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»Prehistory« of WILDLIFE BIOLOGY

In 1971 the Nordic Council for Wildlife Research (NKV) was founded and the idea of starting a new journal emerged already at that time. Some NKV-members felt that scientists, especially from the Nordic countries, needed better possibilities of publishing internationally in wildlife ecology.

National, regional or even local interests in publishing details for the benefit of non-scientists as opposed to the wish of achieving knowledge of a more general bearing for understanding wildlife ecology were discussed, and in 1976 the Council in principle decided to start a scientific, Nordic journal on wildlife research.

Subsequently, the Council investigated the possibilities of financing the journal. They also carried out investigations to find out to what extent potential scientific writers were interested in publishing in a joint Nordic journal as compared to publishing in the national or institutional reports which were available at that time. The Council also looked for editorial competence and capacity.

It soon became clear that it would not be easy to realise the idea. In 1979, wildlife biologists in Sweden held a meeting which strongly supported the idea, but some biologists, e.g. in Finland, remained unconvinced of the soundness of the idea and they preferred to continue publishing in the national publication forums. The national and institutional reports were also considered necessary for maintaining international exchange agreements with other institutions and/or libraries. It seemed difficult to finance a new journal without using at least some of the funds available for national publications.

In the early 1980's no major break-throughs had been made and the idea was taken off the agenda until 1989 when the debate was resumed. This time, the immediate cause was that the Norwegian reorganisation of wildlife research, including publishing, offered a new opportunity to investigate the whole matter once more. Experiences from contemporary wildlife publishing, especially in Denmark, was studied and discussed. In 1991, the council held a meeting with the Managing Editor of Oikos about the art of successfully running a journal. The attitude to the whole idea was now much more positive than earlier. To a still higher degree, wildlife ecology in the Nordic countries had become an integrated part of international scientific discussions. It seemed more easily acceptable this time to reallocate some funds from national to international publishing even though there still were some problems to solve.

In May 1993, NKV decided to take the full financial responsibility for starting a journal. The Council could do this mainly by minimising research grants to coordinated Nordic projects in the budget for the nearest future. From then on, everything went smoothly, from appointing the Editor-in-Chief, the Editorial Board etc. to the emergence of this very first issue which you hold in your hand and which I do hope you will appreciate and enjoy.

Ingemar Ahlén
Member of NKV 1971-1994

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