

Zeitschrift: Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH
Herausgeber: Geobotanisches Institut, ETH Zürich, Stiftung Rübel
Band: 68 (2002)

Vorwort: Editorial
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Download PDF: 09.03.2025

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The *Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH* publishes original articles on the ecology and systematics of plants and fungi, interactions between plants and animals or microorganisms, vegetation and landscape ecology, and issues of nature conservation. Descriptive

and experimental studies are both acceptable. Short communications, preliminary results and new research projects may be presented in the section "Research notes and projects". Manuscripts in English are preferred, but German or French contributions are also welcome.

Instructions to authors

The *Bulletin* is published on an annual basis in July. Manuscripts should be submitted before the end of February. Three paper copies or one paper copy plus an electronic version (preferably pdf format) of the manuscript with all illustrations, tables and appendices should be sent with a covering letter to Dr. S. Güsewell, Geobotanical Institute ETH, Zürichbergstrasse 38, CH-8044 Zürich, Tel. +41-1-632-4307, Fax: +41-1-632-1215, guesewell@geobot.umnw.ethz.ch. Authors must confirm that the manuscript has not been submitted elsewhere. Contributions should not exceed 12 printed pages for original articles and 6 printed pages for research notes or projects. Extensive data tables, coloured figures or methodical details may be included as electronic appendices. Detailed instructions to authors are available under <http://www.geobot.umnw.ethz.ch/publications/periodicals/bulletin.html> or can be obtained from the editor.

Manuscripts are submitted to two reviewers for evaluation of their scientific soundness and clarity of presentation. Authors will generally be notified of acceptance, rejection, or need for revision within 1–2 months. One paper copy and an electronic copy of revised manuscripts should be sent to the editor within one month after this notification. Fifty offprints are supplied free of charge.

Preface

PETER J. EDWARDS & SABINE GÜSEWELL

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No active scientist can be unaware of the revolution that is transforming the way scientific information is published. The trend for authors to submit their papers to journal editors is now well established. As a result, the number of journals and the number of articles published every year have increased exponentially during the last three decades. This enormous quantity of publications forces scientists to be highly selective in their reading. Accordingly, 'being sufficiently read' has become a major concern for authors and an essential criterion in the selection of journals to which manuscripts are submitted. Once published, articles must be brought to the attention of potential readers. The familiar reprints are increasingly being replaced by pdf files which authors can send by e-mail to interested colleagues. The rows of indexing journals which resembled huge telephone directories have already gone and have been replaced by electronic bibliographic databases of astonishing speed and efficiency. Even journal volumes are disappearing from the library shelves, to be replaced by 'e-journals' on the computer screen. Just how quickly this revolution has proceeded has taken even publishers by surprise. However, no-one can yet say what the final result will be; will libraries filled with books become a thing of the past? If so, how long will it take before we work in a completely electronic environment?

This year we announce two new developments which show how the *Bulletin* is adapting to this revolution:

As from this year the *Bulletin of the Geobotanical Institute ETH* will be available as pdf files on the *Bulletin* homepage (<http://www.geobot.umnw.ethz.ch/publications/periodicals/bulletin.html>). It will be possible to download all contributions free of charge. If you prefer this way of accessing the *Bulletin* and no longer wish to receive a hard copy, please let us know. A smaller print run will help us to reduce our costs. The *Bulletin* will also be available on the web site of Opulus Press and included in their search system, so that scientists who did not know about our journal will be given the opportunity to discover it. We thank Opulus Press, and in particular Joost van der Maarel, for offering us this facility.

Another feature of modern scientific literature is that it is mostly in English. In 1996, when we first published the *Bulletin* in its new format, we decided that, in keeping with the international nature of science, papers should whenever possible be in English. This decision has led to occasional criticism from readers who pointed to the long and distinguished tradition of the Stiftung Rübél in Switzerland, and regretted that publications were no longer in one of the Swiss national languages. In fact, we have always accepted German or French contributions – indeed, there is one in German in this volume. If you wish to submit an article in either of these languages (unfortunately we are not able to process Italian manuscripts) we shall be pleased to receive it. We believe that the co-existence of several

languages within the *Bulletin* is appropriate as it reflects the diversity of the readership our journal aims to address. Therefore, as from next year, all contributions will have two summaries: one in English and one in German or French. Authors will find details of the procedure in the instructions for authors on the *Bulletin* homepage.

We hope that these new developments will not only broaden the readership of the *Bulletin* by making it more easily accessible, but that they will also make it more attractive for authors from within and outside the Geobotanical Institute to submit manuscripts to us. Last but not least, we hope that both our old and our new readers will find useful material in the nine contributions appearing in this year's issue.