



Outgoing Editors' Reflections

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Abstract – In the six years since assuming the role as co-editors of this journal, we have witnessed a substantial growth in the reputation and impact of the journal. During our tenure as co-editors in chief, *Animal Behavior and Cognition* became the first journal specializing in research on nonhuman animals to publish pre-registered reports. Furthermore, we initiated a novel Opposing Viewpoints format; the first set of articles in this format were published in the previous issue. We have felt privileged to help shepherd this once fledgling journal to its current status and leave it confidently in the hands of the new editor.

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In 2014, *Animal Behavior and Cognition* (AB&C hereafter) published its first volume of scientific papers under the stewardship of its founding editor, the late Stan Kuczaj. The journal was ground-breaking in its steadfast dedication to open access publishing at no cost to authors. When Stan passed away suddenly in the spring of 2016, we stepped into the roles of co-editors in chief with a strong sense of commitment to continue this tradition. Although it has been challenging, and a tremendous amount of work, we are proud that we have been able to maintain this tradition while increasing the breadth and reputation of the journal. The number of submissions has continued to increase over the past several years and continues to represent researchers working in a variety of fields and settings. We have been proud to publish papers representing field, farm, zoological, laboratory, and household companion animal research. We have published several special issues on important topics in the field (e.g., marine mammal science, cognitive enrichment and welfare, replication, meaningful 'failures,' animal-robot interactions, zoo animal visitor interactions, metacognition, visual illusions, communication, and folk physics) and these have been well received and highly cited.

In addition to maintaining free open access publishing for authors, we are perhaps most proud of our efforts to spearhead the movement to pre-register experimental hypotheses in the area of animal behavior and cognition. We were the first specialized animal behavior and cognition journal to offer authors the opportunity to publish peer-reviewed pre-registered reports. So far, we have published two pre-registered reports (Parrish et al., 2018; Tysall et al., 2020) and numerous teams have in-principle acceptances for which they are presently collecting the data. This initiative is important because pre-registration and peer-review prior to data collection will help sway the field from its focus on attention-grabbing results and back to methodologically rigorous and well-justified studies (Beran, 2018, 2020; Vonk, 2021; Vonk & Krause, 2018). Along with this initiative, we emphasized the value of replication work (Farrar et al., 2020, 2021; Stevens, 2017) and strove to make the journal a welcome outlet for such projects.

Although we emphasized the importance of replication studies and pre-registered reports, we also initiated other unique formats during our tenure with the journal. For example, we created an opposing

viewpoints format that would allow authors with contrasting perspectives on an important problem to present their views in tandem. Although collaboratively writing joint opinion pieces is challenging, we are extremely pleased that Mercado and Lyn (Lyn, 2022; Lyn & Mercado, 2022; Mercado, 2022) took on this challenge to write a set of articles representing the debate about social learning in humpback whale calls (Mercado, 2021). We hope that their excellent inaugural example will inspire other scientists to consider submitting their own viewpoints. We think that providing a forum for authors to do so is extremely important as evidence-based debates are the cornerstone of our science. The nature of work with nonhumans is such that empirical findings are often somewhat open to interpretation, and interpretation is not always objectively balanced with evidence. Opposing viewpoint manuscripts should serve to help center the debates around the key pieces of evidence and allow readers to formulate their own decisions about where the evidence leads. We welcome lively and productive discussions in the literature.

To that end, we also published several target review papers during our tenure as editors. For example, a discussion on cow cognition (Marino & Allen, 2017) included commentaries from experts and highlighted the extent to which science can be provocative and yet collaborative. We look forward to the continuation of such discussions within the pages of *AB&C*.

Unlike many other specialized journals, *AB&C* has also become an outlet for work on all aspects of animal behavior and cognition, including studies of animal welfare. The breadth of topics covered within the journal reflects the multi-disciplinary nature of animal studies. We have published multiple brief reports of observations of novel behaviors in various species (e.g., Ausband, 2021; Luef & Heschl, 2017; Osuna-Mascaró & Auersperg, 2018). Such observations are often difficult to disseminate as other journals have been less willing to publish singular observational reports, but observations of novel or seldom-witnessed behaviors may open up paths of enquiry that otherwise would never be explored. In the spirit of expanding the scope of discovery, we have also published reports on many less well studied species, such as anteaters (Eyer & Miller, 2020), otters (Bandini et al., 2021), giraffe (Razal et al., 2017), rhinoceros (Krebs & Watters, 2017), okapi (Troxell-Smith et al., 2017), degus (Watanabe et al., 2018), bearded dragons (Frohnwieser et al., 2017), grey bamboo sharks (Fuss et al., 2017), crayfish (Chiandetti & Caputi, 2017), and stinkbugs (da Silveira et al., 2019), and even published a special issue anticipating the role that robotics will play in understanding animal behavior and vice versa (Abdai, & Miklósi, 2018). This inclusivity will paint a richer portrait of evolutionary processes shaping cognition and behavior.

We could not have achieved such growth without the support and trust of the editorial board, especially our dedicated copy-editing team, led first by Heather Hill and then Mark Krause. We are indebted to these individuals for their tireless work to support our vision. We look forward to the continued growth of the journal as the new editor, Lydia Hopper, makes changes to its editorial structure and works to further establish this journal as one of the premiere places in which to publish innovative and rigorous research.

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