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Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH

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Editorial policy

The *Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH* was first published in 1928 as the annual report of the Institute, and it has always included some scientific contributions. The *Bulletin* continues to report the activities of the Institute on an annual basis, but the main contents of the journal are more scientific papers. Although the *Bulletin* presents current results and new research projects of the Institute, we would like to include

a growing number of contributions from outside the Institute. The focus of the journal is on ecology and systematics of plants and fungi, but contributions on interactions of plants and animals and on landscape ecology are also welcome. Descriptive and experimental studies of communities, populations, individuals and their interaction with other organisms are all acceptable.

Instructions to authors

The *Bulletin* is published on an annual basis in July (price per volume 40 Sfr). The deadline for submission is the end of February. Manuscripts in English are preferred, but German contributions will also be accepted. Three copies and one disk copy (3¹/₂-inch diskettes; Word, Excel) of the manuscript with all illustrations and tables should be sent with a covering letter to Dr. J. Kollmann, Geobotanisches Institut ETH, Zürichbergstrasse 38, CH-8044 Zürich, Tel. +41-1-632-4307, Fax: +41-1-632-1215, kollmann@geobot.umnw.ethz.ch. Authors must confirm that the manuscript has not been submitted elsewhere. All parts of the manuscript must be typed double-spaced, with margins of 2.5 cm. The style of the manuscript (especially of the references) should be adapted to the last issue of the *Bulletin*. Abbreviations and symbols must be defined when they are first mentioned. The elements of the manuscript should be presented in the conventional order, including up to six keywords. For a description of these elements we refer to the current international standard of scientific papers. Manuscripts are submitted to two reviewers for evaluation of their scientific soundness and significance. Authors will generally be notified of acceptance, rejection, or need for revision within 1–2 months. Fifty offprints are supplied free of charge. Additional reprints may be ordered when authors will receive the proofs for verification.

Preface

PETER J. EDWARDS

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A passing comment from one of our referees while we were preparing this issue of the *Bulletin* gave us pause for thought. The referee was giving his opinion of the article by Urs Weibel on the ecology of the skylark. He liked the paper and had a number of helpful comments for improvement, but wondered whether it was suitable in a publication of a geobotanical institute.

This was a perfectly reasonable comment, but the truth was that it had never occurred to us that a paper about birds was a bit odd in a geobotanical journal. In fact, agroecology is one of our research priorities, and Weibel's project is closely linked with several others concerned with biodiversity in the arable landscape. For example, we have a doctoral student working on how the management of wild flower strips affects plant species diversity (no problem there for our journal), and the link between plant diversity and insect diversity (perhaps not quite so suitable, but probably OK). Urs takes the problem a step further to investigate how wild flower strips affect territory size and diet of skylarks in the arable landscape.

Although this was just a minor incident, it set us thinking about how the content and structure of our research is changing. Like many other research institutes, our work is increasingly interdisciplinary and even transdisciplinary. For example, Andreas Gigon, in collaboration with colleagues from

other institutes, has been working on what he calls "the Blue Lists" – inventories of threatened plant and animal species from the Red Lists for which techniques exist to halt their decline and enhance their populations. In this work, he is concerned, not only with the application of ecology to problems of conservation, but also with how the public perceives the loss of biological diversity. Similarly, within the Swiss National Fund's integrated project on biodiversity, we are working with colleagues from the social sciences who are concerned with such issues as the economic valuation of biodiversity and the political processes by which conservation is achieved. Projects of this kind are conceptually and practically difficult, and require far more discussion and effort than projects which lie wholly within one discipline. In a world where academic evaluation in terms of such things as publications in the top journals and citation record is increasingly important, there is always the lingering worry that the extra effort is not properly appreciated. In any case, where can such work be published? Despite the priority given by funding agencies to interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research, most journals (and especially the "top" journals) publish within the traditional disciplines.

Which brings me back to Weibel's article. Although it would go easily into a journal concerned with animal ecology, we decided

to publish it in our “geobotanical” *Bulletin*, because it is so closely associated with the work of this institute. More generally, and despite the associated difficulties, we welcome the opportunity to participate in inter- and transdisciplinary projects. As an institute within the Department of Environmental Sci-

ences at ETH we see this as an important way in which our research will develop in the future.

Perhaps in the long term, rather than trying to do research which fits the name of the institute, we should change the name of the institute to fit the work which we do!