

# Wildlife Research turns 50

Andrea C. Taylor<sup>A,\*</sup>  and Aaron J. Wirsing<sup>B</sup> 

For full list of author affiliations and declarations see end of paper

**\*Correspondence to:**

Andrea C. Taylor  
School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3800, Australia  
Email: [andrea.taylor@monash.edu](mailto:andrea.taylor@monash.edu)

**Handling Editor:**

Phil Stevens

Our most loyal readers might be thinking that *Wildlife Research (WR)* has been around longer than 50 years. Strictly speaking, they are correct if you include its original incarnation and title as *CSIRO Wildlife Research*. However, it is the half-century of the journal in its current form as a vibrant and impactful contributor to the international research landscape that we are celebrating with this introduction to Issue 1 of Volume 50. Notably, this volume sees the journal move from publishing 8 to 12 issues per year, reflecting its ongoing success and growth. We begin with a brief history of *WR* to highlight its evolution into a trusted source of high-quality research providing an evidence base for wildlife scientists, managers, and policy makers on the world stage, as well as where we see it heading in the future.

Andrew Stammer, Director of Publishing at CSIRO Publishing, reminded us recently of the main driver for establishment of an Australian publishing house around the middle of last century. Consider for a moment the experience of post war Australian scientists having to publish in British and American journals, which required each of the associated processes – submission, review, receipt of reviews, resubmission, and then receipt and return of proofs – to be conducted via sea mail. The significance for local scientists of establishing an Australian-based publisher cannot be overstated. In 1956, *CSIRO Wildlife Research* was one of a group of journals introduced by CSIRO operating in partnership with the newly established Australian Academy of Science, with quality oversight by the Board of Standards and regulation by the *Science and Industry Research Act 1949* (Cth). Australian wildlife research in those early days had a strong focus on the biology, impacts and control of invasive vertebrates, particularly the European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*), with much of this work being done by CSIRO scientists (e.g. [Myktytowycz 1956](#)). However, by 1974 the author base and content had diversified substantially to include contributions from a wide pool of research institutes and universities – from across the country at first and then increasingly internationally. Renaming of the journal as *Australian Wildlife Research* and then *WR* reflected this broadening of research involvement. The journal has continued to grow and provide more content from international collaborations and research groups, as is fitting given that the issues faced by wildlife and natural resource researchers and managers are shared globally and more effectively tackled with an outward-looking research focus.

Another key moment in the journal's development was a switch in the late 2000s from in-house editorial oversight – in the latter years by Camilla Myers – to the appointment of external Editors-in-Chief (EiCs) from academia. Piran White, Andrea Taylor and Stan Boutin were established in these roles with an Editorial outlining the new model ([White et al. 2009](#)). Charles Krebs, with his extraordinary contributions to wildlife ecology and long-term involvement with the Australasian Wildlife Management Society (AWMS) and *WR*, was appointed Chair of the Editorial Board. A multidisciplinary and international team of Associate Editors was established to support the EiCs in making decisions on the increasingly diverse submissions to the journal. Having made valuable contributions to development of the journal, Stan Boutin and Charles Krebs stepped down from their roles in 2015 and 2018, respectively. Then, moving from an Associate Editor role, Aaron Wirsing was appointed as an EiC in 2020, bringing our number back to three and continuing the valuable role of representing the journal in the North American wildlife research arena. Sadly, we are losing the services of Piran White after his long tenure as an EiC. We are supremely grateful for his enthusiasm for improving *WR*, not least as a prolific author in the journal himself. His leadership will be sorely missed. On a more positive note, we are excited to announce that Phil Stephens of Durham University will

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be taking on an EiC role from February this year. Phil brings substantial experience from previous senior editorial roles. With his broad research interests in applied biodiversity conservation and wildlife management, both in the United Kingdom and more broadly, he is a perfect fit for *WR*.

[White et al. \(2009\)](#) also flagged extensive expansions to the disciplinary scope of the journal from its traditional focus on population ecology and pest management in terrestrial systems. Notable additions in more recent years are contributions focusing increasingly on coastal ([Limpus et al. 2020](#)) and marine environments ([Winton et al. 2021](#)) – reflecting growing recognition that both basic and applied questions about wildlife are best addressed by an approach that cuts across ecosystem boundaries – and on human dimensions of wildlife management ([Islas et al. 2022](#)), flowing from the fact that human and natural systems are so often coupled. Other recent papers have used quantitative techniques such as simulation modelling to address management challenges ([Pacioni et al. 2020](#)); we view this as an exciting growth area for the journal.

One of our goals for *WR* has been to provide a forum for topical issues and emergent technologies, particularly in the form of special issues. To that end, over recent decades the journal has published issues on an impressive range of topics that is testament to the breadth of wildlife and broader environmental management problems addressed by science published in the journal. Areas covered in these issues have included: the ecology, impacts and management of invasive vertebrate species ([Cooke and Saunders 2002](#); [White et al. 2008](#); [Legge et al. 2020c](#)); tools, technologies and indices for use in monitoring and management of both pest and threatened species ([Engeman 2005](#); [Tyndale-Biscoe and Hinds 2007](#); [Cowan and Hinds 2008](#); [Fleming and Tracey 2008](#); [Wirsing et al. 2022](#)); human–wildlife interactions ([White and Ward 2010](#); [Soulsbury and White 2015](#)); rodent ecology and management ([Hinds and Singleton 2011](#); [Singleton et al. 2015](#)); biodiversity prioritisation and management ([Cullen and White 2013](#)); and fire ecology and wildlife management ([Whitehead et al. 2005](#)). In addition, a particularly important volume entitled ‘Wildlife Population Dynamics and Management’ highlighted and celebrated the profound influence of the late Graeme Caughley on the field and his service to the journal itself ([Hone 2009](#)). Upcoming special issues include ‘Deer in Australasia’, ‘Fertility Control for Wildlife in the 21st Century’ and ‘Wildlife and Human Health’. These issues provide a unique opportunity for authors to publish alongside their peers in the field and contribute to a specialist collection that is highly discoverable. Overall usage/downloads for special issue papers is higher than for those appearing in regular issues. Indeed, one of our most successful special issues to date, the 2020 ‘Cat Ecology, Impacts and Management in Australia’, includes five of the ten most highly cited *WR* papers for 2020–21. Several contributions from the issue also generated substantial mainstream and social media

interest as indicated by their high Altmetric scores (e.g. [Legge et al. 2020a, 2020b](#)). We invite you to keep up to date with special issues being planned, along with associated calls for papers. Further, we are always happy to consider proposals for special issue topics.

Going forward we plan to broaden the diversity of contributions to the content and editorial board of *WR* and ensure all authors and readers feel welcome. We hope to attract more submissions that incorporate the ecological knowledge of First Nations scientists, as well as incorporating the work of First Nations peoples more broadly in wildlife research and management, such as their crucial work in monitoring species on country. Respectful acknowledgement or recognition of these contributions via co-authorship is entrenched in CSIRO Publishing’s guidelines for ethical and responsible authorship conduct.

We also aim to encourage further submissions from developing countries and regions, where little-known and relatively untouched ecosystems are increasingly coming under anthropogenic pressure. We hope that scientists researching the wildlife management issues inevitably arising from this process – in terms of both invasive and threatened native species – will engage with *WR* as both a vehicle for their own papers and a vital repository of relevant knowledge developed through similar issues being tackled in more developed regions. This requires that researchers in lower-income countries have access to published research. In recognition of this, CSIRO Publishing in the mid-2000s partnered with Research4Life to enable access to its journal content: 42 countries across Africa, Middle East, Northern Asia, South East Asia and Oceania/Pacific are now accessing our content for free. This push for greater accessibility also involves Open Access publishing models and addressing the appetite for Open Science more broadly. *Wildlife Research* is embracing these opportunities with a range of new Open Access options. Each issue of the journal also includes an ‘Editor’s choice’ article that is made available Open Access for three months at no charge to authors. Another exciting development in this space in recent years has been Read and Publish (RAP) agreements with a range of institutions. Researchers at these institutions can now have their papers published as Open Access without charge, underpinned by fees funded by their library. In 2021, the journal saw enormous growth in papers accepted and published Open Access because of these RAP agreements.

Another development for *WR* is the plan to move to a continuous publication model in 2024, whereby papers will no longer be published first in an Online Early version and then paginated for inclusion in an issue – rather, articles will be published in final form as soon as they have completed the production process. This will translate to faster acceptance-to-publication times.

Of course, none of the above would be possible without the inspired research and scholarship of our authors, dedicated assistance of reviewers and continued interest

from our readership. We are also grateful for the incredible support provided by CSIRO Publishing and its enthusiastic staff of journal publishers, production editors and editorial assistants. A hallmark of articles appearing in its journals, including *WR*, is the high quality of production, with copy editing that value adds to the fine work of authors to result in truly polished output. Wherever you are in the world reading this, please light a sparkler and join the *WR* community in wishing the journal a very happy 50th birthday year.

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**Conflicts of interest.** The authors are co-editors of *Wildlife Research* and declare no conflict of interest.

### Author affiliations

<sup>A</sup>School of Biological Sciences, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3800, Australia.

<sup>B</sup>School of Environmental and Forest Sciences, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98105, USA.