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# Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics

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## Editorial

### Integrative studies in plant ecology, evolution and systematics: Sharpening the focus

For the first time in 2012, *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* (PPEES) will publish six issues instead of four. This increase is a sign of the success that PPEES has achieved as a leading journal in ecology and plant sciences. With an impact factor of 4.5, it is now ranked in the top 15% of journals in ecology (rank 20 of 130 listed journals in this category in 2010, 14/129 in 2009) and the top 10% of journals in plant sciences (13/188). The increased number of issues should allow us not only to publish more articles, but also to improve our service as one of the few scientific journals providing space for longer articles.

As publication costs rise, journals are increasingly applying strict page and citation limits. This makes it more difficult to publish articles that build on the work of large consortia (Kueffer et al., 2011), contain detailed natural history information (Lindenmayer and Likens, 2011), or combine a conceptual review with a data-based meta-analysis (Kueffer et al., 2010). However, as the problems tackled by biologists become more complex, and ever larger data-sets become available, such papers will be increasingly important in plant research (Kueffer et al., 2011; Lindenmayer and Likens, 2011). Indeed, synthesis plays an increasingly important role in enhancing scientific understanding, especially of complex ecological and environmental problems (Hampton and Parker, 2011).

PPEES aims to provide an outlet for larger research articles of various formats – including full-length reviews, essay reviews, longer research articles, meta-analyses, or a combination of these – from both the applied and pure plant sciences. The journal also strives to provide a platform for contributions that are likely to stimulate scientific debate. To be considered for publication, manuscripts must provide novel and thought-provoking perspectives on important themes of current interest and debate. These can be based on primary research (including observational studies), meta-analysis of existing datasets, or theoretical and conceptual work. Articles can stem from the research of large consortia (e.g. Gugerli et al., 2008) or summarize long-term, place-based research from a particular study site (Billick and Price, 2010). They can also provide new conceptual perspectives on important topics, as did the influential articles by Chazdon (2003) on tropical forest recovery and by Thuiller et al. (2008) on species distribution modelling. Longer synthesis papers are of particular interest for the journal, as they fill a niche that is often avoided by other journals. The literature review by Klimesova and Klimes (2007) shows how perspective-type articles can successfully build on natural-history information. Additionally, papers by Cochard et al. (2008),

on the vulnerability of coastal ecosystems to the 2004 tsunami in the Indian Ocean, and by Caujapé-Castells et al. (2010), on plant conservation on oceanic islands, illustrate the value of reviews that build extensively on the less accessible grey literature, which can be a particularly valuable approach within an applied context, if carefully done.

PPEES has two formats designed especially to promote the mission of the journal. The first is the special issue, dedicated to an emerging topic of high relevance to plant science or conservation. The editorial board is always pleased to receive proposals for such issues. The three, most recent, special issues – on alien plant invasions in mountains (Dietz, 2005), novel developments in spatial ecological modelling (Moloney and Jeltsch, 2008), and comparative research on oceanic islands (Kueffer and Fernández-Palacios, 2010) – have all been highly influential and have led to new international research activities, including global networks on mountain invasions ([www.miren.ethz.ch](http://www.miren.ethz.ch)) and plant conservation on oceanic islands ([www.bgci.org/ourwork/islandsnetwork](http://www.bgci.org/ourwork/islandsnetwork)). The second format specifically promoting the mission of the journal is the in-depth review on the biology of an individual species, such as the recent article by Jung et al. (2011) on *Colchicum autumnale*. In the future we plan to focus this section primarily on ‘model species’, including species that are flagship species for conservation, invasive species of particular concern, or species that are frequently used as models in ecological research. Prospective authors for an in-depth species review should contact the editorial office of PPEES before starting to write a contribution and enquire whether their planned manuscript would be of interest to PPEES.

PPEES is not supported by a large scientific society, and its success is therefore especially gratifying. However, this has only been possible thanks to the commitment of the editorial board and the contributing authors. We would like to take the opportunity to welcome new editors that have recently joined the board – Salvatore Cozzolino, Claus Holzapfel, Florian Jeltsch, and Alexander Kocyan – and sincerely thank all reviewers and editors for making the special publications possible.

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