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Visit the Foundation's web site – www.arborday.org –
for further details of the national tree scheme.

Letter from the editor

First, I would like to wish all readers a Happy New Year. I hope that 2001 will be a fruitful year for conservation, and that real progress can be made in our efforts to conserve biodiversity. It would be wonderful to be able to report more 'good news' stories in the Briefly section, which so often seems to be dominated by tales of species declines and losses.

The year 2000 was successful for *Oryx*, with more papers submitted than in any previous year (at the time of writing, 65 papers had been submitted, compared with 56 in the whole of 1999) – this is a trend we are keen to encourage further. Another piece of good news is that *Oryx* now has an Impact Factor (IF). The IF is a measure of the number of times that peer-reviewed papers have been cited elsewhere in the 2 years following publication. Having an IF is important for a journal because it is often used as an indicator of its quality and standing. The IF for *Oryx* in 1999 (IFs are awarded retrospectively) is 1.133 placing it 43rd out of 88 journals within the ecology category. This is an excellent start for the journal and the editorial team is committed to maintaining and improving the IF in the future.

Of the papers submitted in 1999, around 50 per cent have been published or accepted for publication, and approximately 15 per cent are with authors for revision. Of those published, the average time between submission and publication was 12 months and the average time between submission and acceptance (following revision) for publication was 7.5 months.

In terms of coverage of the areas in which journal submissions are invited, approximately half of the papers published in 2000 presented field research on the status and distribution of threatened species. A small number fell within the following broad categories: review of the status and distribution of individual species or taxonomic groups; planning for species and biodiversity conservation; and the nature and results of practical conservation initiatives by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Most of the remaining papers (around 30 per cent) addressed issues that are not specifically outlined in the scope of the journal, but are nevertheless of relevance to the readership (e.g.

effects of human activity on biodiversity, human-wildlife conflict, implications of forest loss and fragmentation for wildlife conservation, and health implications of the rehabilitation of illegally traded species). Under-represented areas where the editors would be keen to see a wider range of contributions include:

- reviews of conservation policy and legislation at international, national and local levels
- the working of international conservation conventions
- research on the sustainable use of wild species
- the history of conservation, including the role of key people, organizations and initiatives
- planning for species and biodiversity conservation
- results of practical conservation initiatives.

As far as coverage of taxonomic groups is concerned, more than half the papers focus on mammals. A smaller proportion address taxonomic groups such as birds, reptiles, amphibians, plants, trees and insects – there is clearly considerable scope for improving coverage in these areas. In addition, more interdisciplinary papers, including those with a human or social scientific focus would be welcome.

Only one significant change is planned to the structure of *Oryx* in 2001. A new section, **Forum**, is to be introduced. Forum aims to promote lively debate about current and controversial issues. Topics for discussion will be identified by the editors, with opposing views being commissioned from two or more authors and then published as short papers (generally <2000 words). Occasionally, a submitted paper may be considered suitable for publication in Forum, in which case the author's paper, one or more opposing viewpoints and the author's response will be published in the same issue. The Editors welcome suggestions for suitable Forum topics and contributors.

In addition, the existing Opinion section is to be replaced by a Letters section. Readers are invited to continue to respond to material published in previous issues of the journal.

For further details of the coverage of the journal, outlines of the different sections, and guidelines on the preparation of papers for submission to *Oryx*, please see the notes for contributors on the inside back cover.

Camilla Erskine