
Editorial

Brian Charlesworth

Biol. Lett. 2009 **5**, 1-2

doi: 10.1098/rsbl.2008.0674

References

This article cites 5 articles, 5 of which can be accessed free

<http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/5/1/1.full.html#ref-list-1>

Subject collections

Articles on similar topics can be found in the following collections

[molecular biology](#) (89 articles)

[environmental science](#) (107 articles)

[evolution](#) (541 articles)

Email alerting service

Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article - sign up in the box at the top right-hand corner of the article or click [here](#)

To subscribe to *Biol. Lett.* go to: <http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/subscriptions>

Editorial

Biology Letters has had another very good year; after a rather slow start early in 2008, we have been kept busy, with a projected increase in submissions of 11 per cent compared with 2007. Our impact factor is now 2.716, an increase of over 0.7 since last year, and we are hopeful that it will rise again next year, as the journal becomes more established. Several of our papers attracted attention in the media and journals such as *Nature*. The mean time from receipt to acceptance has been reduced considerably to well under a month, and the mean time from receipt to online publication is currently 56 days. Many thanks are owed to our Editorial Board Members, reviewers and, especially, to Fiona Pring and Louise Gardner in the publishing office. The hard work and enthusiasm of all these people have made these achievements possible. I believe that speed of publication is an especially attractive feature of the journal, and we will strive to maintain and improve this. Fiona conducted a survey of contributors, and found a very high level of customer satisfaction, even among people whose papers had been rejected. Thank you to everyone who responded.

As in my 2007 editorial, I would like to mention some papers that I found especially appealing in our 2008 issues. There was a strong field to choose from, so I hope no one's feelings will be hurt. Vidal *et al.* (2008) provided an analysis of DNA sequences showing that worm lizards (amphisbaenians) somehow succeeded in crossing the Atlantic *ca* 40 Myr ago, initiating a radiation in the Neotropics that gave rise to approximately half of the world's species. Another set of sequence comparisons suggested that the extraordinary maternal care provided by some cecilian amphibians, where the mothers let their offspring eat their skin, has evolved independently in Africa and the Neotropics (Wilkinson *et al.* 2008). Basolo (2008) performed some elegant tricks with genetic markers associated with a body size locus in the platyfish, *Xiphophorus maculatus*, which she used to show that predation in a laboratory environment leads to selection for alleles that delay maturation, apparently contradicting standard life-history theory. This is probably because later maturation is associated with larger body size, which protects against predation. Takahashi & Hori (2008) provided a new insight into polymorphisms for laterality in Tanganyikan cichlid fishes, showing negative assortative mating between morphs with left- and right-handed mouths. These examples illustrate the diversity of topics that we cover, and the unexpected twists that evolution comes up with.

As you will probably have seen, we have introduced some new features in response to suggestions by the Editorial Board, intended to make the journal more distinctive. One is to have opinion pieces—short commentaries on research topics. Another is to publish short accounts of scientific meetings, with a focus on smaller meetings with a strong focus. The most important innovation is to have 'special features' on a particular subject, guest-edited by Board Members with expertise in the area, who solicit papers from the community. The first of these appeared in the September issue, edited and introduced by Barnard & Thuiller (2008). This was dedicated to global change, the most serious problem facing life on Earth. It is a special responsibility of the scientific community to provide evidence concerning the consequences of man-made global warming, in the hope that those with political and economic power will respond before all is lost. The 2008 special feature is our contribution to this goal.

Looking ahead, as every reader of *Biology Letters* will know, 2009 is the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin, and 150 years since the publication of *The Origin of Species*. Although the scientific world is in danger of being overwhelmed by Darwin celebrations, we have decided to add to them, given the high proportion of our papers with a Darwinian flavour. Each of our 2009 issues will have an opinion piece on an aspect of evolutionary biology by a leading expert, and we are planning three special features on: the brain and evolution; molecular evolution; and the evolution of sexual conflict and sex allocation. We hope our readers will enjoy these.

Brian Charlesworth
(*Editor-in-Chief*)

- Barnard, P. & Thuiller, T. 2008 Introduction. Global change and biodiversity: future challenges. *Biol. Lett.* 4, 553–555. (doi:10.1098/rsbl.2008.0374)
- Basolo, A. L. 2008 Evolution of pleiotropic alleles for maturation and size as a consequence of predation. *Biol. Lett.* 4, 200–203. (doi:10.1098/rsbl.2007.0638)

- Takahashi, T. & Hori, M. 2008 Evidence of disassortative mating in a Tanganyikan cichlid fish and its role in the maintenance of intrapopulation dimorphism. *Biol. Lett.* **4**, 497–499. ([doi:10.1098/rsbl.2008.0244](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2008.0244))
- Vidal, N., Azvolinsky, A., Cruaud, C. & Hedges, S. B. 2008 Origin of tropical American burrowing reptiles by transatlantic rafting. *Biol. Lett.* **4**, 115–118. ([doi:10.1098/rsbl.2007.0531](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2007.0531))
- Wilkinson, M., Kupfer, A., Marques-Porto, R., Jeffkins, H., Antoniazzi, M. M. & Jared, C. 2008 One hundred million years of skin feeding? Extended parental care in a Neotropical caecilian (Amphibia: Gymnophiona). *Biol. Lett.* **4**, 358–361. ([doi:10.1098/rsbl.2008.0217](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsbl.2008.0217))