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Beginning the Second Half of the Journal's Century: Perspectives and other Special Papers

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All of last year, the Journal of Herpetology (JH) celebrated its half-century of publication with a number of special features in each of the four issues. That 50th volume marked the beginning of a change in different color formatting, and the cover of each issue included unique and historically relevant images. In addition, the March issue featured a thorough history of the events and people who created and continued to shape JH (Adler, 2016). The September issue included a special essay on herpetological ethics (Perry, 2016), a topic that has become important in a number of journals (not just herpetology), and the December issue included a special, invited essay looking at possible future aspects of communicating and publishing in herpetological journals (Seigel, 2016).

We begin the second half-century of JH with an exciting change in the way we publish papers. Starting in January 2017, this 51st volume of JH moves to a continuous publication model, where each paper will go directly into production after acceptance. Prior to this volume each paper had an online pre-print through Online First; then, several months would pass before page proofs and publication. With our new publishing model, Online First is eliminated because papers will go directly from acceptance to copy editing, page proofs, and publication. Now the online publication is the official publication of record and the print issues will follow with a collection of the most recent papers. We are pleased with this change, because we expect papers to be published much faster than was possible before.

To kick off this new Volume 51, we begin the first issue with two special papers. While JH publishes data-rich papers that rigorously test hypotheses or present novel taxonomic descriptions, five years ago it began publishing invited perspectives pieces from prominent herpetologists that discuss perspectives on changes in herpetology. These colleagues share with us their perspectives on a variety of topics that come from a career of rich and diverse experiences (a complete listing of these perspectives, to date, appear below). The perspective paper in this issue is written by Dr. Eric Pianka who draws from his long career studying lizards, reflects on habitat and other ecological changes he has observed, and on challenges that future lizard ecologists can expect.

The second article is a synthesis paper written by Dr. Ray Semlitsch and three of his colleagues. Herpetologists worldwide have expended much effort and resources for three or more

decades to understand and reverse amphibian population declines. Ray and his colleagues present and discuss amphibian declines from the perspective of "extinction debt", that we publish to encourage discussion of those important issues. Our thanks to Dr. Semlitsch and co-authors for making this discussion piece available to JH.

As all of us know, Dr. Semlitsch passed away in June 2015, far too soon for such a young, productive, and admired scientist and colleague. We are especially proud to present you this paper, because his colleagues tell us it is his last synthesis paper. We think it brings together much of his years of work and ideas, and is one more way to commemorate his life.

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