



# Two celebrations and the Sustainable Development Goals

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This year 2023, we have two milestones to celebrate for *Hydrobiologia*. Firstly, as *Hydrobiologia* was launched in March 1948, our journal is now 75 years young. Secondly, this is the first issue of volume 850. The second celebration requires a little *nuance*. Up to and including 2019, each of the 21 issues of *Hydrobiologia* was considered a separate volume and we ended 2019 with volume 846. Since 2020, Springer Nature standardized its journal portfolio in

that one volume now covers a full year. For *Hydrobiologia* this means that we now have one volume and 21 issues annually. If the publication schedule would have remained unchanged, we would have started 2023 with volume 910 and we would have celebrated volume 1000 in 2027! Now we will have to wait 150 years to celebrate that event, in 2183 no less!

Nobody knows what the next 50, 100 or indeed 150 years will bring to our planet, or more precisely: what devastating effects we, the human species, will continue to impose on life on Earth. Prognoses on the effects of human-driven climate change are far from positive (IPCC, 2022), nor are the reports on the present and future status of global biodiversity any more encouraging (WWF, 2022). Promises to reduce fossil emissions are made by governments at annual international meetings, for example the 27th Conference of the Parties (COP27) in Egypt, which is being held as we write this editorial. But actions supposedly following such promises tend to be ‘delayed’ and the prognoses on the rising global temperatures do not show stagnation, let alone a much-needed decrease.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity (<https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>). Many countries have committed to implementing these 17 SDG’s, to end poverty, hunger, AIDS, and discrimination against women and girls. From the point of view of

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Hydrobiologia, our interest goes primarily to the sustainable management and conservation of aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity, without, of course, diminishing the importance of the other aims. We were therefore happy to detect SDG 14: “Sustaining Life Below Water: Conserving, managing, and protecting our marine and freshwater resources”. Springer Nature has set up a multi-journal collection of papers related to life under water, in which the papers published in *Hydrobiologia* figure prominently. But what a surprise when we read that the SDG 14 Goal is exclusively directed at marine environments: “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development”.

Clearly, none of us will deny the absolute necessity of such an action for our seas and oceans and its importance is right into the focus of *Hydrobiologia*. But what about that other aquatic Realm, the continental freshwaters? If not in SDG 14 “Life below Water”, then where can we find it in the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations? Some further reading of the 17 SDG reveals that continental waters are somewhat hidden in target 6.6 (part of SDG 6 “Clean Water and Sanitation”), which explicitly mentions the protection and restoration of aquatic ecosystems in general, with some specific freshwater examples (“By 2020, protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including mountains, forests, wetlands, rivers, aquifers and lakes”), and in SDG 15 “Life on Land” (“By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, ...”) (Darwall et al., 2018; Van Rees et al., 2021).

This approach shows, once again, the inexplicable reluctance to consider inland waters as the third Realm, next to marine and terrestrial systems. Freshwaters are either considered to be part of the global terrestrial system, as in the SDG’s, or as part of the aquatic Realm together with seas and oceans, next to the terrestrial ecosystems. Van Rees et al. (2021) make it the first of their 14 Special Recommendations for global freshwater biodiversity conservation, that freshwater should be considered a true ecological “third realm that deserves legal and scientific prominence in future frameworks and strategies” and provide solid arguments for this. The Alliance for Freshwater Life (<https://allianceforfreshwaterlife.org/>) launched a global call to unite efforts for

freshwater biodiversity in science and conservation (Darwall et al., 2018). Also, the Freshwater Biodiversity Observation Network (FW BON) and the IUCN Global Center for Species Survival, Freshwater Unit insisted that freshwater firmly deserves its place as an independent Realm (Edmondstone et al., 2022). The Nature 2030 programme of IUCN already made the step to recognize freshwater as an important entity, distinct from land and oceans (<https://www.iucn.org/nature-2030>).

In order to be able to provide scientifically underpinned recommendations to managers and policy makers, all three biotic Realms, including freshwater, should be given full attention (Tickner et al., 2020; Harper et al., 2021; Maasri et al., 2022). *Hydrobiologia* will continue to support both marine and freshwater research in equal measure during the next decade of action on biodiversity, especially in the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

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