Natural History

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As I am now well into my first year as Lead Editor of the Natural Areas Journal, we have been making some updates, both behind the scenes to increase efficiency in the editorial and review process as well as with our author guidelines. I am excited to announce that we now accept format free submissions *and* a new article type: Natural History Articles.

Natural history observations provide the basis for much of hypothesis-driven ecological science, but the observations themselves are generally not enough for publication in many ecological journals. Further, we have seen the loss of natural history-focused journals such as the American Midland Naturalist in recent years. However, in a world that increasingly takes us away from the outdoors, how we define and describe natural history has expanded. Advances in camera traps, data loggers, community science apps, and eDNA are just some of the examples of why some have argued that natural history is experiencing a revival[1] and we can now describe the natural world better and more detailed than ever before.

We have added Natural History Articles to our article submission types in effort to provide an outlet for natural history observations and data on natural areas, both in terms of what some might consider "old school" observations as well as those made with the latest field technology. We hope this addition will encourage you and your colleagues to submit your observations, including those that are somewhat narrow in geographic or taxonomic scope or purely qualitative, but that still illustrate an important phenomenon that helps us better understand natural areas.

The submission description of this article type, recently added to our website, is below. In addition, we encourage authors to include photographs or links to videos, audio, or other media that demonstrates the article's topic.

> Natural History articles (≤ 5000 words) Reviewed by the Editorial Board, these articles discuss descriptive or opportunistic novel observations that add to our understanding of natural area biodiversity, ecology, or management. Submissions

[1] Tosa, M.I., Dziedzic, E.H., Appel, C.L., Urbina, J., Massey, A., Ruprecht, J., Eriksson, C.E., Dolliver, J.E., Lesmeister, D.B., Betts, M.G. and Peres, C.A., 2021. The rapid rise of next-generation natural history. *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*, *9*, p.698131.

should include a detailed description of the observation or phenomena, location information, any methods, and how it adds to current knowledge.

We see this article type as complementary to our current submissions and, in fact, building off of the wonderful work you are already doing or even encouraging you or your students to submit more of or different facets of their work. For example, I managed my first undergraduate led manuscript since I became Lead Editor in the Stewardship in Action article titled "Public-private partnership as a model for restoring natural areas" by Warfield et al. (this issue). This is an inspiring piece that discusses how students, local government, a corporation, and community members came together to restore 100 acres of what is clearly a locally beloved natural area, Brown's Woods. They removed and replaced an understory full of largely invasive trees and shrubs in efforts to restore oaks to their former dominance. In doing so, they recorded positive changes in native trees, birds, and bats. Most of all, however, it is a story of how true and lasting restoration takes a village. As new students come into the Brown's Woods restoration project, there may be important natural history to report, such as more information about the enhanced bird diversity or detailed information about the endangered Indiana bat's behavior in and out of restored areas.

Many of us became passionate about ecology as a result of natural history, feeling awe inspired as we learned for the first time how some ants protect aphids, how there are birds that lay eggs in another bird's nest, or how plants can produce spots on its leaves to trick ovipositing butterflies into moving on to the next host plant. Too often we come to view these observations as anecdotal to more robust data collection, but natural history has value beyond igniting passion and we encourage sharing of that which will no doubt add to scientific knowledge and natural areas management.