of *Mammalian Species* from \$700 to \$770.

(iii) Editor stipends and honoraria are the same as in approved 2024 budget. Additionally, I request that the Board of Directors consider defraying registration for AEs of *JM* and *MS*, the special features editor of *JM*, and the AE for language coordination. The maximum cost of doing so would be \$18,000; however, and in reality, less than 1/3rd of our AEs attend the annual meeting, so that actual costs are unlikely to exceed \$6000.

Respectfully submitted,

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