

An open future for MEE

Aaron M. Ellison¹  | Robert B. O'Hara²  | Natalie Cooper³  | Nicolas Lecomte⁴ 

¹Sound Solutions for Sustainable Science, LLC, Boston, MA, USA

²Department of Mathematical Sciences and Centre for Biodiversity Dynamics, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway

³Natural History Museum, London, United Kingdom

⁴Canada Research Chair in Polar and Boreal Ecology and Centre d'Études Nordiques, Department of Biology, Université de Moncton, Moncton, NB, Canada

Correspondence

Aaron M. Ellison

Email: amellison17@gmail.com

The shift towards open access publishing of research has been occurring for the past two decades and has accelerated recently with some of the world's largest research funders mandating that their funded research should soon be published only in fully open access journals.

Methods in Ecology and Evolution (MEE) was launched 12 years ago as a subscription journal. Since MEE started, authors have had the option to pay an article processing charge (APC), voluntarily making their papers open access. The number of papers published open access in MEE has grown steadily, reaching nearly 50% in 2021.

The time has now come for MEE to take the next step and become a fully open access journal. From January 2023, no articles in MEE will be published behind a paywall. Anyone, anywhere in the world will be able to access all the methods and techniques we publish.

This is an exciting move for the journal, and one that we believe will ensure that the most robust and advanced methods can be readily used by ecologists and evolutionary biologists worldwide to improve and accelerate their research. It also sits well with the British Ecological Society's belief in and promotion of open science while ensuring a sustainable financial footing for the journal into the future.

The decision to transition MEE to a fully open access journal was made by the BES Board of Trustees after consulting with a number of stakeholders, including the Society's Publications Committee, the Senior Editors of MEE and other BES journals, and the Society's publishing team.

We believe that MEE is a great journal to become entirely open access because our authors already choose to publish their papers openly 48% of the time, and we are confident that our healthy submission rate will continue to increase.

For those of you who are readers, we know this will be a welcome news. We hope that you will be able to use the high-quality methods and techniques that we publish in your own research, accelerating your work and progressing ecology and evolutionary biology.

For those of you who are also potential authors, we hope you are as positive about broadening the reach of your research as we are.

But there are costs to publishing, whether subscription based or full open access. Therefore, all papers submitted to the journal from 6 July 2022 will be open access on publication and authors will pay an APC. From 1 January 2023, the paywall will also be removed from any existing content. The scientific review process for research submitted to the journal will not change. Waiver requests are handled by the journal's editorial office staff, with no input from academic editors, so as to ensure clear editorial independence.

Most MEE authors already have access to a source of funding to cover APCs. These sources include grant funding, institutional or departmental funds, or transformational read-and-publish deals. For authors publishing open access for the first time, we urge you to speak to representatives of your library or department in the first instance to find out which options are available.

At the same time, we understand there will be concerns around article processing charges, particularly for colleagues in the Global South. Our publisher, Wiley, is a member of Research4Life, and thereby grants full or 50% waivers for papers whose corresponding authors are based in low-income nations. The list of eligible countries can be found on [the Research4Life website](#).

We do know that some corresponding authors will be unable to cover the APC through any of these methods. Those individuals, from anywhere in the world, can apply directly to MEE for a full waiver. Priority for these additional waivers will be given to researchers without institutional employment, particularly early career researchers and post-docs, and to individual researchers who can show that national or institutional support is unavailable.

Finally, change can be difficult. But as ecologists and evolutionary biologists in the vanguard of our fields, we can lead in meeting change with change. We will be carefully tracking the impact of this transition to open access on the rates and locations of submissions, authors and readers, and we will revise and update our policies,

especially those regarding waivers, to ensure that the journal remains inclusive and accessible to all.

We thank our authors and our readers for their continued support during and after this complex transition.

PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/2041-210X.13911>.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

This article does not contain data.

ORCID

Aaron M. Ellison  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4151-6081>

Robert B. O'Hara  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9737-3724>

Natalie Cooper  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4919-8655>

Nicolas Lecomte  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8473-5375>