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Symmetry in Ecology and Evolution: Concepts, Patterns and Statistical Analyses

Guest Editor:

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Message from the Guest Editor

Morphological asymmetries have been of interest to biologists. Conspicuous asymmetries have raised important evolutionary questions including 'why do fiddler crabs have one larger claw?' and 'why is the large tusk of the narwhal always on the left side?'.

More subtle asymmetries, termed fluctuating asymmetry, have been of interest as a measure of developmental instability. Fluctuating asymmetry (FA) potentially reflects (developmental) stress and quality or fitness for both individuals and populations in an ecological and evolutionary framework.

Links between FA and measures of stress and quality are very heterogeneous and very little is known about the biological origins of this variation. Do morphological asymmetries function as a signal of quality and health of individuals or does it covary with variation in signals? How can subtle asymmetries in size and shape be estimated accurately and what biological phenomena do they reflect? The aim of this Special Issue on "Symmetry in Ecology and Evolution: Concepts, Patterns and Statistical analyses" is to continue highlighting these open questions.

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Message from the Editor-in-Chief

Symmetry is ultimately the most important concept in natural sciences. It is not surprising then that very basic and fundamental research achievements are related to symmetry. For instance, the Nobel Prize in Physics 1979 (Glashow, Salam, Weinberg) was received for a unified symmetry description of electromagnetic and weak interactions, while the Nobel Prize in Physics 2008 (Nambu, Kobayashi, Maskawa) was received for the discovery of the mechanism of spontaneous breaking of symmetry, including CP symmetry. Our journal is named *Symmetry* and it manifests its fundamental role in nature.

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