

## A year in numbers, a year in science

*Communications Earth & Environment's* first anniversary marks an important milestone on our path to maturity. We would like to share and celebrate how much the journal has grown, quantitatively and qualitatively.

Last summer, we started publishing with the ambition of eventually covering all areas of the Earth, environmental and planetary sciences. We were only able to touch on a small selection of the multitude of current and important geoscience themes with our inaugural batch of six articles and editorial. A year later, we have received almost 1000 submissions, and have published more than 200 papers that span research on the planet and its people in the past, present and future.

To root the journal firmly in the communities we serve and to help with the assessment of these manuscripts, we have expanded our Editorial Board from the five original board members to a thriving [Board of 30](#). We would like to highlight the manifold themes that matter to our community. As part of our anniversary collection we therefore have invited our board members to introduce to our broad audience an important aspect of their respective fields that they are passionate about. Clearly, this is an exciting time to be working in the Earth sciences: many have highlighted enormous advances in measuring capabilities that open new avenues for research, on Earth and beyond. The impact of humans on their environment—through changes in atmospheric composition, land use and infrastructure—are a theme that runs through the pieces. This is perhaps the biggest challenge of our time. We have assembled the viewpoints thematically in four Comment articles. The articles cover the [oceans and cryosphere](#), the [atmosphere](#), [human impacts on the environment](#), and [solid Earth and planets](#).

As a complement to this scientific outlook, we are introducing a series of careers perspectives, which will explore some of the impacts of publishing an article in *Communications Earth & Environment* on our authors' lives and professional development. In [the first article in this series](#), Michalea King writes about her sudden transition from working on her Ph.D. in

lockdown to several weeks spent communicating the findings of her paper in media interviews and on social media. We hope that her account will support and inspire others.

As we have expanded over the past year, we have been conscious of the imperative to continue to reflect the diversity of our communities in our pool of reviewers. We found that a fairly stable proportion of around 65% of our reviewers give their gender as male. The number of those declaring themselves as female has dropped slightly since launch, from 31 to 27%, with a commensurate increase in selections of "Prefer not to say". We are proud of our Editorial Board members, who have handled an ever increasing portion of our submissions over the past year (including reviewer assignments), for keeping the gender balance steady within uncertainty. We will continue to work towards further improvements.

Our Editorial Board members hail from all continents (except Antarctica), and that is reflected in our reviewer base: scientists in 64 countries around the world have contributed to peer review at *Communications Earth & Environment*—a slightly broader geographical coverage even than the 60 countries our authors are based in. [We are grateful](#) for each and every one of our reviewers for upholding the integrity of the scientific record and improving the research we publish. [We have also introduced](#) an Award scheme for particularly outstanding contributions to peer review.

Parachute science, where teams of scientists, usually from the western sphere drop into other countries without involvement of local researchers, has increasingly come under scrutiny. For example, looking at the field of palaeontology, the five places worst hit by parachute science have been identified as the Dominican Republic, Myanmar, Namibia, Greenland and Tanzania (in a preprint<sup>1</sup>). At *Communications Earth & Environment*, we



consider it best practice to involve scientists that work in the location that is being investigated, from the conception of a research project (or before). We will step up our efforts to systematically query and remind corresponding authors of articles where this appears to have been omitted. We will ask reviewers to consider whether any scientific conclusions can be considered robust where local knowledge has not been included, for example, to provide ground truth in remote-sensing studies or an overview of relevant sites for fieldwork-based research. Taking into account local perspectives cannot be considered optional; it is important not only for the sake of scientific accuracy but also in order to build capacity and to bring a diversity of perspectives to any research problem<sup>2</sup>.

Our first year of publishing at *Communications Earth & Environment* has been

an amazing journey that has expanded our horizon: many thanks to our authors, reviewers, and readers for their contributions, thoughts and feedback. We are looking forward to continuing on this inspiring and stimulating path.

Published online: 02 September 2021

## References

1. Raja, N. B. et al. Colonial history and global economics distort our understanding of deep-time biodiversity. Preprint at *Earth ArXiv*, <https://doi.org/10.31223/X5802N> (2021).
2. Rodrigues, R. R. Downside up: science matters equally to the Global South. *Commun. Earth Environ.* 2, 100 (2021).



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