

African Herp News

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A series of renewal reminders were sent to all members whose subscription was due to lapse in 2010 or had already lapsed. 127 members (both African and international) have not yet renewed and these can still be pursued. Only 9 members actively expressed wishing to discontinue their memberships.

Renewal reminders for 2011 will be sent out shortly after the conference (first sent 24 Jan 2011). There is scope to attract many more members, especially students.

There were some initial distribution problems after this had been handed over to UNISA (people not receiving copies of the journal or waiting a long time) as well as labelling problems (for example, no name used), but this seems to be improving.

During 2010 the new HAA website was also launched and this is an improvement on the previous one in terms of layout and use of graphics, however some additional work on the site is necessary, including giving members the ability to sign-up or renew membership online. Also, there is no mention of *African Herp News* on the site.

JEANNE TARRANT

JOURNAL EDITOR'S REPORT

This report covers the period where I was acting editor (Feb 2009 – October 2009) and my first term as editor (October 2009 to time of writing in December 2010).

I inherited African Journal of Herpetology (AJH) in good working order from previous editors who had provided an excellent grounding for this scholarly journal of the Herpetological Association of Africa (HAA). Without this grounding it would not have been possible to build the journal and I am indebted to all previous editors. Maintaining the *status quo* for AJH would have continued to produce an excellent product, but it would have retained a heavy burden on the editor to also act as publisher and distributor. In this respect, I wanted to eliminate the publishing burden for myself and future editors allowing for more time to be dedicated to editing quality content both for members of the HAA and a wider academic audience.

Taylor & Francis Publishing AJH - Following negotiations which started with the previous AJH editor (Alex Flemming) in 2008, the HAA committee voted to accept an offer from the Taylor & Francis (hereafter T&F) publishing group (<http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/>) to publish the African Journal of Herpetology (AJH) and a contract was signed by HAA chair, Aaron Bauer, in December 2009.

In the past 12 months, many changes have occurred to AJH and I attempt to summarise the highlights here. The style of the journal has changed to conform to the shape of other T&F publications, while retaining the familiar formatting of AJH. This includes movement to a single column, and inclusion of publishers' logos. The cover now has a colour image and a non-political, more herpetological, map of Africa. The editorial board was revamped with new members being responsible for promotion of AJH, resolution of any disputes and judging of the "Don Broadley Prize for Excellence in African

Herpetology”. The current content has become available online via the [T&F website](#), and is available free to all members via a password which was supplied in July 2010. In addition to the current issue, members can access articles which have been accepted and appear online early. The last month of 2010 saw the completion of the scanning of the entire back catalogue of AJH and Journal of the Herpetological Association of Africa. Every article of every issue is freely available to HAA members right back to Volume 1 (1965). This is something that I think should be of great interest to all members and I encourage you to make use of this facility. **Do not distribute pdfs that you download.** The HAA will lose revenue if members distribute pdfs and so individual members will lose access if they are found to be distributing journal contents when they are not authors. As each pdf downloaded bears the members name, it is not difficult to detect abuse. There is an amazing variety of material to enjoy: from an unavoidable late start by J.D. Visser in July 1965 (JHAA 2:17-20) to a revision of East African *Melanoceps* by Broadley et al in 2006 (AJH 55:95-112).

T&F have taken the management of all subscriptions to the journal. HAA members should note that this does not apply to individuals, only to libraries and institutional members. If you are an individual member of the HAA you receive the journal (paper and electronic access) as part of your membership. Active sales of subscriptions to the journal, as well as the sale of individual articles, are ongoing and T&F expect these numbers to rise steadily over the coming years. Increasing subscriptions and sales represents revenue to HAA so please encourage your institution to subscribe if they don’t already.

Lastly, AJH switched over to an online submissions base (ScholarOne) in April 2010. This has considerably decreased the editorial work of tracking articles by email. It has also allowed the editors to conduct “double-blind” reviewing where authors’ names are not disclosed to reviewers and reviewers’ names are not disclosed to authors. When submitting articles, authors are asked to provide additional information and assurances to the editor, these include: adherence to AJH ethical guidelines (drawn up by the editorial team), declaration of conflict of interest, application for entrance to the “Don Broadley Prize for Excellence in African Herpetology” and whether the manuscript is suitable for a press release. Two press releases have already been made.

The ScholarOne system produces its own metrics which will become a feature of future reports by the AJH editor. The following metrics (Tables 1) relate to the last 9 months (32 submissions which included 2 review articles, 23 original articles, and 7 short communications) of activity for AJH on ScholarOne.

Table 1: ScholarOne metrics for the last nine months worth of submissions to AJH on ScholarOne

ScholarOne metric	Days
Average Time to First Decision	24
Average Referee Turnaround time	21
Average Time to Final Decision	33
Proportion Accepted	43%

This compares favourably with metrics for the previous 14 months (from Feb 2009) in which only 25 manuscripts were received. However, metrics from this 14 month period were submitted to the Committee on Scholarly Publishing in South Africa (CSPiSA) together with answers to a questionnaire. This resulted in the recommendation by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) that AJH remain on the list of accredited journals.

Associate editors - Work on the journal has not been achieved by the editor alone but through a committed editorial team. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank former Associate Editors (AEs) Aaron Bauer, Krystal Tolley, and Brian Henen for their outstanding service to the HAA through acting as editorial associates of AJH. Krystal, Aaron, and Brian joined the editorial team in 2005, when Graham Alexander was editor. Krystal and Aaron served until 2009, while Brian served until 2011. Two new AEs were appointed in 2009: David Blackburn (University of Kansas) and Eli Greenbaum (University of Texas). AEs take on an important and vital role investing a lot of time in reading manuscripts, reading reviewer's reports and making recommendations. Currently AJH does not have enough AEs and is looking for more. If you would like to be considered, please contact the editor.

Metrics - As many members will be aware, the world of scientific publishing is now largely governed by metrics. Since Graham Alexander got AJH admitted onto Thompson/Reuters ISI in 2005, AJH has received an Impact Factor (IF) representing the number of cited articles from the journal in the previous 2 years. Having taken 2 years to become effective, this widely used journal metric has now produced three IF scores: 2007 = 0.618; 2008 = 0.600; 2009 = 0.455. The trend is probably too small and short to be interpreted meaningfully, but it is going in the wrong direction which is not in the interest of the journal or association. It is hoped that by placing the journal online, changing publication months to January and June (instead of June and December) this will increase the metrics of AJH. HAA members can make a difference by citing relevant recent works from the journal in their publications and by publishing articles that are highly citable. From an editorial standpoint the best way of increasing the IF is to have the contents of interest to a wider scientific audience. I believe that this is also in the interest of the HAA, its members and authors and readers of AJH.

As we reach Volume 60 in 2011, I hope you will contribute to the success of the HAA's journal for the future, as well as being able to appreciate all the work from past Editors, Associate Editors and Authors that have made the outstanding publication that we have today.

JOHN MEASEY
