

EDITORIALS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

NON-PEER REVIEW SECTION

HERPETOLOGICAL CONSERVATION AND BIOLOGY:
A SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR

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"In the last 12 months, the first 32 papers published have been downloaded a total of 25,749 times by colleagues in 106 countries."

How does one measure the success of a new journal? With traditional journals, societies can point to current membership trends, institutional subscriptions, and/or citation indices. Success can, for instance, be inferred by whether or not membership in a society is increasing or decreasing. For an online, open-access journal such as ours, however, there is no distinguished society to join. In fact, *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* has no user fees whatsoever! So why would a researcher ever consider submitting a manuscript to a new, unproven, online journal? The objective of this editorial is to reveal various statistics pertaining to the users of *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*. These statistics will enable potential authors to make informed decisions about publishing in our online open-access journal.

This issue of *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* is the fourth published in a 12-month period, since our launch in September 2006 (Bury et al. 2006). For some of us, that alone is considered a success, as several new herpetological journals started over the last decade have struggled to sustain publication viability. Irregularity and delayed release rapidly erodes author confidence, submittal rates, and quality. The Editorial Staff of *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* has placed a high priority on publishing on a regular basis. Moreover, our journal is unique because we strive to publish all completed manuscripts in the next available issue. There is little or no backlog. This provides for rapid publication, often in less than 6 months from the initial date of submission. This is an attractive feature for authors interested in a timely release of their research.

Does a journal really make a difference if few or no one reads it? Fortunately, *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* can compile website statistics using AWStats

(<http://awstats.sourceforge.net/?seenIEPage=1>); software than can analyze data logs on an hourly, daily, monthly, and/or yearly basis. From Internet Protocol Addresses (IP addresses), we know that colleagues from 106 countries have visited the journal website in the last 12 months. Language and technological barriers no doubt play a limiting role in the dissemination of an on-line, English language, journal. Still, on a monthly basis, the website is accessed by colleagues in an average of 61 (range 54-69) countries. Visitation statistics for the top 10 countries are revealing (Table. 1). Albeit highly biased towards a North American readership, we strive to be an international journal. In fact, *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* has published articles on research in Armenia (Tadevosyan 2006), Guam (Rodda et al. 2007), Republic of Congo (Jackson et al. 2007), and Madagascar (D'Cruze et al. 2007). Our commitment to the international community is further reinforced as a result of our affiliation with the World Congress of Herpetology.

Authors often ask themselves questions about their papers once they are published: "is anyone reading this paper that I

TABLE 1. Visitation based on political boundaries to the journal *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* during the first year of online, open-access, publication. Only the top 10 of 106 countries shown. *Excludes statistics for EU countries specifically identified in first column.

Country	Monthly		Annual
	Mean	Range	
United States	5,028	2,360 - 10,114	60,341
Canada	194	56 - 457	2,328
Great Britain	152	31 - 262	1,826
Australia	151	52 - 322	1,808
EU*	124	53 - 248	1,492
Germany	114	32 - 226	1,363
Brazil	97	27 - 247	1,170
Spain	62	6 - 228	744
Netherlands	41	12 - 70	491
France	36	5 - 97	438
Mexico	35	14 - 78	419
Italy	30	7 - 95	363

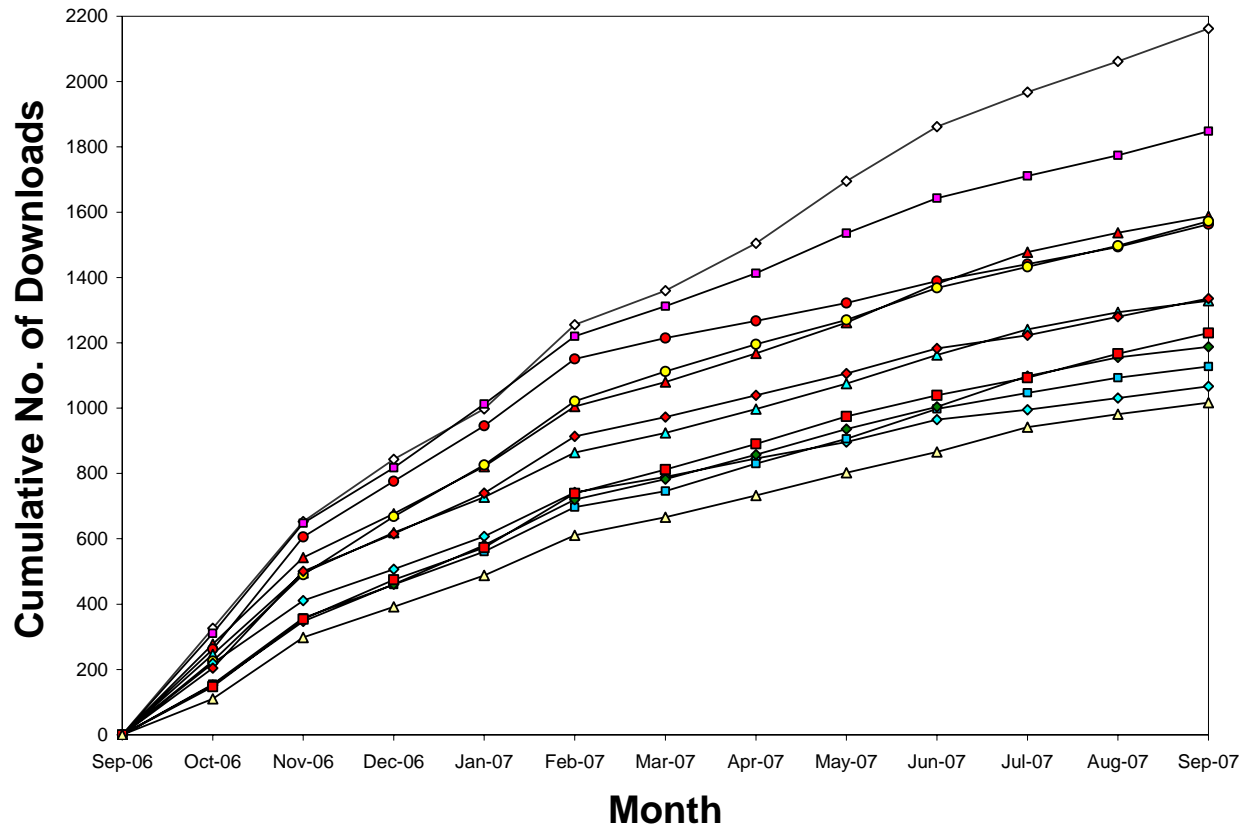


FIGURE 1. Cumulative number of downloads for 12 papers published in the inaugural issue of the journal *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*. Each paper indicated by a distinct series of monthly points.

toiled so long to produce?” and “just how many colleagues might that be, per se?” In other words, what is the level of interest in my research and what impact might it be having? Given our on-line open-access nature, authors of published manuscripts in *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* rarely receive the usual feedback (i.e., reprint requests). However, we can retrieve data on the number of times each PDF (i.e., Portable Document Format) file is downloaded. Herein, a download is defined as each time a person clicks on a link to a given article’s PDF file, thereby causing the article of interest to be transferred to the person’s computer via the internet. Users might then chose to read the paper, save it, forward it to a colleague, and/or send it to a printer (= reprint). I tabulated the mean number and range of downloads for each issue (Table 2). Moreover, I compiled the cumulative number of downloads per individual paper published in Volume 1, issue 1 (Fig. 1).

Overall, our website statistics reveal that, in just 12 months, visitors have downloaded the 32 papers published thus far a total of 25,749 times. To what do we owe such astounding interest? Firstly, we know that natural history papers themselves are interesting and of scientific value (Bury 2006; McCallum and McCallum

2006). Secondly, we suspect that students, professors, and non-academic colleagues in less-developed countries are reticent to pay the user fees charged by other journals to access a single PDF reprint of an article. Moreover, authors are sometimes asked to pay for the privilege of publishing a specific article as open-access, presumably to defray costs associated from loss of sales revenues. *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*, however, is available *gratis* to anyone with access to a computer, the internet, and free Adobe Acrobat reader software (<http://www.adobe.com>).

TABLE 2. Mean number and range of downloads over the last 12 months for articles published in the first three issues of *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*. t = Number of months since issue was published.

Volume (Issue)	t	Annual		No. of Manuscripts
		Mean	Range	
1(1)	12	1,419	1,017-2,162	12
1(2)	8	559	357-963	10
2(1)	4	314	227-419	10

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Some of the benefits of publishing in *Herpetological Conservation and Biology* include:

- Peer-reviewed
- No reprint fees
- No membership fees
- International readership
- Little or no publication backlog
- No charges for production of a PDF file
- No page charges incurred by authors
- No charges for color illustrations
- No charges for open-access publication
- Inclusion of author biographies
- Availability of appendix for multimedia

Although there are many ways one can judge success, we hope that you, authors and readers alike, will be active participants in the continued success of *Herpetological Conservation and Biology*. Your questions, comments, and suggestions are always welcomed.

Acknowledgments.—I thank Bruce Bury, Dave Germano, Malcolm McCallum, Kasey O'Horo, and Stan Trauth for constructive criticism on earlier drafts of this manuscript.

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