

# THE EMU

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PART 1

## EDITORIAL COMMENT

As this is the first part of The Emu that I have seen all the way through it seems appropriate to make a few comments about my overall policy as Editor.

First, I should like to thank my predecessor, Stephen Marchant for the tremendous job he has done over the past thirteen years. During this time The Emu has become a truly international journal. One only has to have a look at the contents of recent years to see that its range now covers the Pacific region and Antarctica as well as Australia. Contributors too come from N. America, Europe and Africa as well as Australasia.

I am often asked how my approach to editing The Emu will differ from that of Stephen's. The simple answer is, I hope, not very much. I shall perhaps be more inclined to let authors write their papers in their own style, though I shall certainly try to minimise verbosity and jargon. I have introduced a few minor changes of format, for instance abbreviations (km, g, ml, %, etc) which are now standard in almost all scientific journals. Also I plan to use & for papers by more than one author. On occasions this can reduce ambiguity. One way in which authors can save my time and theirs is by checking recent issues of The Emu (especially this one) for details of format. This especially is true of the references, where unfortunately there is little consistency among journals. In terms of content my bias is towards ecology and behaviour which seem to occupy less of The Emu's space than they do in similar journals overseas. There is now plenty of research of this type proceeding in Australasia, but too much of it is left lying in theses and reports of very restricted circulation. The RAOU may in the future publish abstracts of theses in some form but this is no substitute for proper publication.

We took recently the major step of having The Emu published outside Australia, in Singapore. The early results indicate that despite a considerable saving there will be no loss in quality. There has been some delay in publication but when the Editor and the publishers are more used to each other and the Editor better organised, this delay should be reduced. I am hoping that the saving will allow a modest expansion of The Emu, as both the number of papers and their length has been gradually increasing. The alternatives to expansion

are a higher rate of rejection or a greater delay between submission and appearance of a paper. This brings me to my main plea to all authors. Please make your papers as brief as possible. A paper which is fifteen pages long but could be only ten pages, would usurp or delay a second paper of five pages.

On the matter of economics any savings made from The Emu will be used to sustain or expand the many other activities of the RAOU. One way in which authors can do this is to pay for the costs of publication (about \$40 per page at present). Many institutions and granting bodies will provide such funds, which even for a sizeable article are small compared with the research and salary costs. All papers that are paid for in this way will appear as *extra* pages of the next issue to go to the printers. This will speed up publication by up to six months without delaying publication of any other articles. Indeed more space will be made available in the regular pages of The Emu. If enough authors contribute to costs of publication the present delay of some fifteen to eighteen months between submission and appearance of a paper could be reduced to around a year. Ability to pay for publication or not will in no way affect acceptance or rejection of a paper.

A final comment, the short communications and short notes which have been a feature of The Emu for a long time, are principally used for brief studies or casual observations. This is valuable but I see another use for such notes; for presenting alternative interpretations or viewpoints of papers published in The Emu, or exceptionally elsewhere. Ornithology, like all sciences, is never as clearcut as it appears when it is presented in print. Interpretation depends on the orthodox views of the time, and the author's experiences as much as on the data. I should like to see more expression of unorthodox views in The Emu, providing they are concisely, logically and politely argued.

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(Please do not write EMU instead of Department of Zoology as your letter may end up at the Electron Microscope Unit!).