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The Role of Reviewer Criticism and How to Keep it in Perspective

Greetings GPNSS members! Hopefully this editorial finds you well and gearing up for the summer field season. As I write this editorial, I find myself reflecting on my time as Editor-in-Chief of TPN over the past 5 years. The experience has been personally and professionally rewarding in many ways, and I want to spend some time discussing something that I have experienced not only as a fellow author and Associate Editor, but also as a journal Editor.

Reviewer criticism. Thinking back to when I was appointed Editor, how I viewed criticism then is very different than how I think about it now. If asked then whether I enjoyed being criticized, I would promptly have answered “of course not.” However, dealing with criticism is now a daily occurrence for me, whether in the form of constructive criticism provided by referees and Associate Editors or interacting with authors who are unhappy with the outcome of the peer-review process (Chamberlain 2009). Undoubtedly, all of you can relate to having your work criticized during the peer-review process. I now (more than ever) am convinced that openly accepting criticism and maintaining an objective perspective when addressing it are fundamental components of successfully publishing your work (Chamberlain 2009). Easier said than done, right? Accepting criticism clearly is not easy, especially given the effort required to gather field data and preparation of scientific manuscripts. All of us can relate to the “sting” of having our work criticized by others. However, referees and Associate Editors are providing authors with, from what I can tell, virtually a thankless service. Admittedly, the author in me still has a hard time believing this at times, particularly following my initial review of an undesirable decision letter! Personal feelings aside, having others criticize your work ultimately improves the quality of your work. To this end, helpful comments provided by referees and Associate Editors should be embraced by authors, which at times can be difficult. However, doing increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the peer review process (Chamberlain 2009), and increases the likelihood of your work eventually be accepted for publication. Further, criticism is useful for authors and receiving constructive comments on your work is essential for ensuring a high level of publication rigor (Chamberlain 2009). Referees should strive to provide relevant criticism of a colleague's work based on your expertise and perspective that is capable of benefitting authors. What makes your review relevant and important to authors is not simply being critical, but rather your experience and knowledge that you draw upon when providing criticism to others.

As an author, I try to keep in mind that referees are selected because they have “been there, done that.” In other words, those criticizing your work are doing so because they have knowledge and experience to share that can benefit the

rigor of your work (Chamberlain 2009). Admittedly, not all criticisms are useful, but those that are can directly benefit your work. Having now been involved with the peer review process wearing dual hats, so to speak, I offer the following thoughts. I appreciate and embrace criticism as an author after being exposed to it as an Editor, having reviewed literally thousands of review comments provided by referees and Associate Editors (Chamberlain 2009). Consequently, I have gleaned more value in the peer review process and genuinely appreciate the tangible benefits of offers authors. As fellow authors, I hope you will accept criticism and see the real value of receiving critical comments of your work from others that share your same desire to maintain publication rigor.

Collectively, this issue of TPN contains a wide range of topics that reflects the breadth of work being conducted across the Great Plains. Several articles detail life history patterns and diet selection by sport/bait that should be useful to fisheries managers. For habitat managers, there is much to assimilate with articles on bed-site selection in neonatal white-tailed deer, habitat use by anglers and bluegills, environmental impacts on small mammals in shortgrass prairies, and multi-scale habitat use by ruffed grouse. For the carnivore and/or raptor enthusiasts, there are articles on bobcat predation, den characteristics of striped skunks, and distribution of diurnal raptors. This issue also includes a number of book reviews, ranging from prairie mammals, to nesting birds, to historical accounts of Wisconsin wildlife management and ecological restoration of natural areas. In short, there is a wide range of information to glean from this issue for improving future management and research activities across the Great Plains.

As part of the long-term objective to have TPN “relisted” by Thomson Reuters Web of Science, ISI Web of Knowledge, and other similar indexing engines, the editorial staff continues to work toward this end. With the publication of this issue, we have completed the formal review process by the Thomson Reuters Web of Science indexing engine; we anticipate a decision regarding the re-listing of TPN during early fall 2014. I will be diligent in updating our membership with their decision. Until next time, have a safe and enjoyable summer field season everyone!

—Christopher N. Jacques
Editor-in-Chief

LITERATURE CITED

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