

Functional Ecology is moving to Open Access

Lara Ferry, Dustin Marshall, Katie J. Field, Emma J. Sayer, Enrico Rezende, Jennifer Meyer

In the very first issue of *Functional Ecology*, the founding editors, Peter Calow and John Grace, said “The success and identity of a journal depends not so much on the Society behind it, nor even on the editors and their board, but on the scientists contributing to it.” (Calow and Grace, 1987). *Functional Ecology* has been fortunate that many scientists have indeed chosen the journal as the place to publish their exciting work over the years and as we move to become a fully open access journal, we will continue to support the scientists contributing to the journal, as readers, as reviewers and as authors.

Functional Ecology has been deeply committed to increasing the accessibility of the journal for readers and authors for many years. For over a decade, every paper published in the journal has been accompanied by a free plain language summary that makes it easier for readers to find and digest useful articles. We have provided help for authors via publishing workshops held both in person and online and have published several advice articles on effective science writing (Sayer, 2018, Sayer 2019, Sayer and Ferry, 2023).

For over 15 years, we have also offered authors the option to publish Open Access in *Functional Ecology*, paying an article processing charge to make their findings freely available to the many readers without a subscription to the journal.

In recent years, the number of authors taking this option has increased significantly, with more than half of our papers now being published Open Access and thus benefitting from the increased readership that this brings. Some content, however, still remains paywalled and less accessible to readers. In our move to becoming a fully open-access journal, we assure that all our content is equally accessible to all researchers – and are also taking steps to ensure publishing in the journal remains accessible to all authors. Although the majority of our authors have funding for Open Access available (provided by their department or institution, as part of their grant funding or through the increasing number of transformational deals), we will be providing author waivers through both Research4Life and the separate British Ecological Society waiver policy.

While Research4Life waivers are offered to authors in low-income countries, additional waivers are available for authors submitting to *Functional Ecology* from the rest of the world. These waivers are granted in line with the BES waiver policy, which applies to all BES open-access journals.

The importance of the BES waiver policy is evident from data we have from our sister journal, *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* (MEE), which became a fully open-access journal two years ago. For MEE, waiver requests have come from (and been granted to) authors in over 15 different countries on 6 continents, at career stages ranging from students to emeritus professors and both within and outside of academia. Those waivers have made it possible for authors who were previously unable to publish open access to do so, and to reap the benefits of the increased exposure publishing open access brings: papers that are read more, cited more, and cited by a broader audience (Huang et al, 2024).

What we seek to publish remains unchanged: papers that significantly advance our mechanistic understanding of ecological pattern and process from the organismic to the ecosystem scale. To authors, we will continue to provide support and guidance in writing and publishing those papers, and we will continue to help readers find and access important content via plain language summaries, blog posts, podcasts or social media promotion.

Finally, we are with Peter Calow and John Grace in believing that our authors are our biggest strength. In moving to Open Access with a clear plan to support authors, we hope that the benefits of publishing in *Functional Ecology* will be available to an even larger portion of the ecological community.

We thank you for your continued support and look forward to taking this exciting step with you.

References

Calow, P. Grace, J. *Functional Ecology*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1987), p. 1

Huang, CK., Neylon, C., Montgomery, L. *et al.* Open access research outputs receive more diverse citations. *Scientometrics* **129**, 825–845 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-023-04894-0>

Sayer, E.J. (2018), The anatomy of an excellent review paper. *Funct Ecol*, 32: 2278-2281. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.13207>

Sayer, E. J. (2019). The essentials of effective scientific writing—A revised alternative guide for authors. *Functional Ecology*, 33, 1576–1579. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.13391>

Sayer, E.J. and Ferry, L.A. (2023), Demonstrating a significant advance to the field: An essential criterion for publication in *Functional Ecology*. *Funct Ecol*, 37: 2980-2983. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.14458>