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EDITORIAL COMMENT: DOUBLE PUBLICATION OF DATA

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Editorial Comment: Double Publication of Data

It is the policy of the *Journal of Raptor Research* not to publish data that have been presented in another publication outlet. This policy is clearly stated in the Information for Contributors and all authors are asked to provide ''a statement that the data in the manuscript have not been published or accepted for publication in the same form, and have not been submitted simultaneously elsewhere'' (*J. Raptor Res.* 39:480). Within the general field of science, this is a generally accepted ethical principle. However, there is a gray area. Specifically, if data are applied to different questions or analyzed by different approaches, these alternative presentations would potentially constitute unique scientific contributions and ''double-publishing'' the same data set would be appropriate. Although editors, referees, and science practitioners should all be vigilant for potential double publication of data, the responsibility to avoid such duplication ultimately lies with the author(s) of scientific presentations.

In the case pointed out by Sarasola (2006, *J. Raptor Res.* 40:178), the same data were presented in two different articles in two different journals. However, as far as I can determine, these data were used to address different research questions and do not violate double-publication policy. Ideally, Leveau et al. (2004, *J. Raptor Res.* 38:178–181) should have alerted the Editor at the submission stage that data included in their manuscript were published previously for a different purpose. This was completed post-hoc (Leveau et al. 2006, *J. Raptor Res.* 40:179), after the submission of the letter by Sarasola (2006).

Here, the editorial staff would like to encourage all participants in the advancement of science, and particularly as it relates to publication of data in the *Journal of Raptor Research*, to be vigilant of potential double publication of data. During my tenure as Editor, I have evaluated several cases of potential double publication of data. In most of these cases, the author(s) of a submitted manuscript alerted me and requested my evaluation. In all of these cases, I read both the published article in question and manuscript submitted to the *Journal*, and determined that the data were treated uniquely and advised the author to proceed with submission. In other cases, either a referee or an Associate Editor brought it to my attention that there may be a double-publication issue. In a small number of these latter cases, manuscripts were rejected, in part, because of a potential violation of the double-publication policy. Therefore, we ask future authors of manuscripts that will be submitted to the *Journal* and all of our referees and members to be aware of proper scientific protocol. Again, ultimately it is the responsibility of authors not to double publish data, and any author suspecting that there may be a question concerning a specific manuscript should consult with the Editor.—James C. Bednarz (e-mail address: jbednarz@astate.edu), outgoing Editor-in-Chief, *Journal of Raptor Research*, Department of Biological Sciences, Jonesboro, AR 72467 U.S.A.

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