

## Research Notes vs. Research Articles

Greetings GPNSS members! I hope this email finds you well, winding down another academic year, and looking forward to the summer field season. Warm temperatures, peak foliage, and heightened anticipation of the start of another field season are upon us following a long winter season and unusually wet spring for many of us across the Great Plains. Here in westcentral Illinois, wild turkeys are gobbling, neotropical migrants are singing and establishing breeding territories, and white-tailed deer are within days of giving birth to the next generation of fawns. Granted, there are many outdoor activities to participate in, though oppressive heat and humidity that will soon grip the Great Plains have those of us who enjoy cooler fall temperatures and a blanket of fresh snow on the landscape already counting down the days until the first day of fall. Just 3–4 more months....

Following peer-review, a common recommendation I frequently receive from Associate Editors is “major revision and reducing manuscripts to Research Notes.” I want to provide more clarity in regards to Research Notes (hereafter “Notes”) versus feature-length Articles (hereafter “Articles”), because of apparent confusion by potential authors to differentiate between Notes and Articles when preparing manuscripts for publication. Likewise and somewhat surprisingly, I have encountered reluctance and resistance from authors when I (or Associate Editors) request that Articles be reformatted as Notes (Chamberlain 2009). Thus, I am hopeful that this editorial will provide clarity regarding my vision for Notes and helpful suggestions for appropriately preparing Notes.

Notes are equally as important as Articles published in *TPN* and often provide relevant and important “natural history” information of interest to readers and often lacking in the published literature (Chamberlain 2009). There are three fundamental differences, however, between Notes and Articles. First and most important, the scope of Notes is narrower than that of Articles. For instance, Notes may include study designs that lack spatial or temporal replication, but have defensible interpretation and population-level inferences that are well-supported by empirical data derived directly from the study (Chamberlain 2009). Second, Notes typically are shorter in length than Articles, thus provide prospective authors with an outlet for their research when formatting as an Article is insufficient; notes are  $\leq 14$  pages whereas Articles are 15–50 pages. Third, there are notable differences in formatting between Notes and Articles because Notes are more succinct. Articles include 9 first-level headings (e.g., Abstract, Key Words, Study Area, Methods, Results, Discussion, Management Implications, Acknowledgments, and Literature Cited) and can include second- and third-level headings. In contrast, Notes only include a “literature cited” first-level heading; second- and third-level subheadings are not permitted.

In short, Notes are not intended to provide an outlet for research with limited regional application or scope, work that suffers from design flaws, or that has questionable interpretation and tenuous inference (Chamberlain 2009). In other words, Notes are not a publication venue for Articles that suffer from fatal design flaws, nor should they be considered inferior to Articles (Chamberlain 2009). Much to my surprise I have encountered substantial reluctance from some authors when I have requested that Articles be reduced to Notes, which in my opinion, is related to the perception that Notes are a lower quality publication than Articles. Not only is this a frivolous argument, to my knowledge it also is unsupported by empirical data. With certainty, Notes are subject to the same level of rigor throughout the peer-review process as Articles. Notes and Articles are reviewed by the same team of referees and Associate Editors, and the same Editor-in-Chief reviews them for acceptance. Additionally, they are critiqued by the same editorial team and published concurrent with Articles (Chamberlain 2009). A common source of reluctance to reduce to a Note is a net loss of information. However, I would argue that it often is not necessary to present every minute detail of your study design to communicate the relevance and importance of your work. In such cases, it is often sufficient to cite previously published works to capture specific details of your study design (e.g., animal capture techniques; Chamberlain 2009). By doing so, authors can avoid instances of losing their readers in excessive amounts of detail and focus instead on highlighting the most relevant data to be gleaned from their study (Chamberlain 2009). When preparing your manuscripts for submission to *TPN*, please keep in mind that Notes are intended for work with equal relevance to our readers (Chamberlain 2009). Further, formatting as a Note does not result in loss of information critical to interpretation, readers are encouraged to format their work as a Note rather than an Article. Several benefits of publishing notes include a more concise presentation of results, rapid acquisition of relevant information, and reduced publication costs through reduced page charges (Chamberlain 2009).

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 is continuing to work toward this end. Most recently, we are now contracting with a professional publishing company who will now be assembling and distributing future issues of *TPN*. Further, JSTOR is currently working to expand its coverage of natural history, ecology, and the plant sciences. To this end, JSTOR has formally invited the Great Plains Natural Society to include our publication (*TPN*) in their existing archive. Current GPNSS executive board members are working with JSTOR to achieve this objective. The formal

review of *TPN* by the Web of Science is underway and will continue until they have received 3 journal issues in a timely manner. Additionally, our Editorial staff continues to work with authors to publish proceedings of the 23<sup>rd</sup> North American Prairie Conference (NAPC) as a special issue in *TPN*. To this end, we have expanded our current editorial staff by adding several new Associate Editors, whose expertise has been invaluable in overseeing the timely review of NAPC submissions. We will be publishing the special issue during early fall 2013, which also will expedite the formal review of *TPN* by the Web of Science. Thus, we anticipate a decision regarding the listing of *TPN* by the Web of Science during early winter 2014. I will be diligent in providing our membership with regular updates regarding the formal review process.

In closing, if you have any questions, comments, or concerns about *TPN*, please feel free to contact me. After all, this is your journal, and I very much appreciate your thoughts about it. Until next time, have a safe summer field season everyone!

—Christopher N. Jacques  
*Editor-in-Chief*

#### LITERATURE CITED

Chamberlain, M. J. 2009. Editor's Message – What Constitutes a Research Note? *Journal of Wildlife Management* 73(3):307–308; DOI: 10.2193/2009-017.