

## Guidelines for Special Sections in *Conservation Biology*

Special sections in *Conservation Biology* are an opportunity to develop a cohesive set of six to eight papers on a high-profile, controversial, or emerging issue of considerable relevance to the science and practice of conserving Earth's biological diversity. Special sections typically attract substantial attention from conservation professionals, colleagues in related disciplines, and the media.

Special sections are not included in the annual page budget of *Conservation Biology* and add to the existing workload of the editorial office. Accordingly, guest editors of special sections must agree not only to guarantee funding for page charges, but to assume primary responsibility for the editorial process. The process includes ensuring cohesion among manuscripts; handling all stages of manuscript review, correspondence with authors, and correspondence with the editorial office; and reviewing one set of page proofs.

**Final decisions on acceptance of the special section as a whole and of individual manuscripts rest with the editor in chief rather than with the guest editor.** The editorial office may request additional review or revision of a given manuscript before making a final decision. It is possible that not all of the manuscripts will be accepted for publication even if the guest editor considers the manuscripts acceptable. Please make this policy clear to potential authors. The editorial office is willing to provide a preliminary review of manuscripts before they are sent for external review to highlight any issues that ultimately might decrease the probability of acceptance.

In most cases, fully revised papers (step #11, below) must be submitted to the managing editor **at least 8 months before the anticipated date of print publication** (e.g., 1 November for anticipated publication in June of the following year). This schedule allows sufficient time for review by the editorial office, any additional reviews or revisions, and copyediting and typesetting.

The following outlines the process to be followed by, and responsibilities of, a guest editor.

1. Contact the journal's editor in chief (efleishman@conbio.org) and provide a one-page prospectus for the special section. The prospectus should outline the topic of the special section and describe anticipated manuscripts and authors. At this point, the editor in chief will make a preliminary decision whether the special section is appropriate for the journal.
2. After initial conversations and approval of the concept, provide the editor in chief with abstracts of anticipated manuscripts. This overview of the scope and content of manuscripts will allow the editorial office to decide whether to proceed with the special section.
3. Secure funding for page charges. The cost of printing is \$150 per typeset page. Estimate the number of journal pages by multiplying the total number of double-spaced manuscript pages by 0.4. Count tables and figures as one page each (e.g., four tables equals four pages). Color photographs or figures cost \$700 per page.
4. Familiarize yourself with the journal's style by reviewing several recent issues of *Conservation Biology*. **It is important that the guest editor and authors read and follow the *Instructions to Authors and Style Guide for Authors*.** Paying careful attention to the

instructions, especially those for formatting of figures, tables, and references, reduces the probability of delays and frustrations.

5. Record submission dates of manuscripts.

6. Obtain at least two independent, external, critical reviews of each manuscript. Reviewers should be experts in the topic of the manuscript and may not be authors of other papers intended for the special section.

7. Send manuscripts that you recommend for revision (i.e., manuscripts for which you do not recommend rejection) and all reviews to the editorial office. **Submit all manuscripts at the same time; do not submit manuscripts singly or in batches.** At this time the editor in chief will assess whether the manuscripts are likely to be acceptable after revision. The editor in chief will forward the manuscripts to the managing editor, who will send editorial comments and suggestions to the guest editor. These editorial comments should be addressed by the authors along with comments from the external reviewers.

8. At this point, the guest editor also must read and evaluate the manuscripts as a cohesive unit. Note overlaps or gaps among manuscripts and work with the authors to address these. It is especially important to eliminate redundancies among manuscripts.

9. Return manuscripts, external reviews, and editorial comments to authors for revision. Tell authors they must explain fully how they have or why they have not addressed comments from the reviewers and editorial office.

10. Evaluate whether authors' revised manuscripts address reviewer comments and editorial comments and conform to journal style. Again, ensure that gaps and overlaps among manuscripts are eliminated. A second round of external review may be warranted for some manuscripts.

11. Forward revised manuscripts and responses to reviews to the editorial office. At the same time, submit a brief (one or two typeset pages) introduction to the special section. Also indicate the order in which papers should appear in the journal.

12. The editorial office will make final decisions on acceptance, notify the guest editor, and forward accepted manuscripts to the publisher.

13. Notify authors of acceptance of papers.

14. Follow instructions from the editorial office regarding payment of page charges.

15. Review the "author proofs," which are sent directly to the guest editor by the typesetter. Turnaround time is 48 hours. Changes should be kept to a minimum. Costs for excessive changes will be charged to the special section, not to the journal.

16. Follow instructions from the publisher and editorial office regarding any changes to the proofs.