

# The Back Page

## Diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in *Human–Wildlife Interactions*

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OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, scholarly publishing professionals have continued strengthening operations and policies to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in scientific journals (e.g., Council of Science Editors [CSE] 2022). These efforts, which can also include increasing access to published work and editorial opportunities, span all demographics of a journal—authors, reviewers, editors, publication staff, and global readership.

From my perspective as a professional communicator, orienting a scientific journal to better meet the needs of diversity, equity, and inclusion requires editorial accountability through transparent publication processes. Similar to Blewett et al. (2019), I view journal editors as uniquely positioned to lead and bolster DEI efforts as part of their role within the scholarly publishing infrastructure.

In a move toward this level of transparency for *Human–Wildlife Interactions*, I interviewed Dr. Terry Messmer, editor-in-chief, about his current direction and next steps in addressing DEI for the journal.

### What do you see as the journal's responsibility toward DEI?

"Part of our job is not only to promote [DEI], but also to help put in place mechanisms to ensure that there is adequate representation. It's a matter of including everyone, not only in the open access to the journal but also with the opportunity to submit and to have material published on the topics of human–wildlife interactions and human–wildlife conflicts. From the standpoint of the journal, we want to continue developing a community of authors, a community of reviewers, and a community of associate editors."

### What shapes your perspective on what is needed for DEI?

"A lot comes from the organization I'm part of—the university. I volunteered as a Title IX hearing officer, and it was a lot of extensive train-

ing about laws, about processes. Going through the process of having served as a hearing officer made me more sensitive, more cognizant that there are better things we could do. We've got university policy, agencies we work with that have policies. There is also our involvement with the Council of Science Editors. As I hear about these things and we have these conversations, I also do research on my own. So that's where my frame of reference comes from. It's existing policy, it's self-learning, it's engagement and activities that I feel are important from the standpoint of ensuring that we've got diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus and in our publication."

### What is a specific example of how the journal is prioritizing DEI?

"We have a lot of diversity in our authors, including with agency backgrounds. Authors have stories that need to be told and have some contribution to make. Maybe they struggle in terms of style and format. In looking at some of the articles, I see their interest and receptiveness to adapt and make changes. They're willing to work with me, and I'm willing to work with them. They have to understand that there are certain levels of quality, that the journal has certain standards, and so if I get a sense that they're feeling that, we can work with it. You have to make the time to do that."

### What are the next steps for DEI in *Human–Wildlife Interactions*?

"As an editorial team, I think we're practicing and we're cognizant of what we need to do to become better. It's a work in progress—more communication with associate editors for input and updates, establishing that dialogue. We need to develop and modify guidelines and a statement about the journal and our publishing process, both the policy that we have and how we are going to effect change to our policy. Our journal is open to anyone, and we support and encourage submissions that reflect on changes

in society when dealing with some of the issues within human–wildlife interactions. We need to continue to be a journal about empowering and building people.”

### Literature cited

- Blewett, K., C. M. LaVecchia, L. R. Micciche, and J. Morris. 2019. Editing as inclusion activism. *College English* 81:273–296.
- Council of Science Editors (CSE). 2022. DEI scholarly resources. Council of Science Editors, Wheat Ridge, Colorado, USA, <<https://www.councilscienceeditors.org/resource-library/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-resources/>>. Accessed March 12, 2022.

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