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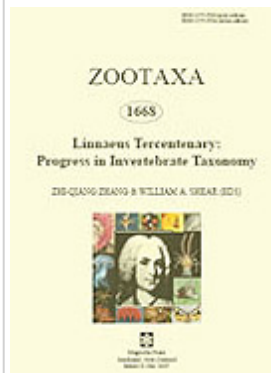


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Journal Interviews : 2008 : 2008 August - Zootaxa

JOURNAL INTERVIEWS - 2008
August 2008

Zootaxa
A Featured Journal from *Essential Science Indicators*SM

The journal Zootaxa has been named a Rising Star in the field of Plant & Animal Science by ScienceWatch.com multiple times this year, meaning that the journal has had the highest percent increase in total cites compared with other journals in its field. The journal's current citation record in this field in Essential Science Indicators from Thomson Reuters includes 3,333 papers cited a total of 2,451 times between January 1, 1998 and April 30, 2008.*

Since its founding in 2001, Zootaxa has published 8,141 new taxa. The journal is published by Magnolia Press.

In the interview below, ScienceWatch.com talks with Zootaxa's Chief Editor and Founder, Dr. Zhi-Qiang Zhang, about the journal's history and citation achievements.

SW: Did you expect Zootaxa to become highly cited, or is this surprising to you?

Yes, many of my co-editors and I do expect *Zootaxa* to become highly cited in the long term, but are surprised that this has happened so rapidly.

SW: How would you account for the high citation rate of Zootaxa?

Zootaxa has become the largest and the most important journal in taxonomy, and taxonomy has been fundamental to all branches of biological sciences, especially biodiversity, biogeography, and evolutionary development, as well as of ecology, the environment, and medicine. *Zootaxa* provides more high-quality taxonomic information of all animal taxa more promptly than any other journal. This surely must be the most important factor contributing to the rapid increase in the citation rate of the journal. Unlike most other taxonomic journals, *Zootaxa* encourages monographs and large taxonomic revisions difficult to publish elsewhere. These comprehensive, large works attract high citations to *Zootaxa*.

SW: Would you give us a brief history of the journal?

Millions of species of animals remain unknown to science. Although there are many journals that may publish taxonomic papers, it is increasingly difficult to publish papers on descriptive taxonomy in a timely and cost-effective manner. Most journals are of a fixed size/frequency and have limits on the length of papers. This impediment in publishing has a huge negative impact on taxonomy—the delay and difficulty in getting works published can discourage taxonomists who worked for years, and unpublished works are a huge waste of talent and resources. Much needed is a rapid and efficient journal for descriptive papers and monographs in taxonomy.

Zootaxa was established as a rapid journal at the start of this century to remove these impediments in taxonomy. From the start, *Zootaxa* was designed as an innovative journal for the future. Each paper or monograph was individually issued, printed, and bound as soon as it was accepted to allow the fastest possible publication. The online edition was published on the same philosophy to assist dissemination over the Internet. There is no fixed frequency, nor is there a limit on the number of papers published, nor the length of papers published. There is no page charge for publishing in *Zootaxa* and color illustrations are published free of charge in the online edition. All authors are provided e-reprints (PDF) of their papers without charge. Authors with funding have the option to pay a small fee for allowing open access of their papers. The rapidity, cost-effectiveness, high-quality review, and flexibility in the type and length of manuscripts are all attractive features desired by most taxonomists.

The journal has received overwhelming support from zoological taxonomists around the world and rapidly transformed itself from a small journal publishing 20 papers totaling 302 pages in 2001 to a mega-journal publishing 1,020 papers in 22,052 pages as frequently as twice each week in 2006. In May 2005, short papers of fewer than 60 pages were no longer published separately; instead, they were grouped to form issues of 60, 64, or 68 pages to save paper, printing cost, and mailing cost. Since then, *Zootaxa* has been publishing several issues on multiple occasions each week with over 20,000 pages each year.

"The large volume of works and citations of Zootaxa have shown that taxonomic activity could be much more intense than it was previously perceived."

SW: What historical factors have contributed to the success of *Zootaxa*?

Certainly the biodiversity crisis and the subsequent resolution of many countries to remove the "taxonomic impediment" in their respective nations have increased productivity in this area of science in recent years.

Also, there has been an important historic trend in taxonomic publishing over the last 20 years, in which journal editors have been making increasing demands on authors to provide phylogenetic and biogeographic analysis, molecular systematics, and other modern types of information in taxonomic papers. These publishers have lost sight of the very strong need for basic description and classification of animals, and many journals no longer accept papers of that type. In addition, there are long publication delays and/or increasing page charges for journals that do publish descriptive taxonomic papers. *Zootaxa* provides a much-needed outlet for such works that are difficult to publish elsewhere.

"The Internet has significantly changed the way taxonomic information is shared."

Another important factor is the participation of a large number of editors who are volunteers; they are practicing taxonomists themselves as well as being editors. This creates a community of people with shared values that is very important to the success of our science.

SW: Have there been specific developments in the fields served by *Zootaxa* that may have contributed?

This is related to the last question. Specific scientific developments in zoology have favored *Zootaxa* in an unexpected way. The increasing popularity of phylogenetic and molecular systematics has led many other publishers away from their traditional markets in descriptive taxonomy. But there are still basic needs for rapid availability of taxonomic names and high-quality taxonomic information is required for basic knowledge of biodiversity and for related ecological and phylogenetic studies.

SW: What, in your view, is this journal's main significance or contribution in the field of Plant & Animal Science?

Provision of names and other high-quality taxonomic and phylogenetic information about animals. Acceleration of rates of descriptions of new taxa, some of which may be threatened or endangered.

The large volume of works and citations of *Zootaxa* have shown that taxonomic activity could be much more intense than it was previously perceived. Many colleagues have diagnosed the taxonomic impediment as a lack of enough professionals or of high-throughput methods to describe biodiversity before its loss. *Zootaxa* has elegantly showed that to these two points we should add the lack of proper dissemination media. There are many highly productive taxonomists out there just asking for efficient outlet to publish high-quality works. Knowing that *Zootaxa* is there to publish their quality works regardless of the length of papers or number of papers encourages taxonomists to be more productive than they were before *Zootaxa*'s availability.

SW: How do you see your field(s) evolving in the next few years?

Traditional taxonomy is likely to experience major growth in the next few years. The Internet has significantly changed the way taxonomic information is shared. Facilities such as the Biodiversity Heritage Library have enabled open access to legacy taxonomic literature that was difficult to access in the past (especially in developing countries). Many open databases (e.g. GIBF, Species2000, ZooBank, etc.) will greatly facilitate taxonomic research on a global scale. The increased output of taxonomic research will demand for more effective outlets for publication.

SW: What role do you see for your journal?

Zootaxa leads the way in the innovative and efficient publication of taxonomic information. Some other journals have already adopted some of *Zootaxa*'s methods. *Zootaxa* will continue its own development by innovation and will meet the needs of taxonomists to publish their works. The large international base of authors (over 4,000) in *Zootaxa* will play an increasing role in forming a community or society of people with shared values that can further contribute to the development of this branch of science.

Zootaxa has played a more significant role than most other international journals in helping taxonomists in biodiversity-rich developing countries to publish their works. *Zootaxa* is also very supportive of graduate students and young scientists everywhere. We expect the journal to continue to evolve and be able to meet the publication needs of our authors, and, at the same time, reflect the pattern of growth of our branch of science, which is expected to experience rapid development due to the integration of the Internet with taxonomy as well as the increasing awareness of the importance of taxonomy to the biodiversity crisis. ■

Zootaxa

Dr. Zhi-Qiang Zhang, Chief Editor and Founder
Magnolia Press, publishers

Zootaxa's most-cited paper with 39 cites to date:

Monne ML and Napp DS, "Cladistic analysis of the tribe Torneutini Thomson (Coleoptera : Cerambycidae : Cerambycinae : Trachyderoinia)," *Zootaxa* (1062): 1-56, 2005. Source: *Essential Science Indicators* from Thomson Reuters.

Additional Information:

Zootaxa was named a Rising Star in Plant & Animal Science in **May** and **July** 2008.

Keywords: taxonomy, animal taxa, phylogenetics, biodiversitytaxonomic publishing practices.



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