

Call for Submissions – “Strange Letters” *Swamphen Special Issue 2026*



Swamphen welcomes submissions for a special issue focusing on work grounded in Aotearoa New Zealand. This special issue aims to open a space for considering place-based modes of reciprocity and exchange through the form of the letter: Who or what is a guest? How do our critical methodologies and modes of making respond to place, whether or not we are from (or feel that we're from) that place? How does the form of the letter embody—or make strange—our relations of care with human and more-than-human others?

Submissions should foreground work about, grounded in, or produced by those with connection to Aotearoa. Submissions can be in any form, style, or media related to letters; they may be presented as epistolary correspondence with an addressee, or may take up more expansive understandings of "Strange Letters." Writing may morph into marks of other kinds (textual, artistic, symbolic, representational, abstract), and submissions may take the form of scholarly writing, personal essay/memoir, visual or hybrid media, or creative writing. Writing may dissolve into singing, or *kōrero*, or *karanga*, or *hikoi*—oral and embodied ways of knowing, exploring, and corresponding.

Submissions might be guided by—but are not limited to—the following questions and topics:

- From *manuhiri* (guest) to *tangata whenua* to everything in between: How do we cultivate our own relationships with the place(s) and land(s) where we find ourselves?
- How do we respond to—and correspond with—the beings, people, things, and environments who find us there?

- What is it to be a good guest, in the short term or long term? Invited, or not?
- What is the difference—relationally—between visiting a place one has whakapapa to but does not reside in, or living there maintaining ahi kā? And how might we stay connected while living away?
- How do people make connections to place and between places, and what narratives connect us, to each other and to the more-than-human world?
- Contributors may entertain a wide range of topics and subjects: they may be inspired by historical letters (like Te Wharepapa's homesick [1864 missive](#) from England, or Kiingi Pōtatau Te Wherowhero's [1843 letter](#) to Queen Victoria, when manuhiritanga was pressing indeed and when pathways to alternative futures remained open, as they do now); they may connect to the need for an embodied, offline life and artistic practices (like the postcards in Sarah Hudson's book [Manga Whenua](#)); they may be written together in 'correspondence' and under constraint (like Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart's [The Hundreds](#)); or they may, alternatively, explore the affordances of digital media and its ties to the long, long whakapapa of correspondence across distances.

This special issue emerges from [Strange Letters Tuarua](#), a 2025 ASLEC-ANZ symposium hosted at the Tauhara Retreat & Conference Centre in Taupō. The *Swamphen* Editorial Collective welcomes contributions from anyone (whether or not you attended the symposium) responding to these questions and prompts. This issue of *Swamphen* will extend the work of the first "Strange Letters" issue ([Swamphen, vol. 9, 2023](#)).

Deborah Bird Rose Prize

The call for contributions to this special issue of *Swamphen* also encourages applications for the Deborah Bird Rose Prize, which was established in 2022 to commemorate and further Deborah Bird Rose's immeasurable contribution to thinking and feeling in the environmental humanities, both globally and locally. This award is granted on a yearly basis to a postgraduate student (masters to PhD) currently studying or having graduated after 2022. Proposals should come in the form of a journal article currently in development. The in-progress article should clearly relate to *Swamphen's* focus on literature and environment, and in this case, with respect to Aotearoa. Applications include a cover sheet with your name, contact details and working title, and a first draft of the article as a Word document, to be submitted to adam.grener@vuw.ac.nz no later than **May 31, 2026**. A selection panel composed of members of the *Swamphen* collective and ASLEC-ANZ executive will select one or two recipients for the prize, which consists of NZD\$1000, a feature on the association's website, mentorship by an appropriate ASLEC-ANZ member on the development of the article or other professional development, and potential to publish the article in the next *Swamphen* issue (see statements from previous winners on the [ASLEC-ANZ website](#)).

About this Issue

This will be the 12th Issue of ASLEC-ANZ's Journal, relaunched as *Swamphen: Journal of Cultural Ecology* in 2020. The new name refers to the Australasian swamphen: kwilomi in

Noongar language; milu in Kala Lagaw Yai language; ping ping in Dja Dja Wurrung language; porphyrio melanotus in binomial nomenclature; and pūkeko in te reo Māori.

The Special Issue Editorial Team is a collective of Aotearoa-based scholars and artists: Hana Pera Aoake, Adam Greener, Raewyn Martyn, Julieanna Preston, Janine Randerson, and Jessica Wilson. The Swamphen Editorial Collective is Chantelle Bayes, Adam Greener, Jennifer Hamilton & Alanna Myers (Book Reviews).

Submission Guidelines

- Approaches that foreground Māori, Pasifika, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or other knowledges and practices of the wider Moana-Nui-a-kiwa (Pacific) are strongly encouraged.
- We encourage short and focused submissions/essays of 3,000 words (or equivalent), with a maximum of 5,000 words;
- Fully developed submissions (ready for peer review) should be made by **June 30, 2026** via the online portal here: <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/Swamphen/about/submissions>
- The submission deadline reflects a planned publication date before the end of 2026; questions regarding the CFP or the timeline can be sent to adam.greener@vuw.ac.nz;
- The journal is able to support the publication of diverse forms of scholarly and creative work and may publish some work on the ASLEC-ANZ website if this is appropriate;
- With the exception of review essays, all submissions, regardless of form, will be double-blind peer reviewed;
- Each issue of *Swamphen* provides space for reviews. If you would like to review a scholarly book or creative work, please email adam.greener@vuw.ac.nz first to submit an expression of interest to review;
- If accepted, contributors will be asked to resubmit using [Swamphen's stylesheet](#); authors are encouraged to use the *Swamphen* stylesheet in drafting submissions.