Editor´s annual report 2000

This is my first year as scientific editor of Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research, since I replaced the former editor, Anders Ericsson, on January 1st.

It has been an exciting year for me, bringing many new experiences and personal contacts. Many thanks to all those authors who have given us the opportunity to publish their important contributions to forestry science.

Submission rate
Judging by the numbers received so far, about 80–90 papers will be submitted this year. This is close to the average figure for the last 10 years, during which there was no obvious trend in the submission rate, either up or down. Since the present publication rate of papers is about 60 per year, the ideal rejection rate should be 25–30%. The average paper is about nine pages long when printed.

Origins
The papers in the last six issues originated from 12 countries. More papers (53%) came from Sweden, than from any other country, and Finland was the second largest contributor (16%). Collectively, the Nordic countries were the source of 83% of the papers.

Subjects
The journal has broad aims and scope, thus the printed papers represent many different forest sciences.

- Yield and regeneration were the most common subjects of the printed papers (accounting for 30% of the total).
- Protection against various pests, the theme of 18% of the papers, was the second most common topic.
- Studies related to improvement, including both genetic and physiological features, were represented by 13% of the papers.

A new trend that can possibly be discerned is that more papers on economy, technology and wood science are being submitted. I would welcome more papers on conservation biology. Review articles are also very welcome, but I strongly recommend that authors of potential reviews discuss their contributions with me in advance.

Referees
I am grateful to all the referees who have helped me evaluate the quality of submitted papers. My policy has been:

i/ to appoint two or three referees per paper,

ii/ to never choose a referee from the same country as the first author, and

iii/ to preferably have at least one referee from an English-speaking country (to facilitate the linguistic revision).

Contacting willing and competent referees is generally considered the main problem for the editor. During the year I have made major changes in my way of doing this. From the previous
editor I adopted the procedure of sending manuscripts to potential referees without securing an agreement in advance. However, many referees never answered, despite several reminders.

Today I use my network of contacts and ask them by e-mail to suggest competent referees. After such recommendations I immediately contact the nominated reviewers, again by e-mail, asking if they would be prepared to evaluate the paper. To my pleasure, I have found that most people I ask agree to do the review.

Among the referees who have helped me during this first year, more have been from the Nordic countries (45%) than from any other region. Countries representing the rest of Europe, especially Western Europe, have contributed 34% of the referees, and a fifth have been from North America. The most heavily represented single country was Sweden (accounting for 22% of the referees), followed by USA (16%), then England and Finland at joint third (each with 11%).

Processing time
On average, for the last six issues, the total time between the reception of a paper and printing came to 17 months: six months from reception until acceptance, and 11 months from acceptance until printing.

An effort to reduce handling time
Since an ambition shared by the publisher, Taylor & Francis, and SNS (the Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee) is to raise the quality of the journal, it will be essential, given the present printing rate, to increase the number of papers submitted to the journal. More submitted papers could then be rejected, thereby raising the quality of the remaining papers. The journal must encourage more highly skilled scientists to contribute. The time taken to process manuscripts must be reduced to achieve this aim. As mentioned above, processing manuscripts from reception to acceptance currently takes six months. It is my goal to reduce this to four months; one month for the review by referees, two months on average for the authors’ revisions and finally one month for me to handle the paper-work, thoroughly read the manuscript and evaluate the referees’ comments.

As also mentioned above, the average delay between acceptance and printing is 11 months at present. This can hopefully be reduced by maintaining a better balance between the number of papers being accepted and the number of papers actually being printed. Previously, too many papers were accepted, resulting in a printing queue. This problem was temporarily solved by printing three issues with 50% extra pages during 1999 and 2000. From now on I face the challenge of not accepting more or less papers than the 60 that are actually printed.

New editorial board
Another tool to help guarantee high quality in the papers printed is an active Editorial Board that can help find competent referees and evaluate their judgements. At the moment I am in the process of renewing the board and hopefully the new team will start working from next year. It is my intention that the board members will collectively be able to cover all the different subjects that are encompassed in the broad range of the journal. A wider geographical representation can also be expected, hopefully including board members from beyond the Nordic countries. I will also take the opportunity here to thank the members of the retiring board who assisted the previous editor, Anders Ericsson, in his work.

Recommendations to authors
On the whole, I have found that most submitted papers have subjects that fall within the scope of the journal, as well as being interesting and of good formal quality. I seldom have to return a paper immediately without registration. Most contributors seem to read the “Instructions to Authors” carefully. However, some persistent deficiencies occur. The most common is that the reference list is not arranged according to the journal’s style. Secondly, the Tables and Figures are often not written as expected. Please consult the “Instructions to Authors” and a recent issue thoroughly. This will help the manuscripts to be processed more rapidly.

Uppsala 2000-10-30
Hans-Örjan Nohrstedt
New strategic plan for SNS

The board of the SNS, the Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee, has launched a new strategic plan for the period 2001 to 2003. The 5-page comprehensive plan can be briefly summarised in a few key-words:

- Synergy
- Renewal
- Networking
- Knowledge transfer

Examples of potentially synergistic activities that SNS should support are given: notably utilisation of existing unique Nordic research facilities, together with the training of post-graduate researchers.

During this three-year period, SNS will assume a more pro-active role and initiate collaboration in new areas, as well as various kinds of investigations.

The programme mentions several bodies with which further co-operation is desired: the national research and research funding bodies, the EU and COST. An increased collaboration between the Nordic region and the adjacent areas (the Baltic countries and North-western Russia), is desired.

The Strategic plan stresses that SNS shall work to maintain high quality in the Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research.

Funding

The most important question for a Nordic researcher is probably: how can SNS provide me with resources and money? Several possible ways are mentioned in the strategic plan:

- You can get support for maintaining and establishing networks in areas with a joint Nordic dimension
- You can get financial support for co-ordinating research projects of Nordic interest which already have a national funding base
- You can get direct funding for workshops, seminars or meetings aiming at the development of project proposals

Seven areas pointed out

Seven research areas are to be given high priority in the coming years:

- Genetic resources and biodiversity
- Development of environmentally friendly forestry practices
- The forest’s role in global change
- The social functions of forests
- Development of new wood-products with higher value
- Wood for bioenergy production
- Economy in family-enterprise forestry

How to keep in contact with SNS

As before, you can apply for funding from SNS once a year. More information will be given on the SNS website. The address is

www.sjfr.se/sns

The new Strategic Plan can be ordered by contacting the SNS secretariat:
sns@sjfr.se

Facts

- The Nordic Forest Research Co-operation Committee is a cooperative body financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- SNS initiates, co-ordinates and supports research collaboration between the five Nordic countries.
- The overall objective for SNS is to support research into sustainable forestry supporting the many different functions of a forest, including social and ecological as well as financial issues.
“Kyoto forests” of marginal importance for CO₂ reduction in EU

According to the Kyoto-protocol, the forests’ contributions as a sink or source for carbon dioxide can “be used to meet the commitments”. But not all forests. Only changes in land-use such as afforestation, reforestation and deforestation, can be incorporated when calculating a national carbon budget – and only changes since 1990 (so-called “Kyoto forests”).

Kyoto forests

A group of researchers has studied the forests’ role in the EU carbon dioxide budget. Their conclusion is that “Kyoto forests” are of marginal significance for meeting the EU’s commitment to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by eight percent, or 70 million tonnes, per year. The effect of the Kyoto forests varies depending on which definition you use. According to the FAO definition, the trees in the EU are a source of 5.4 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, whereas by the definition of the Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change, the trees in the EU act as a sink of 0.1 million tonnes per year: less than 10% of the EU emission reduction target.

In the most heavily forested countries of the EU—Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy and Sweden—the Kyoto forests are of minor significance and land-use changes in them would be of little value for meeting the reduction goals.

However, there are other countries in the EU, with relatively limited forests, where planting Kyoto forests could contribute substantially to meeting the goals for reductions, for example Portugal and Ireland.

All forests

But if we look at all forests in the EU, the trees act as a carbon sink equivalent to seven percent of the emissions in the region. This is almost as much as the reduction in emissions targeted for the area. Thus, the atmospheric carbon sink represented by the trees is almost as large as the proposed reduction in emissions.

Source: EFI press release

Privatisation of forests in Denmark?

A Danish environmental NGO, Nepenthes, suggests that the government should sell off and privatise two thirds of the state-owned forests in Denmark. The potential revenue, estimated at Dkr3.000.000 (about 350 million US$) should, according to the suggestion, be used to transform the remaining third into nature reserves. The government is, so far, opposed to the suggestion.

The Danish Government today owns 25% of all forest land (about 110.000 hectares) in the country.

Source: SKOVEN 9/2000

Not easy to be environmentally-friendly

Chemical or mechanical weed control?
Both can cause environmental problems. In a trial in Denmark, different kinds of weed control were tested on two sites; a forest plantation on poor, former arable land and a Christmas tree plantation on forest land.

Some plots were treated with Round-up (glyphosate), and others with mechanical treatments (harrow or plough).

One year after the treatment, substantial concentrations of AMPA, a break-down product of glyphosate, could be found in the forest soil: six times higher than on the former arable land. This may be an effect of the more acid conditions in the forest soil says the researcher, Lars Bo Pedersen. The slow break-down of the herbicide in the forest soil may cause pollution of the groundwater.

But the mechanical treatments were not that much better. The concentration of nitrate in the soil-water was strongly increased by these practices, and was actually higher than the concentrations commonly found in agricultural land. This was most apparent on the experimental site on the former arable land.

However, the study-period, two years, is too short to determine which weed-control strategy is best from an environmental point of view, according to the author.

Source: Skov & Landskab Nyt No.3 2000
**“Red alert” in Danish forests**

From 1989/90 a syndrome called "red spruce" appeared in Norway spruce in Denmark, in which the needles turned red, especially in the upper third of the crown.

The foresters were very concerned about the problem, and there were anxieties about the future use of spruce in Denmark.

However, after a few years, the symptoms abated, and today no signs are visible.

A group of Danish researchers has studied the phenomenon, and concluded that the syndrome was not caused by any single factor, such as:

- lack of nutrients
- nutrient imbalances.
- warm winters
- air pollution
- poisoning by salt from the Atlantic.

**Several contributing factors**
The researchers suggest, instead, that the phenomenon was an unspecified effect of several contributing factors acting over several years that collectively strained the spruce forests.

*A green spruce shoot. Photo: Areca*

**New epidemic?**
The researchers are somewhat concerned about the future. The red-spruce syndrome of 1989/90 can be traced back to a dry period followed by a storm in 1981. The summer of 1999 was also dry. Furthermore, it was followed by heavy winter-storms. So, should we expect a "new red-spruce epidemic" in a couple of years?

**Selection of healthy parent trees**
The group recommends selecting healthy individual trees for future use in Danish spruce plantations.

*Source: SKOVEN 9/2000*

**Good marks for Norwegian research programme**
The Norwegian research programme "Forest, Environment, Industry and Society" has been evaluated by a scientific review group. The conclusions given in their report are:

- In general, the programme has addressed high priority questions of great relevance for the Norwegian forest sector
- The projects in general are of good scientific quality.
- The publication rate in international journals needs to be improved, but dissemination of results in popular forms seems to be satisfactory
- One of the programme’s main objectives, to build up competence, has been successfully met by doctoral degree projects
- The programme has not fully reached the goals set
- The programme has been cost-effective in relation to the limited budget
- The beneficiaries of the programme have not been clearly defined

Overall, the review group appreciates the efforts made to meet the set goals, and has given the programme a good assessment.

**Forest land takes up nitrogen in winter-time too**

In a dissertation, Micheal Sjöberg, Sweden, has shown that forest soils can take up nitrogen in winter-time. In ten-year-old field trials he found that although the major part of the nitrogen spread in winter leached out, a substantial part was taken up by bacteria, fungi and tree roots.

The take-up was greater in sites where the natural supply of nitrogen was low than in sites richer in the nutrient.

The micro-organisms play an important role in the process, since they can transform inorganic nitrogen into organic compounds (amino-acids and proteins), which are fixed in the humus layer.

*Source: SKL Notiser No. 5 2000.*

**SNS’s chair head of new research council**

Lisa Sennerby-Forsse, the chair of SNS, has been appointed Secretary General of FORMAS, a new research funding council in Sweden. Among the issues handled by the council will be Environment, Agriculture, Forestry and Social Structures & Planning. The council is one of three new governmental research funding councils established in a total reorganization of the research funding structure in Sweden.
New wood-energy programme launched in Finland

Today, Finland utilises some 0.5 million cubic metres (solid) of wood fuel. But in a newly launched programme, the ambition is to increase production to 2.5 million m³ within four years. The programme is called “The Finnish Wood Energy Technology Programme 1999–2003”.

Four reasons are given for increasing wood-fuel utilisation in Finland:

- Reduction of fossil-fuel consumption
- Reduction of carbon dioxide pollution by some 1.5 million tonnes per year
- Creation of job opportunities for some 2,000 people
- Improvement of the local economy by generating a cash flow for rural areas of Finland

The programme, which has a budget of FIM250 million (about US$35 million) for the period 1999 to 2003, will include research in:

- Production Planning
- Production Technology
- Quality Management
- Environmental Issues.

The main wood-fuel sources will be residues from final fellings and small-wood from thinnings.

Source: www.tekes.fi/english

Wooden roller coaster in Norway

“Believe in wood” has been used as a slogan for promoting wood-products. And you must certainly believe in wood if you try out the 30 metre high wooden roller coaster now under construction in Norway.

The structure consists of almost 20,000 planks with a volume of 1,100 cubic metres, bolted together by almost a million screws, nuts and nails. It is made of North-American timber; Douglas fir in the tracks and Yellow pine in other parts.

There are some limitations with wooden roller coasters compared with steel constructions. You can’t have loops and you can’t incline the track as much as with steel. But the feeling is said to be something really special. The whole structure squeaks and creaks – and moves – when loaded.

Source: Norsk skogbruk 9/2000

Letters to the editors

We strongly encourage our readers to contribute to a lively and interesting journal. Letters to the News & Views section will be published if they are:

- short
- relevant to the Journal
- interesting for the readers.

Examples: comments on papers published in the Journal, views on ongoing research, trends in research policy, opinion about forestry practice etc.

News & Views is edited by Areca Information AB. Contact: Carl Henrik Palmér, chp@areca.se