

Letter from the Editors

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Letter from the Editors

This issue of the *Journal* marks the completion of a long process involving two institutions and their respective editors and editorial committees. The first discussions on merging the *Journal of the East Africa Natural History Society and National Museums of Kenya* and *Utafiti* started in 1991. With minor variations of name, the *JEANHS & NMK* has been published by the Society since 1909, with little or no editorial involvement of the National Museum of Kenya; *Utafiti* was from its inception, in 1988, purely a Museum affair. It soon became apparent that both journals catered for the same readership, and had very much the same aims and objectives. With both organisations situated on the same compound—on Museum Hill in Nairobi—and with our collaborative links growing ever closer, this separation no longer made sense. Rather than competing with each other for both contributions and readership, editors on both sides, with the blessing of their respective institutions, decided to publish the two periodicals jointly, under the new, less long-winded, title *Journal of East African Natural History*.

What do we want to publish? Any articles on natural history, relevant to the eastern African region, will be welcome. As pointed out in the letter of the Chairman of the EANHS, 'natural history' should be interpreted in the light of modern interest in biodiversity. Contributions that add to our knowledge of the status and conservation of biological diversity in the region will therefore be especially welcome. These can include studies at a genetic level, for example, extending old concepts of natural history into modern-day molecular techniques. Papers on the interaction of man and wildlife and on ethnobiology will continue to be considered.

We want our journal to be different from other major international publications, in the sense that it will report on active work relevant to the eastern African region. There will be more room for basic data, such as check-lists for a study area or lists of vernacular plant names. We think this is important, as such information is often lost or buried in the 'grey literature'. However, we do not intend to compromise on either quality or content. As in any international publication, all manuscripts will be peer-reviewed in accordance with international standards. We hope the result will be a journal that is informative, interesting and above all, useful.

The editorial board of the *Journal of East African Natural History* consists of three members each from the NMK and EANHS, ensuring a broad range of expertise and allowing for faster processing of manuscripts. The two co-editors will, as has been the case during the preparation of this issue, be chosen to represent the two partners in this venture.

Since the *JEANHS & NMK* had been in existence much longer than its new partner, it was decided that both the title and the volume numbers would follow from the EANHS publication. Due to unexpected delays, the booklet you are holding now is Volume 83, Part 1, technically the first issue of 1994. Most of the material for 1994's second and last issue is ready, and we hope to make good any delays by the end of 1996.

One of the consequences of the merger, and of the resulting new format, is that new types of contributions will be possible. The format of the old *JEANHS & NMK*, with all contributions published as separate booklets, only allowed for the publication of longer contributions.

Under its new title the *Journal* will be published as two parts per year, of approximately 100 pages each. In this new format, there will be room for book reviews, short notes and letters to the editors on general biodiversity matters or comments on recently published contributions. Whereas none of these have been included in this issue, we are confident that contributions from our readership will allow us to change this starting from the first part of Volume 84.

There will be no page charges for the *Journal of East African Natural History*—there were none for either *Utafiti* or *JEANHS & NMK*. We value your scientific contribution more than any possible financial contribution, and certainly do not want to discourage or even exclude valuable potential contributions by insisting on page charges. The *Journal* will be run as a non-profit venture, and it is the responsibility of the joint editorial committee, with the help of both parent organisations, to ensure that funds for timely and efficient publication are available. We would therefore welcome financial contributions from prospective authors: their assistance will help maintain the publication on a solid footing. Whilst such help is very much needed it will, of course, not compromise our decision on whether or not to publish.

We hope you will have as interesting a time reading the *Journal of East African Natural History* as we have had while editing and producing it. We eagerly await your contributions, to enable us to continue to bring together information on the biodiversity of this region.

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