and protect the authors of submitted papers and proponents of research proposals.

I wonder how many readers have experienced any of the following -

- Comments from a reviewer of a paper or proposal that were incorrect, due to ignorance on the part of the reviewer, lack of familiarity with the subject-matter, or what would appear to be "blocking": comments accompanied by a recommendation to 'reject', and acceptance of that recommendation by the editor/granting agency;
- The inclusion of *ad hominum* remarks in a review regarding one's work or the author or proponent personally;
- Rejection of a manuscript or proposal, followed some time later by a request to review what appears to be a remarkably similar document by someone suspected of having reviewed your work and rejected it;
- Rejection of a manuscript or proposal, and later reading or hearing about a very similar study being published, or a project with a very similar design to yours, being funded, involving someone who may have reviewed your documents;
- A request to review a manuscript or proposal that used language which was almost identical to yours in a document previously rejected as a result of reviewers' comments;
- An excellent peer review of a proposal, but rejection because of comments made by the expert review panel; etc.

I have spoken to many people who identify with one or more of the above. Perhaps it is time for a change to our standard blind review system. Perhaps our field has grown to the point where a different approach is needed: one that is fair to all – authors, research proponents, reviewers, editors, and granting agencies; one that is more transparent; one where the author/proponent has a stronger voice; and one where reviewers and others associated with the review process may be held accountable for comments, particularly if a problem arises in a specific review. I fear that if we continue on our current path, we run the risk of further damaging not only our ecosystem but also our science.

In a recent paper[1], I demonstrate why the peer review system has become problematic. I examined data from a US funding agency, a global fund-ing agency, and abstracting indices. The data indicate that research funding, and numbers of funded projects, have not kept pace with the increase in environmental problems, numbers of researchers, and funding demand, resulting in a chronic support gap. This has created a difficult atmosphere in which to work, contributing to the undermining of trust, mutual support, and free-flow of information. The end result: a poorly functioning review system.

I have therefore proposed a new peer review system, where the author or proponent is given a stronger voice. I examined the advantages and disadvantages of the current masking system and the alternate double-blinded review system, and have recommended a more transparent review system – the reverse-blind review system (RBRS). Among other things, I recommend that:

- The author's identity is kept from the reviewers, but that the identity of the reviewers is revealed to the author; the editor/agency would be aware of both.
- Expert 'panel' members be used in grant pro-posal reviews, similar to the editorial system of scientific journals, with each making direct recommendations to the funding agency;
- Duplicate/multiple expert panel members be used for each proposal, with an averaging of recommendations being made to the funding agency;
- There should be no panel meetings, in order to reduce input from non--experts and reduce confounding group interactions; rarely can all members of a larger panel be experts in a given field. Instead, greater responsibility would be placed on the funding bodies for decision-making; and
- Researchers be allowed to appeal decisions based on inaccurate, misleading, or other problematic information.

Such a system would, I believe, be fairer to the researchers, foster research, and increase information exchange. I invite you to read the paper[1] and hope you find it helpful.

I once attended a meeting at a marine lab where I saw in the education unit, a large, colour wall poster aimed at children. It showed a wooden boat on the sea, with many diverse animals in it: elephants, giraffes, lions, tigers, wildebeest, cows, horses, etc. I expected it to have a Noah's Ark conservation message on it, but the caption read "We're all in this lifeboat together." A wise message that gave me reason to pause.

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Pancake-seagrass formations in Florida Bay

Mysterious pancake-like patterns, resembling flattened circular nests of drifting seagrass blades (Figs. 1, 2), commonly occur in Florida Bay, USA. The 2,072-km^2

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Bay, with its vast mangrove, seagrass and coral-reef habitats, and interact importantly with the Florida Coral Reef Tract via inter-island hydrodynamic exchanges[1]. The drifting fragments, consisting mostly of the shoal grass *Halodule wrightii*, are exceptional because they can maintain viability for up to four weeks[2]. Interestingly, such extraordinary mosaic patterns of pancake-seagrass rafts are previously unreported, but commonly originate in the western region of Florida Bay under light wind and wave conditions.

To date, we have no evidence identifying the mechanisms responsible for the circular patterns, but they do appear to be analogous to cold-water pancake-ice formations (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancake_ice), in respect to how they take shape. As in pancake-ice, the patterns are posited to be sculpted by the bumping action of adjacent clumps, in conjunction with the nature of the curved crescent-shaped individual blades. The initial stages of formation (Fig. 3, arrows) seem to develop from a tendency for the buoyant blades to be gently shuffled inward to coalesce as overlapping/interlocking concentric rings, with the mean pancake diameter being 18 cm –4 SD. The possibility that the pancakes are rolled into shape by tidal-current shear has also been suggested. Because pancake-seagrass formations are so striking, we would welcome any further observations/insights from the readership – the suggestion of "alien crop circles in the sea" has already been proposed.

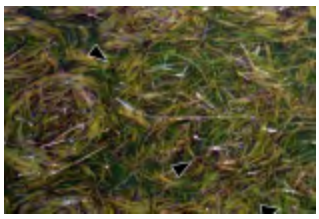

Fig. 3

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NEWS

Safeguarding temperature loggers on remote coral reefs – lessons learned from relocating loggers in the Chagos archipelago

Research into sea surface temperature and impacts of thermal stresses on coral reefs has led to the increasing use of compact sea temperature loggers on reefs. While deployment itself is easy, ensuring they survive *in situ* for 2–3 years until recovery is less so. We had received numerous accounts of disappearance of anything from 50–100% of groups of deployed loggers, sometimes as soon as a few weeks later, even with those placed in sheltered lagoons.

Underwater temperature loggers have improved enormously in recent years, with diverse products commercially available. Durable, pressure resistant, compact devices, capable of recording over 30,000 temperature samples with accuracies of up to 0.1°C and with a battery life commonly exceeding five years, are widely available for prices below US$150 each. When these are deployed at sites to which return visits are infrequent and widely spaced, we need to ensure a good recovery rate. We developed a technique to reliably secure 20 *StowAway TB132 Tidbit* data loggers. We wanted to place these on reefs at a range of depths to 25 m deep on several atolls in the Chagos Archipelago, at sites that would not be revisited for 2–3 years.

Each logger was wrapped in a layer of film to protect against fouling, then fastened within a 15cm section of 35mm PVC pipe by zip ties, through holes drilled along the pipe. It was intended that the pipe sections would protect the device and its attachment ties from potential bites by fish. The pipe section was then secured with similar ties to a 1m steel stake that had been hammered into the reef at the required monitoring depth through a zip-lock bag containing a few hundred grams of concrete powder mixed with sand. The concrete was used dry, and the holes torn by punching the stake through the bag caused water to enter and solidify the concrete. This hardened in a manner that conformed to the substrate, thus helping to lock the stake in place. The bags could be readily prepared on the surface and transported underwater to the required location sealed and watertight. Even where the stake had toppled due to storms and decay of the underlying reef, the concrete disk prevented movement away from the site.

We tried this technique with 19 loggers (one of our 20 was dud) at seven sites across four remote Chagos atolls in March 2006. Loggers were usually sited in threes; at 5, 15 and 25m depth, in lines taken straight down the reef, with a GPS fix recorded for the site of the shallowest one. Opportunity was taken to recover six loggers at two sites in early 2008, when all were retrieved in working order (results were remarkable and are published in *Coral Reefs*). The remaining 13 could not be revisited for another year when, in March 2009, 12 of them were

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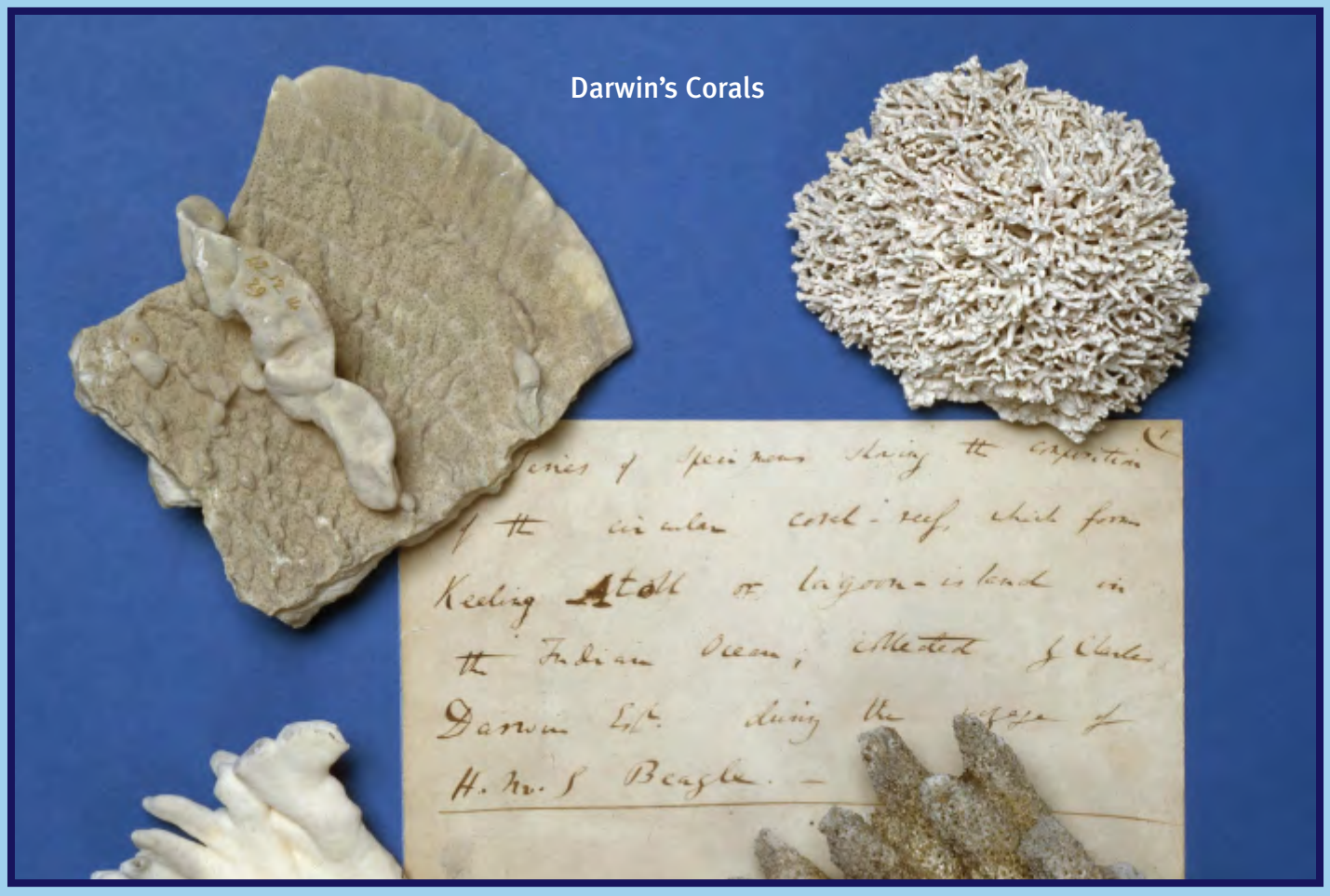

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