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- [ecology](#)
- [ecological applications](#)
- [ecological monographs](#)
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- [bulletin](#)
-

Ecological Applications

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[Mission](#)

[Scope](#)

[Types of Contributions](#)

[Board of Editors](#)

[current issue](#)

[back issues](#)

[new policy on](#) [Communications](#)

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Mission Statement: *Ecological Applications* is concerned broadly with the applications of ecological science to environmental problems. It publishes papers that develop scientific principles to support environmental decision-making, as well as papers that discuss the application of ecological concepts to environmental issues, policy, and management. Papers may report on experimental tests, actual applications, scientific decision support techniques, economic analyses, social implications of environmental issues, or other relevant topics. Statistical or experimental methods papers that support research and applications are welcome. Papers submitted to *Ecological Applications* should be accessible to both scholars and practitioners.

The pages of *Ecological Applications* are open to research and discussion papers that integrate ecological science and concepts with their application and implications. Of special interest are papers that develop the basic scientific principles on which environmental decision-making should rest, and those that discuss the application of ecological concepts to environmental problem solving, policy, and management. Papers that deal explicitly with policy matters are welcome. Interdisciplinary approaches are encouraged, as are short communications on emerging environmental challenges. *Ecological Applications* rarely publishes papers focused on the management of a single species or particular habitat unless the case study clearly addresses a topic of wide relevance, broad interest or extraordinary novelty. Case studies accepted in *Ecological Applications* will almost certainly inform ecological science or management across ecosystems, habitats or taxa, rather than pertaining to a particular species, location or unique

setting. Papers that focus on the management of a single species or habitat are better submitted to more specialized journals. Discussions of particular environmental problems, and site- and species-specific research results, will be considered only if they are placed successfully in a more general context. Papers describing new methods or techniques can be published only if they describe truly new and significant advances in methodology that can be broadly applied to the understanding or management of environmental problems. Inevitably, there will be some overlap in subject matter with *Ecology*; however, papers submitted to *Ecological Applications* should explicitly discuss the applications or implications of the work with regard to policy, management, or the analysis and solution of major environmental problems.

Ecological Applications invites contributions from scientists, policy makers, and managers concerned with the full spectrum of ecological applications. Included within this spectrum are global climate change and biogeochemistry, conservation biology, ecotoxicology and pollution ecology, fishery and wildlife ecology, forestry, agroecosystems, range management, soils, hydrology and groundwater, landscape ecology, and epidemiology.

Presentation style

We want authors to write their papers so that they clearly communicate with potential users of the information presented in their manuscripts and not overemphasize ties to colleagues conducting research on the same topic. We encourage authors to clearly state the scientific and practical challenge and then describe the contribution that their paper makes toward understanding or resolving the issue. This requires a clear, simple, and direct opening paragraph. The background and literature pedigree of the work should be described in subsequent paragraphs. The title and abstract should be aimed at communicating with users of the new knowledge rather than with researchers in closely allied areas. This does not mean that we want authors to write for a lay or less informed audience; rather, we hope authors will address the needs of practitioners as well as those of researchers. We are not suggesting any change in the style or rigorousness of the methods, results, and discussions; nor will there be any change in our peer-review standards for the excellence of the underlying research.

However, the presentation style should also change in concluding sections. In these sections, authors should again clearly address potential applications of their results. It is not enough to indicate that, for example, species with complex management dynamics require innovative management approaches. What are the implications for the species studied, and what generalities can be drawn? If the results indicate a problem, but not a solution, what steps are required to implement the new ideas as management techniques? If the study addresses a technique or concept that may be applied by other researchers, under what circumstances can the new method be employed?

The purpose of these style guidelines is to solidify the role of *Ecological Applications* as a journal where excellent science meets pressing technical issues of environmental policy, management, and governance. As a side effect, they may encourage more communication among ecological subdisciplines by demystifying some of the science as well! In any case, these new

guidelines are now evident in many papers in the journal, and they will be communicated to new authors by the Editorial Board. They will certainly influence the review process.

Our reviewers will continue to invest their expertise in critiquing the science underlying submitted manuscripts. It will be the Editorial Board members and the Editor-in-Chief who implement the new policies and who determine the suitability of papers for the journal. In general, a paper will not be rejected for failing to communicate in the spirit of the new guidelines, but it may be returned for editorial revision before technical peer review.

Types of contributions

Length limits with respect to manuscripts refer to all pages, including cover page, text, literature cited, tables and figures. Each figure will count as one page. Generally 3.5 pages of the double-spaced manuscript correspond to one printed page.

Final decisions on article types are at the discretion of the Managing Editor. (i) Papers submitted/accepted as Communications, but which require more than 8.0 printed pages in the final version, will be published as Articles.

Articles. Articles describing significant original research comprise the core of the journal. Articles may not exceed 60 manuscript pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, including **everything** from Title Page through the last figure). Abstracts should be no longer than 350 words. Articles exceeding 60 manuscript pages may be considered for [*Ecological Monographs*](#) at the discretion of the editor-in-chief .

Communications. Shorter papers (up to 8 journal pages) of immediate impact in fast-moving scientific debate or urgent practical application. These papers will be fast-tracked through the editorial, review and production processes so as to make possible a relatively rapid publication. These papers must be accompanied by a cover letter clearly indicating that the paper is being submitted for consideration for the Communications section and explaining why the paper warrants this special treatment. Papers deemed unsuitable for Communications may be considered for publication as regular articles.

As added incentives for authors to cast their submissions in the concise Communications format, we are implementing the following new policies:

- All Communications will be Open Access (i.e., one need not be a subscriber or have institutional access in order to view full text online).
- There will be no charge for color figures to authors of Communications.

By making the Communications more accessible and visually appealing, we hope to increase our readership and cement *Ecological Applications*'s reputation as the place where authors publish the most important and exciting research findings in our science.

In order to assure rapid publication, papers must conform to a strict page limit and format. *Submissions may contain up to 20 manuscript pages (double-spaced, 12-point font, including everything from Title Page through the last figure). The abstract can have a maximum of 200 words.*

Invited Features. Invited Features are intended to address various aspects of a theme that is likely to be of broad interest to applied ecologists. Ideally, a feature should inform a broad audience about an unfamiliar topic or an area in which there has been considerable recent progress, or it should cause the audience to re-examine an issue that is not as settled as most have presumed. Proposals for Invited Features should be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief. [Additional advice and instructions](#) are available which explain how to propose and prepare Invited Features.

Forums. *Ecological Applications* occasionally publishes Forums. A Forum can take a number of forms but always includes a series of commentaries solicited from a number of experts. These commentaries represent personal responses to a paper (or papers) considered to be of very broad interest and significance within the field of applied ecology. [Special instructions are available.](#)

Letters to the Editor (up to 4 journal pages). Letters to the Editor point out errors of fact or interpretation in, or otherwise comment on, articles that previously appeared in ESA journals, or in articles or books that are the basis of numerous articles published in ESA journals. Submissions must contain no more than 16 manuscript pages. [Special procedures](#) have been established for preparation and review of Letters to the Editor and responses to Letters.

Questions to guide the prospective author

Ecological Applications publishes papers across the full spectrum of applications of ecological science, covering all types of organisms and environments. At the same time, it publishes a limited number of pages per year. Consequently, the journal can only publish the very best and most significant papers. Many papers that would be publishable in journals with a narrower disciplinary, taxonomic, or geographic scope may not be publishable in *Ecological Applications*.

Ecological Applications seeks to publish papers that will be interesting to a diverse audience including readers from many different subdisciplines of ecology, as well as from related disciplines. Given the focus of the journal on applications of ecological science to environmental problems, readers also include land managers, environmental consultants, ecologists with state and federal agencies, ecologists working for industry, and many others who are not necessarily heavily involved in doing research themselves. It is essential that papers published in *Ecological Applications* be oriented toward this broad audience, both in terms of addressing important and

widespread problems and in clearly explaining how results from particular locations or on particular species may apply more broadly.

Given these and related considerations, here are some questions that authors should ask themselves before submitting a manuscript to *Ecological Applications*. The acceptance rate for manuscripts submitted to ESA journals is only about 30%. The purpose of these questions is to help prospective authors determine the chances that a manuscript will fall in the group that is original and important enough to be accepted. It may take six months or longer for a decision, so if these questions raise substantial doubts about whether a manuscript satisfies these specified criteria, a lot of time might be saved by submitting it to a more specialized journal.

- Is your manuscript so original and important that it warrants publication in a journal that can only publish one or a few papers per issue in any particular subdiscipline (e.g., conservation biology, biogeochemistry, agroecology, toxicology), or is it better suited for a more specialized journal?
- Does your manuscript focus on the application of ecological science to the understanding, management, or solution of environmental problems, or is the primary motivation and focus related to basic understanding of ecological phenomena? In manuscripts submitted to *Ecological Applications*, it is appropriate for the Introduction to focus primarily on the environmental issue(s) being addressed rather than on more fundamental issues.
- Does your manuscript address an environmental issue of widespread importance, or is the issue merely of local or limited importance? A manuscript covering a topic of local importance is better suited for a journal with a limited geographic scope.
- If your manuscript primarily reports on site- or species- specific results, do these results have broader implications (e.g., for other systems) and have you successfully explained how your results may offer insights to scientists or managers who are not necessarily interested in your particular system?
- Is your manuscript likely to be of interest and relevance only to a limited audience with training in a particular technical field, or will it appeal to a broad audience? This is a particularly crucial question for manuscripts that report new methods or approaches.

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