

COVID-19: full peer review in hours
William J. Sutherland University of Cambridge, UK.
w.sutherland@zoo.cam.ac.uk
Katrina A. Lythgoe University of Oxford
Katrina.lythgoe@bdi.ox.ac.uk

The impetus to rapidly disseminate scientific results during a crisis ahead of peer review could cause governments and international organizations to act prematurely — or to be reluctant to act at all. Having struggled with such challenges in our COVID-19 work, we recommend our tested review system, which has an ultrashort submission-to-acceptance time. One of us (W.S.) runs a workshop every September to identify horizon-scanning issues in conservation, which we aim to report on in *Trends in Ecology and Evolution* the following January. The journal's editor (formerly K.A.L.) agrees a submission date and selects referees. Authors send in a working draft a week before formal submission so that referees have time to prepare their comments. In the first year (2009), the time from formal submission to return of detailed comments was 90 minutes. The crucial features of this process are advance selection of referees and the provision of a draft manuscript. Agreeing a submission date makes planning easier for referees but is not essential. Our model could be used for ultrafast peer review of COVID-19 papers (see M. A. Johansson and D. Saderi *Nature* 579, 29; 2020). Setting up a pool of referees dedicated to rapid review of key papers would help relieve pressure on overstretched individuals.