



Announcement

Journal of Ecology, Volume 84, Issue 6 (Dec., 1996).

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Journal of Ecology
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Winner of the John L. Harper Young Investigator's Prize for 1996

The winner of the John L. Harper Young Investigator's Prize for a paper published in *Journal of Ecology* in 1996 is Dr Susanne Schwinning for her paper 'Analysis of the coexistence mechanisms for grasses and legumes in grazing systems' which appears in this issue, co-authored with Dr A.J.Parsons. Susanne Schwinning completed an MSc in Plant Physiology at the University of California in Davis, and in 1994 a PhD in Plant Ecology at the University of Arizona in Tucson, USA, where her advisors were Robert Robichaux and Bill Schaffer. She now works at the Institute of Grassland and Environmental Research in Devon, UK, on the spatial dynamics of competing stoloniferous plants.

The winning paper was the unanimous choice of the three editors although the paper is an unusual one for this journal because it has an applied orientation. In fact we believe that the paper and a companion article which follows it (S.Schwinning & A.J. Parsons: A spatially explicit population model of stoloniferous N-fixing legumes in mixed pasture with grass) are of fundamental relevance to plant ecology. By taking an earlier physiological model with 22 state variables and reducing these to 8 and then 4 they show that a grass-legume cycle predicted by the model (and observed in the field) essentially depends upon a relationship between the species that has more in common with predator and prey than between competing autotrophs. Among other properties of grass-legume communities this insight explains why increasing the quantity of legumes (the 'prey') in a pasture can lead to greater instability of the system and a subsequent increase in the grass population (the 'predator').

The John L. Harper Young Investigator's Prize is awarded annually. Intending authors who wish to be considered for the prize will find further details in the Instructions to Authors which appears in the first issue each year and on the Journal's Web site:

http://www.open.ac.uk/OU/Academic/Biology/J_Ecol/JEmenu.htm