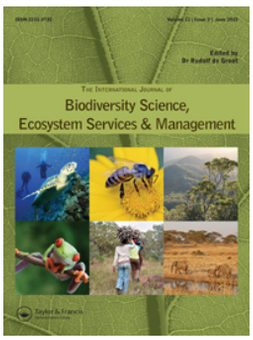

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Editorial

Alexander P.E. van Oudenhoven, Matthias Schröter & Rudolf de Groot

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Editorial

In this editorial to the second Issue of Volume 11 (2015), we provide insight into the Journal's statistics of 2014 and provide a short overview of the papers that make up the Issue.

We welcome two new Editorial Board members who joined the Journal at the end of last year: Dr. Graciela Rusch, terrestrial ecologist at the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research in Trondheim (Norway), and Dr. Bas Amelung, environmental scientist with background in climate change and tourism, based at the Environmental Systems Analysis group, Wageningen University (The Netherlands).

We are also very pleased that Sara Mulder (researcher at the Foundation for Sustainable Development, The Netherlands, based at Wageningen University) joined the Editorial Team.

Finally, *IJBESM* is strengthening its ties with the Ecosystem Services Partnership (www.es-partnership.org) and many of our contributing authors will attend the 8th ESP World Conference in Stellenbosch, South Africa (9–13 November 2015). The overarching theme of the conference is 'Ecosystem Services for Nature, People and Prosperity'. The conference will host over 40 workshops and sessions, and provides a platform that connects science with policy and practice. The conference provides an excellent opportunity for exchanging ideas and preparing papers and Special Issues for *IJBESM*. *IJBESM* readers and contributors are encouraged to register at www.espconference.org.

IJBESM in 2014

Compared to the very successful year 2013 (see Van Oudenhoven & De Groot 2014 for more information), the statistics of 2014 indicate that the Journal continues to be on the rise in terms of subscriptions, downloads, citations and article submissions. The number of institutions with access to the Journal went up by 5% compared to 2013. The number of full-text downloads increased by almost threefold compared to the same year. In particular, institutions from Northern and Central Europe (31%), Asia (13%), Northern America (12%), Africa (11%), Eastern Europe (11%) and South Asia (8%) frequently downloaded papers. The most frequently downloaded papers in 2014 deal with (participatory) biodiversity conservation (e.g. Krause & Zambonino 2013; Villarreal et al. 2013; Hodder et al. 2014) and operationalization of the ecosystem service concept (e.g. Plant & Ryan 2013; Bhatta et al. 2014; Spangenberg et al. 2014).

Importantly, the Journal's papers are being picked up and cited increasingly by authors submitting to excellent other Journals in the field, such as *Landscape Ecology, Ecological Indicators, Progress in Physical Geography, PLOS One, Applied Geography* and *Ecological Economics*. The most frequently downloaded papers in 2014 deal with mapping and modelling of ecosystem services (e.g. Guerry et al. 2012; Martínez-Harms & Balvanera 2012; Schulp et al. 2012). The trend of continued increasing citations indicates that *IJBESM* is establishing itself as an important platform for exchanging results and conceptual thinking on ecosystem service modelling and mapping in relation to management. *IJBESM* is currently not ISI-listed, but looking at citations to the Journal in 2014 in relation to articles published in 2012 and 2013, it would have a 'mock impact factor' of around 1.2 (1.07 in 2013).

An increasing number of authors are submitting to the Journal, as compared to the previous years. Around 70% more submissions were received compared to 2013 and the authors' origins are highly diverse. Most submissions in 2014 have come from authors working in India, Australia, the US, Italy and China. In addition, papers from over 50 other countries have been submitted. Despite the high diversity in topics of submitted manuscripts, submitting authors receive the decision within 40 days on average. The average time between submission and final acceptance is around 38 weeks, but a clear peak can be seen around 25 weeks. We are grateful to the editors and reviewers who have contributed to these excellent statistics.

Last but not least, the author survey ($N = 34$) yielded very positive results as well, which were similar to last year's. 'Satisfaction with the refereeing process' scored 9 (on a scale of 1–10) on average, and authors were furthermore satisfied with the speed of review (score 8), the final article (score 10) and overall experience of publishing an article (score 9). We thank the authors who participated in the survey and look forward to any other feedback from either authors or reviewers.

This Issue

Of the eight papers that make up this Issue, two papers deal with relations between management and forest biodiversity. Three other papers cover ecosystem services and

biodiversity related to livestock management, whereas the final three papers deal with social aspects of ecosystem service provision and biodiversity conservation.

Attention has increased on the important role played by lianas (woody vines) in forest regeneration, species diversity and ecosystem-level processes (Schnitzer & Bongers 2002). However, different views exist on appropriate manners to manage lianas (Addo-Fordjour et al. 2013), especially considering that forest regeneration can be slowed down after perturbation. In this Issue, Sfair et al. (2015) mathematically simulated management strategies that focused on (a) abundant liana species and (b) the largest lianas, contrasting both strategies with random liana removal for a region in southeastern Brazil. Sfair et al. (2015) found that removing larger lianas was just as effective as randomly cutting them. This management strategy was found suboptimal, especially considering that larger lianas were not aggressive. Conversely, cutting the most abundant lianas proved more effective than randomly cutting lianas, especially in the light of accelerating forest regeneration.

Impacts of other forest management activities were analysed in a community-managed forest in Nepal by Oli and Subedi (2015, this Issue). The studied management activities related to restricting access, conservation and targeting economically beneficial forest plant species. Species richness, diversity and distribution patterns, and forest stand structure were analysed. Oli and Subedi (2015) showed that the degree to which access to the community-managed forest is restricted is key to regulating forest stand structure. The study highlights the need for finding synergy between biodiversity conservation and conservation outcome.

Over one billion people rely directly on rangelands for their livelihoods, mostly through livestock grazing (65%) and agriculture (25%) in semi-arid regions (MA 2005; UN 2011). Impacts of livestock grazing on (semi-) arid rangelands can include increasing soil erosion and runoff and reducing rangeland productivity and biodiversity (Marques et al. 2007; Fu et al. 2011; Kauffman et al. 2014). In this Issue, Gamoun et al. (2015) and Kikoti and Mligo (2015) assessed livestock grazing impacts on vegetation composition in Tunisian arid rangelands and Kenyan montane rangelands, respectively. Gamoun et al. (2015) compared continuously grazed areas to areas that had been rested regularly. Their results suggest that overgrazed rangelands can be resilient and recover if given rest periods. However, lightly to moderately grazed rangelands were found to improve considerably faster compared to continuously grazed rangelands. Considering a rangeland's carrying capacity is thus crucial when deciding on a livestock grazing management strategy (Gamoun et al. 2015). Kikoti and Mligo (2015, this Issue) studied the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro (Kenya), which are affected by increased livestock grazing due to prolonged drought and agricultural expansion. The authors found that plant species diversity was higher in moderately and lightly grazed areas as compared to heavily and ungrazed slopes. However, mainly grasses, shrubs and herbs contributed to this high species richness and diversity. Evaluating biodiversity effects of livestock grazing in addition to additional outcomes (i.e. ecosystem services) is important because most of the land is communal and people living on the lower slopes depend on other ecosystem services of Mount Kilimanjaro than just those provided by livestock grazing.

Livestock farmers in Europe are encouraged to reduce environmental impacts and enhance ecosystem services provision by policymakers. In this Issue, Duru et al. (2015) developed a methodological framework which uses easily defined indicators to analyse responses to environmental and management drivers, and effects on ecosystem services. The framework was then applied to farms that differed in their orientation and in their management intensity. Duru et al. (2015) relate their results to different grass functional types and conclude that their methodological framework allows summarising relations between environmental and management drivers and ecosystem services, as well as examining trade-offs between ecosystem services.

Mountain ecosystems and the people depending on agro-ecosystems in these regions are particularly sensitive to ongoing climate change (Schroth et al. 2009; Gordon et al. 2010; Bhatta et al. 2014). In this Issue, Bhatta et al. (2015) describe participatory research methods used to analyse impacts of climate change on ecosystem services and livelihoods, and possible adaptation strategies of local peoples in the mountains of central Nepal. Climate change impacts included reduced precipitation combined with irregular rainfall patterns, which affect food production. Bhatta et al. (2015) observed that, despite the increased potential for and interest in forest ecosystem services, their availability has actually decreased because of a strict regulation on forest goods extraction and new invasive species preventing regeneration of preferred, local forest. Local adaptation strategies that were deemed efficient include changing both agricultural practices and water harvesting and management.

This Journal has frequently features studies on sacred groves in India and surrounding countries (e.g. Nagaraja et al. 2011; Blicharska et al. 2013). These studies mainly focused on the groves' role in conserving biodiversity, providing ecosystem services and different management practices to ensure this. In this Issue, Sinha and Mishra (2015) provide a more in-depth study into people's perceptions of various ecosystem services in the Garhwal Himalayas, India. Their methods included contingent valuation to calculate the willingness to pay for different ecosystem services. Six direct and seven indirect ecosystem services were identified and valued highly by the local people living in villages adjoining the sacred landscape, but their willingness to pay for landscape conservation was the lowest. This discrepancy was attributed to the difference in education and rights related to rituals and access to resource use. Improved participation and environmental awareness may be achieved by including adjoining villages in access rights and rituals and adapting a

more transparent way to manage available funds (Sinha & Mishra 2015).

Community perceptions in relation to potential conservation benefits were studied by Hill et al. (2015, this Issue). The authors studied which conditions would guarantee successful participation of local communities in conservation. Hill et al. (2015) investigated perception–behaviour relationships in El Vizcaíno Biosphere Reserve, Mexico. Although stakeholders supported nature reserve designation and recognized threats to the reserve, these perceptions did not translate into pro-conservation behaviour. The authors argue that the limited capacity of management institutions and local government agencies has resulted in lacking awareness of conservation initiatives, requiring external support to develop strong leadership and other crucial capacities that are needed to involve local actors in long-term conservation activities.

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