

Historical biogeography special issue: part 1

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In writing this editorial I would like to put this special issue on Historical Biogeography, edited by Malte C. Ebach, Juan J. Morrone, Isabel Sanmartín and Tania Escalante, into a historical context of its own in *Australian Systematic Botany*. The journal has a strong heritage and precedent in publishing biogeographical research, and indeed the ground-breaking book, *Austral Biogeography*, edited by Ladiges *et al.* (1991), was produced from a Special Issue of *Australian Systematic Botany* (in volume 4). That volume brought together many biogeographical studies of Australasia and surrounding areas, applying a variety of methodologies contemporary to that time (mainly cladistic biogeography and panbiogeography), and like the current Special Issue most of the studies were not of plant or fungal groups; rather than straying from the scope of *Australian Systematic Botany* this taxonomic diversity reflects the taxa on which biogeographical interest and research focussed in 1991. Similarly, in this Special Issue the taxonomic groups covered reflect the variety of biodiversity being studied in historical biogeography today. It is interesting to contrast the current series of papers with those in *Austral Biogeography* 26 years ago. In reading that volume again recently, I found somewhat surprisingly that we are still debating many of the same issues today, including the virtues (or failings) of panbiogeography, and the relative importance of dispersal in biogeographic hypotheses.

Soon after I became Editor-in-Chief of *Australian Systematic Botany*, I wrote an editorial highlighting the journal scope, which clearly included biogeography (Murphy 2014). Yet, I felt we needed an increased emphasis in this important research area. Many (perhaps most) systematic and taxonomic studies include a biogeographic component, and indeed distribution of taxa is of key importance to studying biodiversity; however, I felt that biogeography, as a scientific discipline in its own right, was lacking some of the focus it deserved in *Australian Systematic*

Botany. In some ways historical biogeography has had difficulties finding a home. Even though biogeographic discipline-based journals exist and many other journals include biogeography in their scope, biogeography can be difficult to comprehensively cover, because of the many sub-disciplines and theoretical heterogeneity. Also, I was especially concerned that Australasian biogeography was somewhat ignored, and therefore less well understood, than in other regions of the world. As such, in 2015, Malte Ebach was appointed as a specialist Associate Editor for *Australian Systematic Botany* to cover biogeography, and, in writing his own editorial, outlined a vision for the biogeographical content of the journal (Ebach 2015). This current issue is Malte's initiative and he, along with a team of international biogeographers Juan Morrone, Isabel Sanmartín and Tania Escalante, have edited all of the fascinating and diverse papers collected herein. It is intended as part 1 of a 'Biogeography Special Issue' and we eagerly anticipate a second part in 2017, and possibly additional biogeographical special issues in the future.

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References

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