

Editorial

Development of Ornithology and Ornithological Journals—A New Opening by the MDPI with the *Birds* Journal

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Before I started to produce this Editorial article for the new ornithological open access journal, *Birds*, of the MDPI (Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute), I read a fascinating book about the history of ornithology by Michael Walters [1]. A lot has happened since the first ornithological journals, the *Journal of Ornithology* (1853), *Ibis*, the *Auk*, *Wilson Journal of Ornithology* and the *Condor*, were established (Figure 1 [2]). Walters' book reminded me about the long history of ornithology and ornithologists; birds have fascinated people since practically the dawn of civilization [1]. The 18th century was the time of Linnaeus, Brisson, Buffon, and Pallas, i.e., the classification of birds. During the 19th century, ornithology was still mainly very descriptive. Most ornithologists were studying the anatomy and taxonomy of birds, while some were interested in the distribution of birds [3]. During those times, ornithologists had a habit to shut their study object. At the same time (1892), the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) was founded [3]. At the beginning of the 20th century, egg collection flourished. Typical titles of reports were like "A new species for ..." or "Birds observed in ..." [3]. Many new ornithological journals, such as *Emu* (1901, Australia), *British Birds* (1907, UK), *Rivista Italia di Ornithologia* (1911, Italy), *Ornis Fennica* (1924, Finland) and *Ostrich* (1930, South Africa), were launched all over the world [2]. At the same time, the number of published ornithological articles started to increase [3]. Birds as pests, game birds and the general ecology of birds gained considerable attention. The International Council for Bird Preservation was founded in 1922. The development of binoculars, telescopes and cameras helped a lot of bird identification, and correspondingly the science. Ring marking, and especially using color rings at the beginning of the 1930s [3], helped those people that were interested in the behavior of birds. Later, for example, the development of telemetry, transponders and molecular methods have further increased our understanding of birds [3]. Currently, landscapeecological, behavioral and climate-change-related bird studies are flourishing.

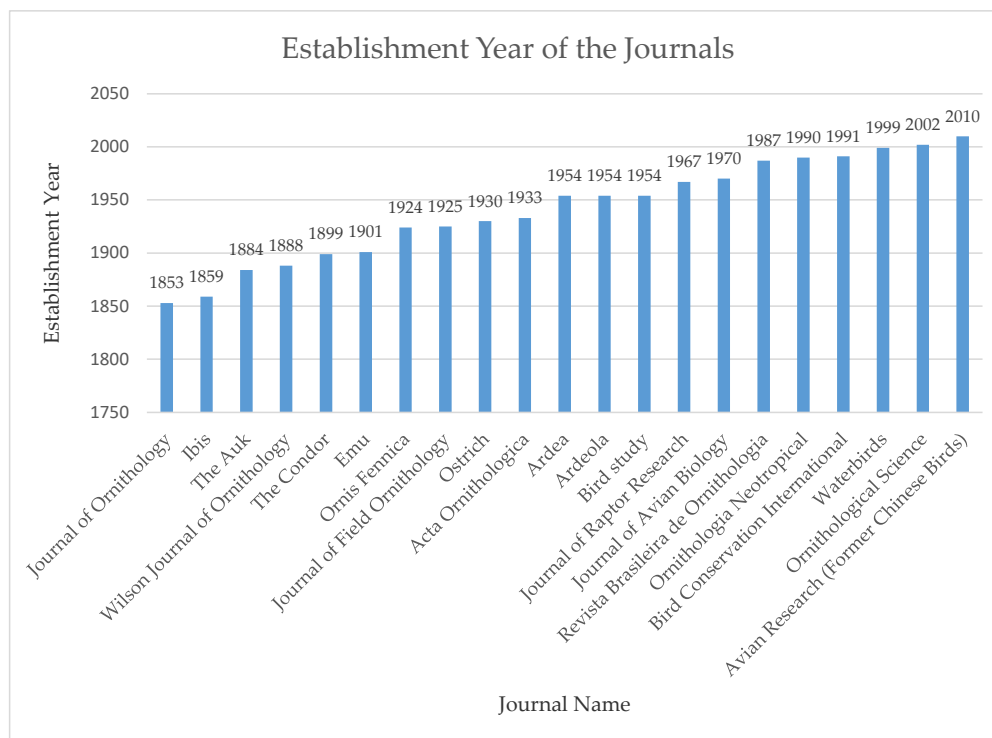


Figure 1. Establishment year of the main JCR (Journal Citation Reports)-indexed ornithological journals ($n = 21$ [2]).

Following the increase in ornithological work, the first sharp increase in the number of published ornithological articles started in the late 1980s and the early 1990s (Figure 2 [3,4]). Moreover, many new ornithological journals, such as *Revista Brasileira Ornithologia* (1987), *Hirundo* (1988), *Ciconia* (1989), *Alauda* (1990), *Ornithologia Neotropical* (1990), *Bird Conservation of International* (1991), *Ornis Hungarica* (1991), *Ornis Svecica* (1991) and the *Korean Journal of Ornithology* (1994), were established (Figure 1 [4]). At the same time, the *BirdLife International* was established in 1993, currently having almost 3 million members within their >120 national partner organizations [5]. *BirdLife International*, with its national *BirdLifes*, is not only the world-leading bird conservation organization, but, e.g., with its Data Zone pages [6], the *BirdLife* is important for many bird researchers. Almost all *BirdLife International*'s national partners have their own bird-related publication(s). For example, *BirdLife Finland* has 30 regional/local organizations that have their own journal. With a simple calculation, 120 (*BirdLife National organization*) \times 30 (*Regional/local organization within each country, as in Finland*), there might be over 3500 regional/local bird-related journals. Even if the scope of these journals is related mainly on birding, they also contain a lot of basic data, e.g., of species distribution and abundances, being especially important for the climate change research. According to [2], there are currently about 150 ornithological journals. However, only about 14% of them are so called JCR (Journal Citation Reports)-indexed journals (journals with a Journal Impact Factor, JIF).

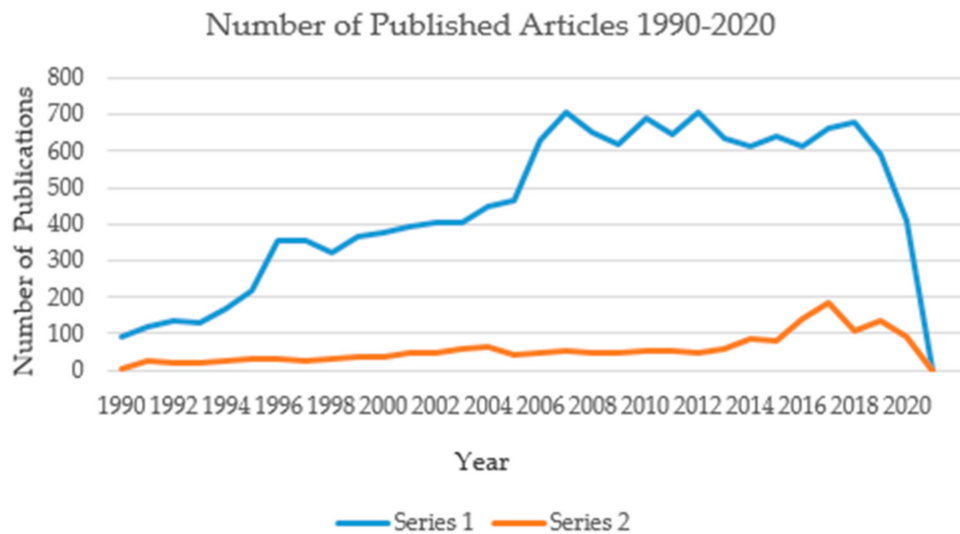


Figure 2. Number of published ornithological articles in the main JCR (Journal Citation Reports [4])-indexed. The blue line (Series1) represents articles published other than open access journals, and the orange line (Series2) represents articles published in the open access journals during 1990–2020 based on the Scopus search, using the search word “birds” [4]. The journals were the same as in Figure 1, without the Avian Research, Journal of Raptor Research and Ornithological Science ($n = 18$).

The last step increases in the published ornithological articles in the JCR-indexed journals happened in 2005–2007 (Figure 2). Nowadays, about 800 ornithological articles are published yearly in these JCR-indexed ornithological journals. It should be noted here, that many scientists published their ornithological works also in other type of journals, mainly in ecological ones. Both the number of open access articles and their proportion of the all articles published has grown during 1990–2020. During the years 1990–2013, the proportion of the open access articles of all articles was under 10%, except the years 1991–1995 and 2001–2004 (Figure 2). From the year 2014 onwards, the proportion of open access articles has been over 10%, being currently about 20% (Figure 2). Moreover, many journals have stopped publishing a printed version, and therefore all articles are available only in online. This is partly due to the high printing costs, but also the possibility of publishing articles more rapidly. Some journals have followed a hybrid strategy, where authors can decide if they want to publish either printed or online articles, or even both.

There are many benefits to publishing in these open access journals, for example, your article will be rapidly, easily and widely available for the other scientists, managers and politicians. One disadvantage for the researcher can be the relatively high Article Processing Charges (APC), sometimes also called Author Processing Charges. Fortunately, many institutes, like universities, quite often have agreements with those Open Access Publishers, so the individual researches shall not pay APC.

Birds is a new open access journal that is completely devoted to ornithology. *Birds* is an international, peer-reviewed ornithological that provides an advanced forum for studies on all aspects of ornithology. The themes of *Birds* will cover, for example: bird ecology and biogeography; bird communities and populations; bird behavior, bird conservation; bird immunology, health, and diseases; bird systematics, taxonomy, and evolution; bird physiology and reproduction; and bird migration. In addition, *Birds* also welcomes multidisciplinary works related to birds as well as applied manuscripts related to the management of birds and their habitats. Both descriptive and experimental manuscripts will be considered for the publication. Manuscripts, written in English, all over the world will be considered. We will have a high-quality editorial board and reviewers that will help the authors with their manuscripts rather than given overwhelming feedback. One main advantage of *Birds* compared to the other ornithological journals is the rapid review and publication processes. The authors will get the first decisions about in 15 days, and, after final acceptance, the paper will be published online in 3 days.

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