Thanks and Welcome: Another Changing of the Guard

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1Co-Editors, Journal of Herpetology

With this first issue of Volume 53, the Journal of Herpetology welcomes John Rowe and Chris Distel as the new Co-Editors and says goodbye to the outgoing Co-Editors Tiffany Doan and Paul Bartelt. To ensure a smooth transition, Drs. Rowe and Distel have been handling all manuscripts submitted since 1 January; Drs. Doan and Bartelt will finish handling older manuscripts and assist with other editorial aspects for the next year.

We begin by saying goodbye to the outgoing Co-Editors. Serving as Co-Editors has been a great honor—we inherited a strong journal and hope we have been good stewards of it. The Journal of Herpetology remains strongly international in scope, as it published research conducted in 59 countries during our tenure (Fig. 1). We could not have done this without the help of so many others. We express our deep thanks to our faithful Associate Editors—they are worth their weights in gold! They find reviewers for each manuscript we assign to them and provide thorough, thoughtful additional reviews for each, saving us countless hours of work. We thank the anonymous expert reviewers who agree to donate time from their already overloaded schedules to provide careful, insightful reviews of manuscripts. We thank the many authors who decide to submit their manuscripts (the results of their careful, intense work) to the Journal of Herpetology. We have enjoyed working with you in your efforts to incorporate our suggestions to strengthen your manuscripts. Finally, we thank members of the Journal's Editorial Board who have stepped in at a moment's notice when we have needed an additional review or direction in editing a manuscript.

While maintaining the strong traditions of the Journal, we also initiated some changes, some cosmetic and others more substantial. For example, we made some small changes in the color scheme of its pages (cosmetic) and also began a practice of “continuous publication” (substantial). We consider this second change to be quite important, because it is helping us speed the publication of accepted manuscripts, getting new information out to other herpetologists that will help them in their research. Another substantial change, explained in an editorial published in the December 2018 issue of the Journal, is a new policy adopted by the SSAR Board of Directors in July 2018 to help ensure Transparency and Openness in Publication, which started with new submissions in January 2019.

One frustration that we and our Associate Editors have had is the ongoing difficulty of finding colleagues willing to provide expert reviews of manuscripts. We understand that everyone’s schedule is overloaded, but peer review is the sine qua non of scientific advancement; although tedious, the peer review process ensures that we publish manuscripts that are of high quality. The herpetological community needs you! We strongly encourage our readers to accept invitations to serve as reviewers.

Our tenure as Co-Editors has been challenging, rewarding, and fun, but 5 yr is enough fun for us and we are happy to turn over the reins to our colleagues. Every population thrives on diversity, and we look forward with anticipation to the new ideas and insights the new Co-Editors will provide to the Journal. Tiffany Doan and Paul Bartelt

It is with gratefulness and humility that we receive the role of Co-Editors from Tiffany and Paul. They, along with the Editorial Board and SSAR leadership, addressed substantial and ongoing challenges in a time when objective, scholarly information is both more easily accessible and met with more skepticism by non-scholars than it once was. Their recent Transparency and Openness in Publication policy is an important and timely update to existing practices.

Digital media and communication have certainly expanded the availability of much scholarship over the past 2 decades. Tiffany deftly navigated the relatively new landscape of character-limited social media. Rather than viewing social media as a threat to the Journal’s contents, she capitalized on rapidly diversifying platforms, such as Twitter, to enhance the visibility of the Journal. We plan to continue communication through both traditional and novel outlets in hopes of making herpetological research more approachable to budding scholars and more visible to non-scholars.

We will also steward the rigor, style, and scope of the Journal to best meet the needs of its established readership. We welcome your ideas, input, and concerns and are appreciative of your ongoing support of the Journal and of SSAR.

Chris Distel and John Rowe

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DOI: 10.1670/18-170