

EDITORIAL

Making the applied research that practitioners need and want accessible

Exchanging applied ecological and management information is the key to achieving real-world impact for mitigating the environmental impacts of anthropogenic activities. A large proportion of applied ecological information produced by researchers, ecological practitioners, and natural resource managers is not currently being shared effectively and we believe that more could be done to increase the flow of information between the different sectors of the community and help to close the widely discussed research–implementation gap (e.g., Born, Boreux, & Lawes, 2009; Esler, Prozesky, Sharma, & McGeoch, 2010; Knight et al., 2008).

Without effective sharing we repeat past errors, causing applied projects to be inefficient. If information and lessons learned are lost, then future projects are destined to re-invent solutions to the same problems and correct the same errors. Yet, this does not need to be the case. The mission of the British Ecological Society (BES) is to advance ecology and make it count, and this means ensuring that it has real-world impact on policy and applied management.

1 | THE NEED FOR A NEW JOURNAL AND PUBLISHING PHILOSOPHY: ENTER ECOLOGICAL SOLUTIONS AND EVIDENCE

Ecological Solutions and Evidence is a new peer-reviewed open access journal publishing articles with direct relevance for the management of biological resources and ecological systems. We have considered all aspects of the journal to encourage contributions from people in a range of ecological roles, especially those working on the front lines of applied ecology, environmental management, and conservation.

The BES publishes the world's premier applied ecology journal (*Journal of Applied Ecology*), which provides a high-profile venue for authors to publish research that moves applied research theory forward. Many high-quality, robust studies do not fit into its broad scope because they focus on a single place or taxa, confirm and supplement previous studies, or are of interest to a relatively small community. These are exactly the type of studies that are important for practitioners who need information to effectively design and implement on-the-ground applied projects, and, therefore, this research deserves to be published in a journal that places emphasis on the management

relevance. Authors should continue to submit their best, cutting-edge or broadly applicable research to *Journal of Applied Ecology*. Papers that do not fit its broad scope but still are highly relevant to applied management will have the option of being considered for a broad applied journal that is open access through transfer to *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*. To facilitate a streamlined transfer of manuscripts, along with the reviewer and editor comments, we have a referral system in place from *Journal of Applied Ecology* to offer authors an alternative option for publication in *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*.

Ecological Solutions and Evidence represents a new and cutting-edge approach to fostering communication among practitioners, policy makers, and academic researchers. The Editorial Board consists of both applied researchers working in academia and practitioners in a range of roles—consultants, NGOs, and government agencies.

To further facilitate dialogue between practitioners and academics, we have introduced new article types. In addition to typical Research Articles and Reviews that are the bread and butter of any journal, we will publish article types that will facilitate much-needed conversations between practitioners, applied researchers, and other stakeholders. We will publish Data Articles that describe and detail datasets with applied relevance, thus giving additional value to the data that are collected from applied projects. More importantly we are introducing what we call From Practice articles, which are short-form articles with a flexible format and can communicate anything practitioners feel is important to applied management, including case studies, best practices, lessons learned, and expert opinion pieces.

Ecological Solutions and Evidence will be an open access journal because paywalls can be a barrier for practitioners who are often not affiliated with a research institution. Two levels of article processing charges (APCs) are in place, one for regular Research Articles and Reviews, and a much-reduced APC for the shorter From Practice and Data Articles. While the APCs can present a barrier for those without research funding, we have instituted ways to overcome this hurdle. In addition to standard waiver policies for authors from low-income countries, we have other support options in place for articles from practitioners who are unable to contribute the APC, including a BES-funded APC pot.

We have also put a lot of thought into making the article preparation, submission, and peer-review process as easy as possible for those

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who are less familiar with journal publishing. The author guidelines are as short and simple as possible, with just a few key requirements for article structure and only essential information requested at the first submission stage. The journal is also supported by editorial office staff who are familiar with the ecological management sector and who are on hand to help support and guide practitioner authors.

2 | A BROADER INITIATIVE TO CONNECT PRACTITIONERS AND INFORMATION

Peer-reviewed journals are only a small part of the solution to close the research–implementation gap (see Hulme, 2014). A multitude of information sources other than journal articles are commonly used to inform on-the-ground management design and implementation (e.g., Cook, Carter, Fuller, & Hockings, 2012), and this variety of information sources are not currently captured by traditional journals, and are often not actually available or easily found online. For this reason, we have placed *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* at the centre of a new information repository called Applied Ecology Resources (AER).

Applied information has value beyond the individual projects for which it was gathered, and maximizing the value of this information means that it should be available now and in the future. Furthermore, project design efficacy requires that all available information be assessed to ensure effective use of limited applied management finances; but how can this be achieved in a world where time is scarce and most information sharing is limited to immediate networks? AER is the BES's new approach to preserving, sharing, and communicating the lessons learned from applied environmental management projects. AER is a dynamic online information repository, designed to facilitate information exchange for anyone involved in the management or monitoring of natural systems. Promoting evidence-based decision making, AER will serve as a storehouse of applied ecological information bridging scientific research to grey literature. AER will contain a wide range of documents such as research summaries, open access journal articles, stakeholder reports, and case studies. It will also support information written in several languages and supply an English-language summary for any non-English documents.

AER will be transformational for applied management and environmental policy development by tripartite guiding philosophy for applied information:

Preserve. Share. Discover.

AER will *preserve* information for the long term by archiving and indexing documents with a permanent identifier (DOI). It will provide a place to quickly and easily *share* information—either through uploading documents that practitioner and academic ecologists produce through day-to-day work, or by submitting articles for peer review and publication in *Ecological Solutions and Evidence*. Finally, AER will make it much easier to discover management-relevant information by indexing with enhanced metadata that will help to make the information more discoverable both on the AER platform and through search engines.

Ecological Solutions and Evidence is essential to the success of AER because we believe that overcoming the divide between academic research and grey literature can be achieved only if they are found side by side. Furthermore, when information seekers search AER using keywords of interest, we believe that project design is best served by evaluating a continuum of information sources from peer-reviewed articles to research summaries to project reports and case studies. The design of applied projects can then incorporate a variety of information sources, yielding best-practice solutions that are the outcome of a journey from case studies and agency reports up to the most cutting-edge research.

3 | THE FUTURE FOR KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE IN APPLIED ECOLOGY

We live in a world awash with information that can guide how we manage ecological systems. However, so much of this information is lost, to the point that workers within large organizations are unable to find relevant information produced in-house, much less locate information from projects carried out by organizations elsewhere. We believe that AER and *Ecological Solutions and Evidence* will become the information storehouse for applied ecological management that allows truly global sharing of project successes. This new publishing model will go a long way to overcoming the chasm that separates academic research and applied practice, and we are excited to see its potential realized.

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