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## Editorial

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# Why a new scientific journal on wildlife in Canada?

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Canada is the second largest country of the world after Russia. It encompasses 15 ecozones, 25 per cent of the world's wetlands and boreal forests, and a diversity of landscapes reaching the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic Oceans. It is home to hundreds of wildlife species distributed across coniferous, deciduous and mixed forests, mountains and prairies, lakes, rivers, wetlands, muskegs, and marine environments. Despite the fact that Canada has over 75 universities, hundreds of provincial and territorial wildlife offices, and many wildlife researchers and managers, the number of scientific journals focusing on natural history, and on wildlife biology and conservation, is less than the number of fingers on one hand! Reporting basic ecological findings on local populations and habitats, and discussing state-of-the-art wildlife management programs, has indeed been a challenge for Canadian wildlife professionals and naturalists wishing to publish in a Canadian scientific journal.

I understand that wildlife biologists and naturalists wishing to report their findings and observations have been told by editors of non-Canadian journals that their contributions are "of local interest only", or they are "just another habitat study", or that "we already knew this". This is nonsense. In fact, data collected on species that are common, at risk, or of economic importance, in various habitats and under different environmental conditions, are essential to ascertain what we know and challenge what we think we know. New information on the status and the distribution of species is important to build conservation actions. And the jurisdictional division of wildlife in Canada requires specific context for any recommendation related to wildlife management actions. When one finds a new species, collects data that may further

our understanding of habitats and populations, or identifies conditions that may critically affect the survival of species, publishing these findings should become a priority and it should be done in a time-effective manner. Currently, there is no scientific journal in Canada that meets such a priority. There is a pressing need to fill this gap to maintain adequate communication among wildlife professionals, naturalists, and managers for the sake of wildlife conservation.

Wildlife research and resource management have changed considerably over the last century. One hundred years ago, little was known about species' distribution, populations and their habitats, predator-prey relationships, physiological constraints, genetics, taxonomy, biogeography, and other subjects related to wildlife biology and management (e.g., Proulx and Santos-Reis 2012). Our understanding of habitats, our insights into population dynamics, our ability to ask relevant questions and develop effective conservation programs are the result of field work carried out by biologists and naturalists trekking through forests, swamps and fields, capturing, handling and tracking small and large animals, collecting scats, securing nest sites, re-introducing populations, taking notes on the behavior of individuals at different phenological periods of their life, and much more (Pianka 2002; Dayton 2003). Without field-based datasets and observations, many of today's mammal, bird, reptile and amphibian populations would have become extinct, and ecosystems would have been lost forever. As Bury (2006) stated, "studies of natural history, life history and field ecology provide the factual information to address critical environmental issues..." Canadian Wildlife Biology & Management recognizes the importance of field studies, and aims

to revitalize the input of field researchers in our understanding of wildlife biology and the development of effective conservation measures. While a panoply of models with complex statistical analyses (e.g., Caswell 2001; Manly *et al.* 2002; Miller and Lacy 2005, and many others) are now available to quantitatively predict the spatio-temporal use of habitats by species, propose different management scenarios for various population demographics, and calculate the relative probability of success of various management programs, all these models should be adaptive in nature and be continuously re-evaluated as new datasets are acquired by field biologists and naturalists. In a nutshell, good field data lead to good models, and good wildlife management programs.

On the basis of their field studies, wildlife professionals should identify management issues and make recommendations to ensure the conservation of species and habitats. They should also publish the results of both successful and unsuccessful management programs so that wildlife managers can improve their own programs and identify areas where more work is required to develop effective multi-scale and multispecies conservation programs (Proulx and Santos-Reis 2012). Unfortunately, little is being published on management programs and human:wildlife conflict resolutions, especially in a Canadian context. Also, I have seen editors judging management recommendations as being too subjective when they impact on current government policies or industry activities. However, as professionals in their own field, wildlife biologists should be able to connect their scientific findings with the real world, if only to point out that there is a need to review policies and conservation measures. Canadian Wildlife Biology & Management intends to provide wildlife professionals with an opportunity to make conservation recommendations based on factual information.

In conclusion, there is a need for a new wildlife journal in Canada to help wildlife professionals and naturalists report their findings, encourage more field work on wildlife populations, habitats and behavior, and provide managers with recommendations for state-of-the-art conservation programs. It is the intent of Canadian Wildlife Biology & Management to meet this need and to bring together wildlife professionals, naturalists, and managers.

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