



Conservation Letters

A journal of the Society for Conservation Biology

FAQs for Authors

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Overview

What is *Conservation Letters*?

Conservation Letters is a new scientific journal publishing empirical and theoretical research with significant implications for the conservation of biological diversity. The journal welcomes submissions across the biological and social sciences – especially interdisciplinary submissions – that advance pragmatic goals as well as scientific understanding. Manuscripts will be published on a rapid communications schedule and therefore should be current and topical. Research articles should clearly articulate the significance of their findings for conservation policy and practice.

Conservation Letters welcome studies in all biomes (marine, terrestrial, and freshwater), ecosystems, and cultural settings, and will strive for balanced coverage of each.

Why another new journal?

We decided to start this journal for three reasons. First, conservation science draws on knowledge, tools and interactions between many disciplines – biogeography, ecology, evolution, mathematics, economics, psychology and anthropology among them. While the past two decades have witnessed an explosion of conservation-related publications, none has set about to represent the full range of problems and perspectives that these disciplines bring to bear.

Second, conservation is a crisis discipline. We need answers to pressing problems, and we need them soon. Hence *Conservation Letters* is a forum for the rapid publication of the most novel research that will transform our perspective on important issues.

Third, conservation is an explicitly applied discipline: research needs to be geared for implementation within entrenched socio-political, economic and administrative realities that can't be changed by science alone. Consequently, publication in *Conservation Letters* requires that all papers clearly articulate the implications of their findings for conservation policy and practice.

Conservation Letters will ensure that manuscripts are reviewed without delay and that accepted articles are published quickly. For all articles, we aim to make first decisions within 6 weeks and strive for submission-to-publication times of 4 to 6 months. As the inaugural editorial team, we are committed to delivering constructive review and transparent decisions. We are genuinely excited by the growth in our discipline and hope that this journal can elevate its quality, impact and relevance.

What article types does *Conservation Letters* publish?

Letters: novel findings with high relevance for practice or policy. Format is IMRAD and data should be previously unpublished.

Mini-Reviews: overviews of emerging subjects that merit urgent coverage or succinct syntheses of important topics that are rarely encountered in the mainstream literature. Format is usually IMRAD.

Policy Perspectives: brief essays for a general audience on issues related to conservation and society. Perspectives do not contain formal sections, although mention of methods may be appropriate where necessary to inform the reader. The latter should be quite brief. Emphasis is on the scientific insight and what it means for policy.

Precedents that will be familiar to many can be found in *Science*, *Nature*, *TREE*, *Ecology Letters*, and elsewhere, but do not necessarily incorporate all the elements of interdisciplinarity and applicability that *Conservation Letters* seeks to foster. We are now attempting to compile a library of model articles as a benchmark.

Please consult Author Guidelines at <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=1755-263X&site=1> for word count, illustration count, format and style.

What is the difference between *Conservation Letters* and *Conservation Biology*?

Although *Conservation Biology* and *Conservation Letters* are sister journals, the likelihood of one paper being equally suitable for both is small. As a vehicle for information that needs rapid dissemination in order to address urgent threats or impending policy debates, *Conservation Letters* is a venue for brief and telegraphic communications that point to avenues for action and can be read, at least in part, by non-specialists. As a vehicle for suggestive findings and challenges to theory that will influence the priorities of fellow researchers, *Conservation Letters* is a clearinghouse for the best thinking across disciplines on how conservation efforts can be more effective on the ground. *Conservation Biology* welcomes many of these qualities in a submission, but does not make any of them a requirement for publication. In addition, *Conservation Biology* publishes longer, more thoroughgoing explorations of data and methods. Although the niche distinction between the two journals is premised on much more than fast turnaround times, *Conservation Letters* is the right choice for early observations and breaking news.

Authors who submit a manuscript not suitable for one of these journals for reasons cited are encouraged to submit to the other.

Does *Conservation Letters* publish special issues or sections?

We do not now publish special issues, but will consider sections or groups of papers devoted to a topic. These could be organized by an individual or as output from a meeting. Each paper submitted will go through the standard *Conservation Letters* review process and must be of sufficiently high quality to merit publication independently. Those accepted will be published together where possible. We remain committed to timely publication of individual manuscripts, however, even when submitted as part of a group.

What is the frequency and page extent?

The journal will initially publish 6 issues per year in one volume. Early issues will probably contain 6-7 articles, with a target of 8-10 articles per issue by year end. Articles are published online as ready, in order to improve turnaround for time-sensitive material.

What are the subscription rates?

We are pleased to say that in the first three years of publication (2008-2010), the journal will be **free to all** to invite a wide audience, build a readership, and encourage citations. Thereafter library pricing will be determined by market standards as measured by usage and page extent. Individual subscriptions are available to members of the Society for Conservation Biology.

Submission and review

How do I submit a paper?

Please read author guidelines at <http://www.wiley.com/bw/submit.asp?ref=1755-263X&site=1> before submitting to avoid delays in processing your paper. Submissions should be uploaded to our ScholarOne Manuscripts site: <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/conl>. If you are unfamiliar with the system or encountering problems with your upload, don't hesitate to contact Managing Editor Jen Mahar <jmahar@wiley.com> for assistance.

Who will evaluate my manuscript?

A Senior Editor selects the Editor who will handle your manuscript according to the Editor's interests and expertise. We strongly encourage authors to recommend Editors at submission, but cannot promise that the Editor(s) selected will in fact be assigned.

How do Editors decide which submissions merit external review?

Editors consider the following five criteria when determining whether a manuscript merits external review:

1. **Completeness.** The submission is appropriately formatted, clearly presented, and includes all required components.
2. **Rigorous methods.** The submission has no obvious methods or data-quality issues that would preclude eventual publication.
3. **Novelty.** The submission does not merely replicate or reaffirm previous work.
4. **Policy relevance.** The submission has substantial implications for important conservation policy questions, and clearly articulates how its findings will inform conservation policy and practice.
5. **General interest.** The submission's novelty and policy relevance will likely interest a diverse audience.

How are reviewers selected?

Authors are asked to recommend reviewers, and may in turn ask that certain people be excluded from consideration as reviewers. The Editor then selects reviewers based on his or her knowledge of the field, author suggestions, and an extensive reviewer database organized by keyword.

How many reviewers will be assigned to my manuscript?

We encourage three reviews wherever possible, but understand that in some cases common sense will suggest two. ScholarOne Manuscripts is configured to accept both scenarios.

What is the timeline for review (from submission to decision)?

The Editorial Board is currently averaging 30 days from submission to decision, and 91% of all submissions in the past 12 months have had a final decision within 60 days, inclusive of major revisions.

If I've been asked to revise my manuscript, how do I resubmit it?

Revisions are uploaded by authors to ScholarOne Manuscripts and then forwarded to the Editor for consideration. In the case of *minor* revisions, the Editor alone generally reviews changes to the manuscript, determines whether the revised manuscript merits publication (or requires further revisions), and makes a recommendation to the Editors-in-Chief. In the case of *major* revisions, the Editor generally returns the manuscript to the original reviewers for a second look; based on this last round of feedback, the Editor then renders a decision to the EiCs.

What if I need additional time to revise my manuscript?

In order to facilitate the turnaround times that *Conservation Letters* promises its authors, revisions are due within 15-30 days of an Editor's decision. If you cannot accommodate that timeframe, you may contact conservationletters@wiley.com for an extension. Provided that a delayed resubmission will not undermine the merit of the manuscript from either a scientific or policy standpoint, an extension will normally be granted. The new deadline will be noted in ScholarOne Manuscripts by the Managing Editor.

Who makes the final decision regarding the fate of a manuscript under review?

After evaluating reviewer remarks, the Editor makes a publishing decision and conveys it to the EiC. All decisions are reviewed by the EiC and the Senior Editor to ensure that they are in aggregate fair and consistent, but in all but the most unusual circumstances, the Editor's recommendation will stand. Reviewers should feel free to recommend one of the following options to the Editor when submitting reports:

- Accept
- Provisionally accept with minor revision
- Return
- Major revision
- Reject without invitation to resubmit

Accept implies that the manuscript *as submitted* is publishable in the journal. Authors may still have an opportunity to make minor revisions occasioned by reviewer suggestions or queries, if desired.

Provisionally accept with minor revision is a presumption of acceptance *after* the authors have made minor revisions in conformity with reviewer requirements. Papers in this category will rarely if ever require a second round of review.

Return (reject without review) is invoked when – based on a preliminary screening – a manuscript is determined to be incomplete or inappropriate for the Journal (see Question 10 above for screening criteria).

Major revision indicates that the manuscript is not publishable and will require significant work on the authors' part to bring it up to Journal standards. This category is reserved for work of real promise or interest where we have obtained constructive suggestions from reviewers on how to strengthen the manuscript. Authors will be asked to re-write their papers on the understanding that the revision may be re-reviewed.

Reject means that, pursuant to review, the Editor has determined that the submission is not publishable in *Conservation Letters*. If the Editor believes that the manuscript has merit, he or she may at this juncture want to recommend an alternate journal better suited to the work.

All decision categories allow the Editor to provide comments to the authors, including reviewer remarks and suggestions.

Under what conditions is it appropriate to ask for fast-track review?

Manuscripts are appropriate for fast-tracking if they either:

- Address a conservation issue of national or global significance for which a delay of an extra week or two might be critical. An example might be the identification of a rapidly spreading disease. We expect this to be rarely applicable.
- Contain information so time-sensitive that standard review and publication processes would miss the window of time during which this information could usefully inform policy deliberations and decisions. A good example would typically inform a discrete policy decision in a specific decision-making forum.

Given the standing commitment of Conservation Letters to rapid review, fast-tracking is appropriate only in unusual circumstances. Authors requesting it should do so in ScholarOne and in the cover letter accompanying submission, and should include the following information:

- A brief description of the specific policy issue/debate that the manuscript will inform;
- The name of the specific forum in which decisions regarding this issue will be made;
- The time window during which this information is necessary to usefully inform deliberations;
- The implications of the manuscript's findings for the policy alternatives under discussion.

Ethics and confidentiality

What standards of confidentiality govern the *Conservation Letters* review process?

Editors and reviewers are expected to treat the review process as strictly confidential, according to the following guidelines:

Manuscripts reviewed for *Conservation Letters* should not be discussed with anyone who is not directly involved in the review process.

Reviewers who choose to consult with colleagues are asked to maintain the author's anonymity and suppress any identifying information, whether overt or implicit. They are also instructed to check with the assigning Editor beforehand to avoid involving someone who may have been excluded by request of the author.

Are reviewers ever identified to authors?

Editors go to some lengths to insure that reviewers are not identifiable to authors in communications within or outside the peer review system. The system itself is configured to protect reviewer identity.

Reviewers should, as a rule, not disclose their identities to authors or other colleagues. If they feel strongly about making their identity known to authors, we ask that they do so via the handling Editor.

Are reviewer comments transmitted to authors *verbatim*?

We almost always transmit all comments from reviewers that are intended for authors. On rare occasions, we may edit a review report where the reviewer has made a factual mistake, or to remove comments that reveal confidential information. We ask reviewers to avoid saying anything that may cause needless offense, but also expect authors to recognize that direct criticism is not necessarily unfair.

What are an author's responsibilities with respect to publication ethics?

Standard representations required by our copyright assignment form include the following:

- the work is original to the authors
- all persons identified as authors actually contributed to the work
- all persons who contributed to the work are identified as authors
- the manuscript has not been previously published
- the manuscript is submitted at this time only to this Journal
- the author(s) will obtain all necessary permissions for re-use of any material the manuscript may contain which is not original to the author(s)
- all material used by permission is appropriately credited within the article to the copyright holder
- the manuscript contains no libelous or unlawful statements
- the manuscript contains no statements or instructions which infringe upon the rights or privacy of others, or which may cause harm to others

In addition *Conservation Letters*, as a policy-relevant journal, requires that all sources of funding, including personal income from consulting services, are disclosed to the Editor and, where relevant to the work, within the manuscript acknowledgements.

Wiley-Blackwell maintains a variety of resources on publication ethics and will be happy to consult with you. *Conservation Letters* is a member of COPE, the Committee on Publications Ethics. For more information, contact Marjorie Spencer, Associate Publisher, at [mspencer@wiley.com](mailto:m Spencer@wiley.com).

Helpful contacts

Pre-submission inquiries

conservationletters@wiley.com or the appropriate EiC

Questions regarding the review process

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Suggestions, feedback and ideas

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(messages to the conservationletters mailbox will routinely be forwarded to the EiCs)

Permissions requests

permreq@wiley.com

Journal Customer Service

www.wiley.com/bw/cservlets/default.asp

