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One Hundred Years Ardea!

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One hundred years Ardea!

The Netherlands Ornithologists' Union is very proud that its journal Ardea now has been produced over a period of one hundred years! The Ornithology in the Netherlands is traditionally a strong field. In the old days the communication between the members of the "Nederlandse Ornithologische Vereniging" (NOV, 1901–1956) occurred via meetings. Of great importance was also their written communication, first published in the "Verslagen en Mededeelingen" and from 1910 onwards in the "Jaarboekje" of the NOV. In 1912 the board of the NOV decided to publish a new journal, Ardea, to appear at a higher frequency than the earlier publications. Ardea had four issues per year right from the start and the members were asked to send in their contributions and to stimulate people to become a member of the NOV in order to make realization of the journal financially possible. The first wish of the editorial staff was "Moge Ardea levenskracht bezitten en zich gaandeweg uitbreiden" (Ardea 1 (1) page 1, "May Ardea be vital and expand"). Well, Ardea did, thanks to the many people that contributed to write for Ardea, the editorial boards that spent a lot of their time producing Ardea, and last but not least the members of the NOV and later the Netherlands Ornithologists' Union (NOU 1957–present) who both contributed by writing papers and made it financially all possible through their membership.

Most members were (and are) active field biologists, both professionals and non-professionals, and the articles in those times covered a wide range of topics. To name a few in the first issue of 1912: Observations on arrival dates of swifts, Fake nests of magpies, Bird ring recoveries and The birds of Vuurland. And I must say, most of them are still very accessible, pleasant to read and very informative. Ardea played an important role in the development of Ornithology in the Netherlands because both amateurs and scientists published in it and read the papers. Ardea was a platform to communicate observations and ideas. Science was less international but not less fundamental at those times. Important Dutch scientists took the trouble to communicate main lines of thinking in the field and not in the last place because the articles were written in Dutch, this was an excellent opportunity for everyone to find out about the new scientific developments (Ardea 41, 1953).

Over its lifetime Ardea has produced a fairly stable number of articles of around 25 annually with an increase in the last decades (see Figure 1). In the early years most articles were written in Dutch, some in French and German. In the fifties a switch from Dutch to English took place. All papers are now published in English. Ardea became a true international journal and lives up to those standards. This led to discussions in the NOU because the cost of such a switch is that communication between the Dutch-speaking amateurs and the professional ornithologists is not taking place as prominently any more in Ardea. In the last decade, chief editor Rob Bijlsma (Ornithology from the tree tops) made an attempt to attract a wider readership than the scientific community alone. His drive to position Ardea such that it would appeal to amateur naturalists as well as the core scientific readership has, in combination with the input of the editors, indeed affected the flavour of Ardea. Currently, Ardea covers papers in Ornithology focusing on ecology, life history and evolution and is keen to have papers that incorporate the naturalists' field knowledge. It aims at being a platform for both pure and applied research and as such it is very successful.

Ardea ranks as a good Ornithological journal when judged from the impact factor, especially when we look at the long term impact factor. A number of articles have been very important for this rating such as the citation classic "The prudent parent: energetic adjustments in avian breeding" by R.H. Drent and S. Daan (1980) with 1288 citations and "Determination of clutch size in birds – a review" by Herman Klomp (1970) with 618 citations. It turned out that five of the six publications cited more than 200 times were of Dutch authors! The new developments are that there is a less clear tie between Dutch ornithologists and Ardea.

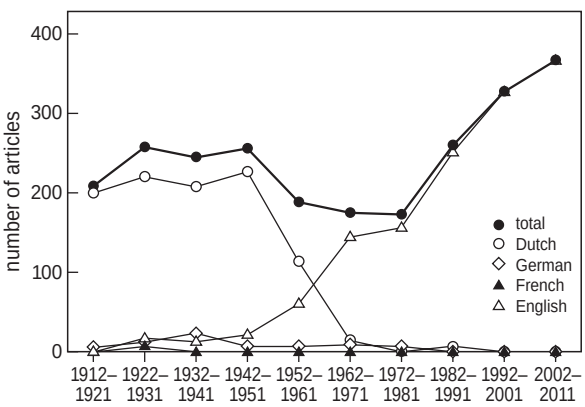


Figure 1. Number of articles per decade published in Ardea. The total number of articles increased in recent times and in the fifties the transition to the English language took place.

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More and more authors come from abroad. However this does not mean that the Dutch don't publish in Ardea. Over the last 10 years 25% of the authors were affiliated with universities and institutes from the Netherlands.

To keep up with current times the board of the NOU together with the editors of Ardea has made great efforts to get the journal accessible via the internet. The Prins Bernard Cultuurfonds rewarded a grant to digitize all articles in Ardea and its forerunners. This is a really big step because everybody interested in Ornithology can now freely access articles older than five years via the website of the NOU (www.ardeajournal.nl). Moreover, since last year new articles can be accessed via BioOne, and recently we learned that in a year time BioOne had 25000 'hits' for articles in Ardea from all over the world. Ardea is alive and kicking!

To my opinion it is crucial to have an international Ornithological journal as Ardea in the Netherlands. Not only does it stimulate international contacts in the world, but it also allows the publication of special issues about meetings valuable to all Ornithologists like: "The changing birdscape of wetlands" (2010, Ardea 98(3)), "Owls-ambassadors for the protection of nature in their changing landscapes" (2009, Ardea 97(4)), the "Checklist of the Birds of Aruba, Curacao and Bonaire, South Caribbean"(2009, Ardea 97(2)) and "Travelling to breed"(2006, Ardea 94(3)). This involvement guaranties contacts with Ornithologists abroad essential to the networks of amateur and professional Ornithologists in the Netherlands.

Here is perhaps the place to repeat the wish of the editorial board of the very first Ardea in 1912: "*May Ardea be vital and expand*". Now, 100 years later, we are much more confident that this can and will happen. Yet we ourselves have to contribute, by reading articles in Ardea, by writing articles in Ardea, by subscribing to Ardea or by being a member of the NOU. Enjoy reading!

Joost M. Tinbergen
Chairman NOU

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