

Editorial comments

2013 will be the 40th Anniversary of *New Zealand Natural Sciences (NZNS)* and its predecessor *Mauri Ora*, and over that period it has been a strong contributor to the scientific wealth of our region. However, future challenges include the pressure for researchers to publish in high-profile journals and the increasing importance of technology, meanings that traditional forms of publishing are being eschewed in favour of electronic formats. With these factors in mind, *NZNS* has included a questionnaire with this year's mailout aimed at gauging the present and future needs of subscribers and contributors. Complimenting this move is the comment below provided by the editorial board outlining the vision for the journal moving ahead. A short retrospective follows this, looking at the history of the journal and its valuable contribution over the years.

With this year's volume, we had some difficulties attracting early submissions, which has contributed to it being published later than normal. We apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused, and would like to emphasise our desire to utilise the website to enable quicker dissemination of accepted articles in the future.

The journal has a strong tradition of publishing valuable articles documenting aspects of the natural sciences in New Zealand and Antarctica. One of the initial aims of the journal was to provide a useful outlet for students preparing and submitting their research for publication. I can only but reiterate previous calls by past editors for supervisors to encourage students to consider *NZNS* as a potential forum for their research. Moreover, since its inception, the journal has been run and produced almost exclusively by student volunteers, and I can only but emphasise the value of this service. We would like to encourage motivated students considering volunteer work outside their studies to offer their time and skills to *NZNS*. Being involved with the journal is a great honour and provides valuable experience.

Finally, I would like to thank the contributing authors, reviewers, and members of the editorial board. The support made available by the School of Biological Sciences in producing the journal is greatly appreciated, as is the assistance provided by Matt Walters regarding the posters and the website. I look forward to the continuing success of the journal in providing a valuable outlet for researchers documenting aspects of the natural sciences in our region.

Francis J. Burdon - Editor

Comment from the Editorial Board

Significant changes in how scientific papers are published have seen the establishment of new on-line journals, greatly improved internet access of established journals, and a fall in subscriptions to, and use of, traditional hard-copy journals. Emphasis on publication in high ranking journals has also put pressure on "lower level" publications such as local natural history titles. We believe *NZNS* continues to have a role in the publication of local science but in accordance with the times are contemplating moving to a solely on-line format. If so, we hope such a move will have the continuing support of our subscribers and contributors.

The history of the New Zealand Journal of Natural Sciences

The NZ Journal of Natural Sciences (NZNS) began life as *Mauri Ora*, under the auspices of the Biological Society, University of Canterbury. The Society was established in 1972 by students and staff of the University's Zoology and Botany Departments to provide extracurricular educational activities such as lectures and field trips, as well as social functions for its members. Rex Gibson, then a Masters student in Zoology, was the primary force behind establishing the journal, which was seen as a place where student research could be published and circulated to a wide scientific audience. It therefore followed in the tradition established by the now discontinued *Tane* (Journal of the Auckland University Field Club) and *Tuatara* (Journal of the Biological Society Victoria University of Wellington). The original name of the journal (*Mauri Ora*) was selected following a competition and signifies the Maori concept of the "soul of nature". The change of name to *NZNS* was made in 1988 in the belief that it would give the journal a higher profile and attract more manuscripts from outside the University of Canterbury.

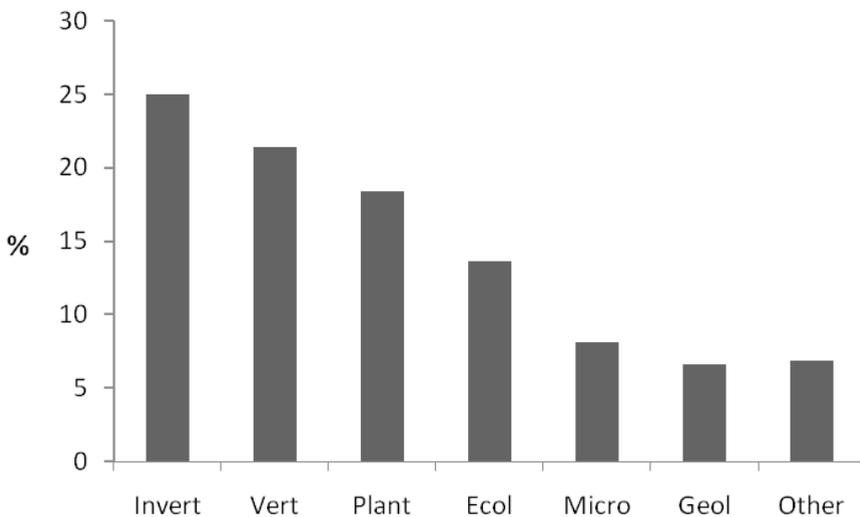


Figure 1. Subject areas of papers published in NZNS (excluding special issues) 1973-2011. $N = 305$ papers.

The journal has an editorial board comprising students and staff of the university and elsewhere, and almost always the editors have been current graduate students of the University of Canterbury. The first editor was the late Seddon Bennington who subsequently became chief executive of Te Papa Museum of New Zealand. Volumes of *NZNS* have typically been published annually and have contained an average of 10 research papers per issue. Book reviews have also been included in some years. In addition, four special issues of the journal have been published, including Volume 12 (1985), which commemorated 25 years of research at the Edward Percival Field Station, Kaikoura. All papers submitted to the journal are peer-reviewed.

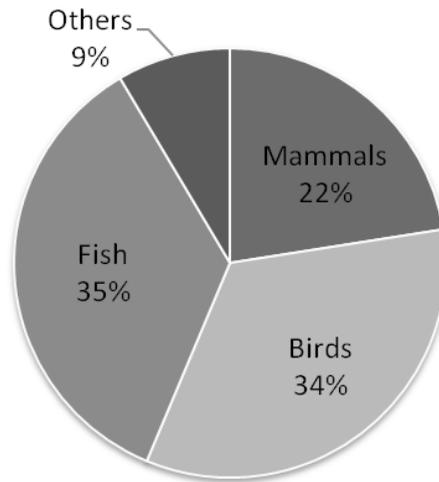


Figure 2. Percentages of papers dealing with major groups of vertebrates. $N = 71$ papers.

The content of the journal is diverse as shown in Figure 1, and although dominated by field-based studies, it has included microbiological and biochemical papers. Of 332 papers published between 1973 and 2011 (excluding special issues) 25% have focussed primarily on invertebrates, 21% on vertebrates and 18% on plants. Fish and bird papers dominate the vertebrate category (Figure 2). Papers classified as ecological are mainly plant community studies, and many of the geological papers deal with fossils and other aspects of palaeontology. Most of the papers categorised as “other” in Figure 1 describe sampling and statistical methods. Almost half the field-based papers deal with terrestrial organisms and environments (Figure 3).

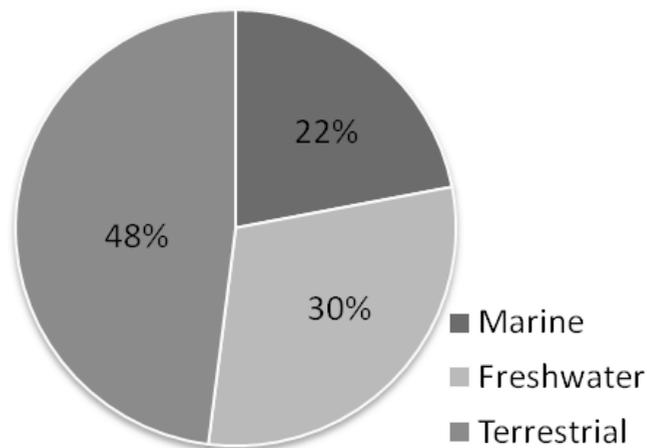


Figure 3. Percentages of field-based papers devoted primarily to marine (including estuarine), freshwater, and terrestrial environments. $N = 305$ papers.

Papers in NZNS and its predecessor *Mauri Ora* have been cited regularly in the scientific literature. According to Google Scholar (accessed 12 August 2012) the most cited article is:

Duncan, R. P. (1989). An evaluation of errors in tree age estimates based on increment cores in kahikatea (*Dacrycarpus dacrydioides*). *New Zealand Natural Sciences* 16: 31-27 (158 citations).

Other well cited papers are:

Anderson, N. H. (1982). A survey of aquatic insects associated with wood debris in New Zealand streams. *Mauri Ora* 10: 21-33.

Winterbourn, M. J. (1974). Larval Trematoda parasitizing the New Zealand species of *Potamopyrgus* (Gastropoda: Hydrobiidae). *Mauri Ora* 2: 17-30.

Winterbourn, M. J. & Fegley, A. 1989: Effects of nutrient enrichment and grazing on periphyton assemblages in some spring-fed, South Island streams. *New Zealand Natural Sciences* 16: 57-65.

Burrows, C. J. 1994: Fruit, seeds, birds and the forests of Banks Peninsula. *New Zealand Natural Sciences* 21: 87-108.

Fielder, D. R. & Jones, M. B. 1978: Observations of feeding behaviour in two New Zealand mud crabs (*Helice crassa* and *Macrophthalmus hirtipes*). *Mauri Ora* 6: 41-46.

NZNS Editorial Board