

Editor's Note: The Bulletin and Scientific Peer Review

We at the Central Valley Bird Club view the Bulletin as serving several valuable roles. First, we try to publish information that is interesting and useful to our members. Also important, however, is for the information in the Bulletin to contribute to scientific knowledge and bird conservation. We recognize that these aims can sometimes be in conflict, and we try to balance them. We avoid articles about birders and birding per se, and focus on information about birds. We also stay away from complicated, theoretical, or limited scientific studies with complex statistical analyses. But we do try to contribute worthwhile scientific information on bird distribution, status, identification, ecology, and conservation.

We are proud that our articles have contributed over the years to science and conservation. For example, Bulletin articles have been cited in other papers published in widely read and prestigious ornithological journals, such as the Auk, Condor, Journal of Field Ornithology, and Western Birds. We also have been on the forefront in publishing up-to-date information on the status and conservation of a variety of species in the Central Valley, including West Nile virus-susceptible species, Swainson's Hawk, Mountain Plover, wintering raptors, Bank Swallow, Tricolored Blackbird, and many others.

A hallmark of scientific publishing is the peer review process. In brief, peer review involves subjecting submitted papers to independent review by knowledgeable individuals who can offer opinions about the scientific soundness of the material and suggestions for improvement. The editor then considers these comments in deciding whether to accept the paper for publication, and identifies what comments should be addressed by the authors.

The Bulletin has had a variable process for peer review, depending on the types of articles we publish. Some articles are popular in nature rather than strictly scientific, and do not warrant peer review. For many articles that are more scientific in character I, as editor, have felt qualified to provide both editorial and scientific review, although technically this does not represent true peer review. I have often chosen to serve in this dual role to move the articles more quickly through the publication schedule. In other cases, particularly where the paper is of a particularly scientific nature, or addresses a conservation controversy, I have sent the paper out for full peer review. We have not, however, made clear to readers which articles have gone through which review process.

There are several benefits to implementing a more rigorous peer review process for the Bulletin, including improving the quality and credibility of the published papers. A more active and visible peer review process also could

improve the reputation of the Bulletin as a source for publishing scientific papers and thereby increase submittals. Potential downsides of an enhanced peer review process are the increased editorial workload and time required from the authors' initial submission of manuscripts to ultimate publication and the potential for articles to become too technical (i.e., unreadable).

As a result of discussions with several of the Bulletin's Editorial Board members and the club's Board of Directors, I am implementing a pilot effort to put greater emphasis on a rigorous peer review process for scientific and conservation-oriented submissions to the Bulletin. Also, starting with this issue, we will provide greater transparency in describing the editorial process that has been applied to the Bulletin's articles. Specifically, we will designate each published article that goes through formal peer review as "*Peer-Reviewed Paper*" on the first page.

For the two peer-reviewed papers in this issue, review did take longer and increased the workload for the authors and me as editor. But the process identified valuable suggestions that have improved the quality of papers and, we hope, the scientific credibility of the results. For the paper in which I served as lead author, I appointed Ed Pandolfino as guest editor, to preserve independence in the decisions regarding the paper's acceptance and revisions. I thank Ed for serving effectively in this role.

These changes in editorial policy are not expected to change the experience of reading the Bulletin for our member readers. We will still strive to continue to provide interesting and readable articles, that also may have more credibility and influence in the realms of science and conservation. We will evaluate the benefits and possible detriments of the peer review process on an ongoing basis and adjust as necessary. I welcome your thoughts on this topic or any others related to the Bulletin.

Daniel Airola, Editor