

# The IOU Flutter



***The Official Newsletter of the International Ornithologists' Union***

**Volume 3, Issue 1 (April 29, 2021)**

## **IOU News!!!**

Make sure that you mark your travel calendars for August 14-22, 2022 to attend the 28th IOCongress™ in Durban, South Africa. The IOU is pleased to partner with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to organize the IOCongress2022, once again in the great seaside city of Durban where it was last held in 1998! Many things involving ornithology and bird conservation have changed in those 24 years in the massive continent of Africa and it will be quite interesting to revisit this part of the world, renowned for its unique biological diversity, as well as for its vibrant research in avian biology and ecology. Visit <https://www.internationalornithology.org/iocongress-2022> and <https://iocongress2022.com/> for more information! Please stay tuned as the registration and abstract submission portal is planned to open in a couple of weeks (end of April). Please also keep in mind that IOU members can take advantage of the members-only special registration fee!

## **Message from the President**



Dear IOU Members, IOU Fellows and Colleagues,

This issue of the IOU newsletter *The Flutter* will be filled with good news and its release coincides with the opening of the IOU membership and donor portals

<https://www.internationalornithology.org/membership> and <https://intorn.wildapricot.org/Donate/>

This achievement is yet another step towards moving ornithology forward globally and reducing the large gaps in our understanding of avian biology, especially in the bird-rich regions located in many of the low-income countries.

We need to keep in mind, however, that maintaining an organization to plan for congresses ten or more years ahead is not free even if it relies on volunteer work like the IOU. There are no free lunches – someone always has to pay. In the past, the IOU has been fortunate to have been supported by generous donors who believe in the necessity of an international ornithological organization to level the playing field of all ornithologists irrespective of the economic level of their country (see <https://www.internationalornithology.org/benefactors-iou> ). However, in order to provide services and benefits to its members and to pay for the “household” expenses of a not-for-profit tax-exempt international organization, the IOU needs to be supported by ornithologists that join the IOU as members <https://www.internationalornithology.org/application-process> and/or donors <https://intorn.wildapricot.org/Donate/> .

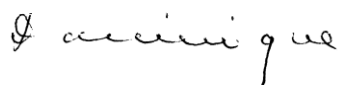
When the IOU set the level of membership dues, the issues involved in this process turned out to be more complex than anticipated when aiming at fairness and addressing global inequality. Income inequality has increased globally, and scientists and students are generally not among the more high-earning citizens. While it was a matter of course to minimize membership dues for members in low-income countries, these reduced dues would still be unaffordable to some. Furthermore, some countries do not allow the transfer of money to foreign countries. To alleviate such hardship cases, the IOU is offering complimentary memberships upon application at no cost to the applicants. These complimentary memberships are also available to colleagues who find themselves in a financial bottleneck due to circumstances beyond their control irrespective of the country of residence. In addition, we are offering reduced membership dues to ornithologists living in middle-income countries and to early professionals in high-income countries. The IOU’s progressive membership dues structure is the right thing to do, and we will depend and rely on ornithologists in high-income countries to support our goals and work by becoming regular or supporting members.

This issue of *The Flutter* also coincides with the opening of the registration and abstract submission portals for the International Ornithological Congress™ (IOCongress™) in Durban, South Africa, 14-20 August 2022 <https://iocongress2022.com/registration/> and <https://iocongress2022.com/congress-contributions/> . The Scientific Program Committee under the leadership of its chair, Professor Will Cresswell, has assembled a multifaceted program that offers a broad palette of innovative presentations and contributions <https://iocongress2022.com/programme-framework/> . There will

be poster and oral sessions for which abstracts can be submitted. New for an IOCongress will be three different types of symposia <https://iocongress2022.com/conference-symposia/>: (1) Traditional “hybrid” symposia with invited and contributed papers; (2) review symposia dedicated to in-depth treatment of a particular subject by specialists; and (3) pioneering symposia with new and/or experimental formats. Workshops on particular topics will be held on the day before the full program. Round-table Discussions will be held in the evenings to discuss focused issues or to organize working groups. Speed talks will lighten the program, and ten plenaries will present cutting-edge research by leading scientists.

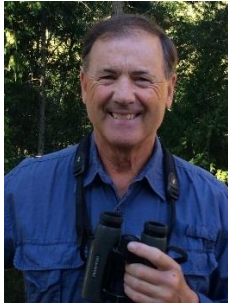
The IOCongress2022 will be held again in Durban 24 years after the IOCongress1998, but the experience will be new because of the broadened and updated scientific program and, significantly, because it will be fully accessible either in person or virtually (see <https://iocongress2022.com/registration/> ). We expect both congress formats to be attractive for various reasons, but if travel restrictions were to be imposed again in August 2022, the IOCongress2022 would nevertheless be able to be held by switching it completely into the virtual sphere. However, the in-person format of the IOCongress will have its time-tested and special attractions: Personal networking and meeting friends and colleagues, the thrill of visiting a modern city and perhaps being able to compare it to how it was 24 years ago, and an especially rich and diverse program of bird watching in the vastly biodiverse environment of eastern southern Africa <https://iocongress2022.com/birds-of-southern-africa/> . This birdwatching program <https://iocongress2022.com/birding-in-durban/> will be part of the IOCongress2022 as one of the “First time bonuses” under “Registration Inclusions” at <https://iocongress2022.com/registration/> . An extensive and truly “mouth-watering” program of pre- and post-congress tours exclusively for IOCongress2022 participants will be difficult to resist (see <https://iocongress2022.com/pre-and-post-birding-tours/> ). This innovative, complex and exciting congress has been prepared by the Local Organizing Committee (LOC) under the leadership of the congress convener Professor Colleen Downs and the Professional Congress Organizer (PCO) Nina Freysen-Pretorius and her staff.

With many thanks in advance for your support, best wishes and kind regards,



**Dominique G. Homberger, IOU President**

## From the Editor



Dear IOU members:

How lucky are we to have jobs studying birds?! While I have always believed this to be the case for virtually all of my academic career and even today as a so-called retiree, this rather simple but interesting observation was recently underscored during a street conversation with a dear friend of mine (let's call him Bob) who is just months away from reluctantly pulling the plug on a stellar ornithology career with the Canadian government. We were discussing a mutual friend (let's call him John) who is also employed as a professional ornithologist but is now approaching 70 and still working. I said, "Boy, John just keeps on going, doesn't he?!" Bob grinned widely and exclaimed, "Why would he want to retire? Why would any of us want to hang it up? Ornithologists are the luckiest people in the world getting to study birds for a living!". And that is precisely why I do not like to use the word "retired" to describe my current situation. I am almost busier now doing bird-related activities than I was working as a professor for McGill University in Montreal!

If you are not sure that you agree with me and Bob about being lucky to be paid to study birds, consider this new study that just came out in March from a team of German scientists at the Senckenberg Biodiversity and Climate Research Centre, the iDiv, the Goethe University in Frankfurt, and the University of Kiel (DOI: [10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106917](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106917)). They have examined for the first time whether diversity in nature increases the well-being or happiness of humans on a continent-wide scale. To achieve their goal, the researchers used the data from the "2012 European quality of Life Survey" to study the connection between the 'species diversity in their surroundings' and 'life satisfaction' in more than 26,000 adults from 26 European countries. Species diversity was measured based on the diversity of avian species, as documented in the European breeding bird atlas. The team examined the socio-economic data of the people that were surveyed, and, to their surprise, they found that avian diversity is as important for their life satisfaction as is their income! This was

especially obvious when both values increase by ten percent. In other words, fourteen additional bird species in the vicinity apparently raises the level of life satisfaction at least as much as an extra 124 Euros per month in the household account, based on an average income of 1,237 Euros per month in Europe.

Birds, being among the most visible elements in nature and especially so in urban habitats, are well-suited as indicators of biological diversity. Even if they are not seen, their songs and calls can often be heard. For example, just hours before writing these words, three of my friends in a tennis foursome stopped playing to listen to a sudden cacophony of house sparrows roosting nearby and to ask me what kind of birds were making all that fuss.

Let's face it -- most birds are enjoyable to see and to be heard and people do like to watch them whether they are birders or not. This is even more prevalent during a pandemic. But it is not just the birds themselves. The German scientists also pointed out a second aspect that affects life satisfaction: one's surroundings. A particularly high number of bird species can be found in areas with plenty of somewhat natural and diverse landscapes that hold numerous greenspaces and bodies of water.

To summarize, Europeans have been shown to be more content with their lives if their immediate surroundings host a high species diversity. They probably are not alone in this world. In other words, the happiest Europeans are those who get to enjoy numerous kinds of birds in their daily lives or at least live in fairly natural environments that are home to a wide variety of bird species.

Another recent study published in the *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* in December 2020 (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/why-listening-sounds-nature-can-be-restorative-180977397/>) Danielle Ferraro, Clinton Francis and others at the California Polytechnic University found that a variety of pre-recorded bird songs and calls on hiking trails improved the outdoor experience of people in general. In other words, hearing birdsong while hiking outdoors improved people's overall well-being, more than if they hiked without hearing birds chirping. For the study, the scientists had set up hidden speakers on two sections of trails in the Open Space and Mountain Parks in Boulder, Colorado, and then they played recorded songs from a diverse group of birds or silence on alternating weeks. When they interviewed the hikers, they found that those who unwittingly heard the bird song recordings reported a greater sense of well-being than those who did not hear them.

The take-home lesson from both of the above studies is that, more than ever, we need to conserve our biological diversity, such as birds, and, at the same time, reduce human noise pollution to allow us to better appreciate their presence. Even more important, we need to convince folks to get out there and enjoy nature. According to Ferraro, “a typical United States citizen spends 87% of their time indoors and an additional 6% of their time in vehicles.” and she adds that “Living almost entirely apart from nature can lead to an overall disconnection from nature that has negative consequences for environmental conservation and can deprive individuals of the health and well-being benefits that nature provides.” Maybe if we tell them that enjoying the presence of birds is equivalent to a raise in monthly income as seen in the European study, they will listen.

And if the above does not serve enough of a motivation to get out into nature, maybe we can add that people enjoying bird song might even live longer! According to yet another recent study (<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2013097118>), the ambience of bird song in nature can even improve one’s health! Rachel Buxton of Carleton University in Ottawa teamed up with colleagues from six American universities and the National Park Service to perform a statistical analysis of some three dozen past studies, much of them in laboratory settings, for the purpose of exploring the measurable health benefits of natural sound, including pleasant bird songs and calls. Publishing in the March 2021 issue of *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, they found that various groups exposed to such sounds saw a 184 percent improvement in overall health outcomes by lowering blood pressure, augmenting cognitive performance, and even reducing pain.

Of course, many ornithologists are also aware that biological diversity, including bird life, is in a state of serious decline all over the world. Will this translate into a decrease in human well-being as well?

As always, my very best to all of you.....stay safe....and stay sane!

P.S. I added some colour photos to this issue. I hope that you like them!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Bird". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

***Emeritus Prof. David M. Bird, Editor***

[david.bird@mcgill.ca](mailto:david.bird@mcgill.ca)

## Member Profile

*Editor's note: In each newsletter, we will feature a brief profile on hard-working volunteers who make the International Ornithologists' Union an effective and useful organization for ornithologists all over the world. If you are a past or present officer or Council member of or otherwise active in the IOU, please send me a brief profile (250 words or so) of yourself written in first or third person, as well as a photo, just like the one below!*



**Patricia Escalante**, Membership Chair, IOU (2019-present)

Using birds as an object of study, Patricia has made contributions to the genetics, evolution, systematics, phylogeography, ecology, distribution, and conservation of both Mexican and American birds. She currently conducts conservation projects, such as the reintroduction of the scarlet macaw in areas of its historical distribution in Mexico, including aspects of genetics, behaviour, ecology and environmental education. She has been Curator of the National Bird Collection since 1992. She has 87 scientific and 9 outreach publications. She has offered nine undergraduate and graduate courses and has supervised theses for biologists (16), M.Sc.'s (13), and Ph.D.'s (2) and hosted 10 students in academic exchange programs. Since 1995, Patricia has been the main tutor for the postgraduate

course in Biological Sciences at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM). She has served as President of both CIPAMEX (Society for the Study and Conservation of Birds in Mexico) from 1992-1998, and the Society of Neotropical Ornithology (2003-2007). She has been an associate editor for various specialized publications such as *Ornitología Neotropical*, *The Auk*, and *Mitochondrial DNA part B*. She graduated as a Biologist from UNAM, and from the City University of New York as a Doctor in the Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Program and has worked at the Institute of Biology UNAM since 1992. Her first attendance at an IOCongress was in Ottawa, Canada, in 1986, and continued in Christchurch, New Zealand 1990, Vienna, Austria 1994, Campos de Jōrdao Brasil 2010, and Vancouver, Canada 2018.

As Patricia has been keen to contribute to strengthen institutions, the opportunity to voluntarily contribute to the IOU has become very important to her. As she explains “The IOU impressed me as a student by facilitating my participation in an event as important as an international congress, an event that opened up my perspective on the career I wanted to pursue in the fascinating field in ornithology”. It has become very important to her to return the favour with some volunteer work for the IOU.

## Requests for Assistance

***Editor’s Note: This newsletter exists to help IOU members. If you need some help with a project of some kind, please forward a brief version like the one below for me to post. This will be the last time that the following request will be posted, so if you are interested, please contact Jane Popowich right away.***

### **IOU Code of Ethics General Statement:**

The Working Group Ethics in Ornithology (WGEO) <https://www.internationalornithology.org/ethics-ornithology> is establishing an IOU code of ethics and conduct practices. In particular, the IOU is in the process of developing guidelines for under-represented categories.

The IOU Code of Ethics will begin with the following categories:

1. Avoidance of glass collisions
2. Drones



3. Ecotourism
4. Ethical birdwatching
5. Ethical photography
6. Scientific collecting
7. Sports activities
8. Winter feeding

Please note that the IOU Code of Ethics will be a living document subject to change as it develops. It will be drafted with input from the WGEO group, members' suggestions and in coordination with codes of ethics of other organizations. Please see the WGEO reading list under 'code of ethics' for links to ethical codes and conduct practices of other ornithological organizations. The IOU code of ethics is to be published on the IOU Website <https://www.internationalornithology.org/>.

#### **Call for volunteers:**

The IOU invites volunteers interested in contributing to the development of an IOU Code of Ethics and conduct practices to please contact the Chair of the IOU working Group Ethics in Ornithology, Jane Popovich at [WGEO@janepopowich.com](mailto:WGEO@janepopowich.com)

## **Opinion Letters/Articles**



Photo by Flavio Amiel on Unsplash

***Editor's Note: Since I have not received any opinion letters or articles, I offer two of my own to hopefully stimulate some discussion or even better, some research.***

### **Why Do Dippers and Black-billed Magpies Flash White Eyelids?**

While both the dippers (*Cinclus* spp.) and the black-billed magpie (*Pica hudsonia*) are known to flash white eyelids, we have to be careful in our interpretations because we are in fact talking about two very different eyelids! All birds have an upper and lower eyelid, but most, if not all, birds also have

a third eyelid known as the nictitating membrane, ostensibly for protecting the cornea and moistening the eye. The various species of dippers worldwide have narrow white feathers on both the upper and lower eyelids that produce a white flash seen in the field. They particularly like to blink their white eyelids while dipping in the water, and the more agitated they are, the more they do both. They are known to blink as much as 40 to 50 times a minute! As for the black-billed magpie, that somewhat whitish flashing in their eyes is actually the nictitating membrane itself. But that membrane ends up with a bright orange patch in the late fall of the hatch year. In the magpies it is used to signal dominance in males. Two magpies will stand sideways or facing one another with bills raised above sixty degrees while flashing at one another those white nictitating membranes with the orange patch. Apparently, they are able to flash them independently of one another, doing this only on the side facing their opponent. Back to those dippers. While no one is really sure of the function of the white eyelid flashing in that species, ornithologists speculate that that it is simply used to catch the attention of other dippers in the area as part of courtship, as a threat display, and/or as an alert-signal to warn of predators in the area. Who knows – it might even serve to show dominance, as seen with the magpies. Sounds like a great study for a graduate degree thesis!



An American Dipper shows its “white” eye by blinking with its upper and lower eyelids (Photo Credit: Sibley Guides)

--- David M. Bird, Editor

### **Do Birds Really Care About the Colour of Bird Feeders?**

It is always rewarding to see scientific research dovetail with practical and, even better, commercial applications that hold benefits for our birds. Here is an example. I have learned that a number of customers who purchase green bird feeders from Brome Bird Care in Quebec resort to painting them in different colours. While they likely do it for fun, it is true that some of the larger stores do offer a variety of brightly coloured feeders. So, do birds really care about the colour of a given feeder? Well, there was actually a study done on this in 2017, with feeder birds in the UK. Students working with Lesley Morrell at the University of Hull offered the same food in eight identical feeders with the same seed but with the metal parts painted in different colours: red, yellow, green, blue, purple, black, silver and white. Over the winter, the students spent 185 hours recording 7,435 visits by 11 different bird species, most of which were various tit species (like our chickadees), house sparrows, and a couple of finch species. Red, yellow and blue were the least favoured followed by white, black and purple...but the birds definitely liked silver and green. I was not surprised that white was not favoured as it is widely believed to act as a warning colour in nature. Even when the students added an ultraviolet reflectance to the blue and red feeders, it did not make them more attractive to birds. Next, the students decided to find out what feeder colours the customers preferred. At a science festival, they presented the same choices to visitors at their booth. While the public did tend to like the brightly coloured feeders, the only colour that was mutually agreed upon between them and the birds was.....green. And that is the original colour of all of Brome Bird Care's feeders! Which means that Brome got it right in the first place! Even though this study is four years old, I like it for three reasons. First, it demonstrates that undergraduate students can conduct good science worthy of publication in prestigious journals. Second, the methods used are great examples of simplicity. And third, the findings offer practical benefits to both the business community, to the general public feeding birds, and to avian conservation in general.

----- **David M. Bird, Editor**

- **Original Paper:** Rothery, L., G.W. Scott and L.J. Morrell. 2017. Colour preferences of UK garden birds at supplementary seed feeders. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0172422>

### **Using Trained Eagles to Take Down Drones**

As someone who has worked with drones for more than a dozen years and with birds of prey for almost half a century, I have had quite a number of folks bring to my attention the training of bald eagles to take down drones behaving badly. It all started with the Dutch police who gained world-

wide attention in the media with their inaugural program. The concept is simple. One trains a bald eagle (and I am not altogether sure why this species was chosen) to regard drones as something to attack and “kill”. Why would the police do that? Well, not all drones are flown responsibly or by people with good intentions. For example, some criminals use drones to fly drugs and other illegal goods over the walls into prisons. In other cases, some drone pilots take some perverse pleasure in flying their machines very close to airport runways and other dangerous locations. And for sure, the eagles are certainly quite capable of taking down a drone; one wild bald eagle, not even defending its territory, did so just recently. But if I am a bad guy and do not care about hurting eagles, I will simply use a more powerful machine or worse, attach sharpened propeller blades to hack the eagle’s feet (do not pass this on!!). Yes, I know that the police, to their credit, are now placing Kevlar foot guards on the birds, but there is surely lots of room for error and hence, still a good chance for injury to an eagle striking a drone with at least four whirring and possibly sharp blades.



A Bald Eagle trained by the Dutch police is about to “capture”  
an illegally flown drone (Photo Credit: Reddit.com)

Then there is the logistics factor. By the time the police get word of a drone being flown illegally, they have to retrieve the bird from its aviary, load it into a vehicle, drive to the site of the offending drone, and launch the bird. Most drones can only stay in the air for twenty minutes, so by the time the eagle is in the air, the machine is already on the ground and gone. I guess that the public knowledge that the local police do have on hand a trained bald eagle to take down drones might act as somewhat of a deterrent. But I have also heard that the price for acquiring such a trained eagle

is about \$100,000 U.S. plus spending a year with the bird from the day it comes out of the egg. So, why not just employ a drone-killing drone.....there are several models on the market today.

--- **David M. Bird, Editor**

## Recently Published Papers: Editor's Choice



Photo by chuttersnap on Unsplash

### **Fewer Birds, Fewer Singing Mentors, Less Song Learning, Fewer Birds**

Imagine that you are in your first year or two and learning how to speak, but that there are no other humans around to teach you the language you need to acquire. In other words, no mentors about to learn from. In many bird species, males spend several months in their first year, learning and refining the songs of their species. While some bird species learn from their fathers, other species leave the nest area before they learn to sing and thus, have to find other mentors. But what if their particular species is endangered and there are precious few such mentors about to learn from? This turns out to be exactly the case for critically endangered regent honeyeaters (*Anthochaera phrygia*) in Australia. Over a five-year period, Ross Crate, a Ph.D. student in the lab of Robert Heinsohn at the Australian National University in Canberra, has been studying these strikingly coloured black and yellow birds, which were at one time quite common across Australia but are down to 300 to 400 birds in the wild today. Once in large flocks, they now flit about as singles and are quite spread out across the landscape. That means that there are many fewer mentors around in that impressionable first year for the young males to learn songs from. Without those mentors, the youngsters do not know what song they should be learning. Interestingly, they are instead picking up and producing mangled versions of songs from such common boisterous birds as noisy friarbirds and black-faced cuckoo-shrikes. And Crates and his co-authors suggest that female regent honeyeaters do not like what they are hearing. In fact, they are outright ignoring those males producing these strange sounds or abandoning them shortly after encountering them. Neither is a



good outcome for a population in danger of disappearing. So, in an effort to help the poor males in need of a proper song to learn from, Crates and his team are actually playing back recordings of the correct songs, as well as placing captive males near the youngsters.



Highly endangered male regent honeyeaters are finding it difficult to locate mentors from which to learn their songs (Photo Credit: E-Bird)

**Original Paper:** Crates, R., N. Langmore, L. Ranjard, D. Stojanovic, L. Rayner, D. Ingwersen, and R. Heinsohn. 2021. Loss of vocal culture and fitness costs in a critically endangered songbird. *Proc. R. Soc. B.* 288: 20210225 <http://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2021.0225>

## Birds in the news



Photo by Roman Kraft on Unsplash

**Editor's note:** *If you have some late-breaking news on some exciting ornithological research that you would like to share with IOU members, send along a summary and a photo if you wish for inclusion in the next issue of The Flutter.*

## The Newest Superstars Among the Birds!

You know, Hollywood and the sports world aren't the only sources of superstars – the bird world has them too! And these days, there are two real superstars out there in the world of feathered organisms...both of them living on the very southern edge of our planet...and famous for two very different reasons. The most notable and deserving one is a Laysan albatross (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) called Wisdom. Not only did she recently turn seventy, she also hatched another chick.... on February 1<sup>st</sup> to be exact. Now known as the oldest wild bird in history, she has outlived not only her previous mates but also Chandler Robbins, the biologist who first placed a metal ID band on her leg in 1956! Her current mate has been with her since 2010. While albatrosses are known to have the longest pair bonds in the bird world, they will take on a new mate if one has perished. Considering that albatrosses only lay one egg every second year and have to contend with possibly dying on a fishhook on a commercial long line and more recently deal with climate warming affecting their food sources, living to 70 and still producing babies is a remarkable achievement!



“Wisdom”, a Laysan albatross that holds the honour of being the oldest of all wild birds in the world, still produces offspring as (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

The other superstar is a king penguin (*Aptenodytes patagonicus*) which is famous only for its colour. Instead of sporting the usual black, white and yellow plumage, this spectacular bird is all white with plenty of bright yellow showing. While some might chalk the overall pale colour to albinism, the

more logical explanation is what we call leucism, meaning that the bird does not produce as much in the way of dark melanin pigments. It just so happens that they have a pigment known only to them, called spheniscin, that could account for the abundance of yellow. Anyway, the source of the colour is still up for debate, but meanwhile, photos of this very rare bird have been going viral.



Photos of a very rare colour aberration of a king penguin went viral this year

(Photo Credit: National Audubon Society)

**Popular Article:** May, N. Wisdom the albatross, the world's oldest known wild bird, has another chick at age 70. The Guardian, March 5, 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/mar/05/wisdom-the-albatross-the-worlds-oldest-known-wild-bird-has-another-chick-at-age-70>

**Popular Article:** Wetzel, C. Rare yellow penguin bewilders scientists. Audubon Magazine, March 3, 2021 <https://www.audubon.org/news/rare-yellow-penguin-bewilders-scientists>

### **Maybe the Biggest Bird Brains Ever!!**

Two Australian scientists, Warren Handley and Trevor Worthy, hold the distinct honour of studying the biggest 'bird brains' in history for the first time. And, no, they were not the brains of ravens or African gray parrots! The two paleontologists examined the brain cases of extinct flightless birds in the dromornithidae family – including some of the largest birds that ever existed – and found that they represented some very “extreme evolutionary experiments”.





Warren Handley (on the left) and Trevor Worthy are studying the brains of gigantic flightless birds known as the Dromornithidae (Photo Credit: EurekAlert!)

A group of gigantic flightless birds known as the Dromornithidae inhabited Australia from the Late Oligocene, around 25 million years ago, until they went extinct as recently as 50,000 years ago, during the Pleistocene. Other names, one aboriginal and the others local, are mihirung, meaning “giant bird” and “demon ducks” or “thunder bird”, respectively. The largest species could grow up to 3 m (9.8 ft) tall and weigh about 600 kg (1,320 lb).

The two scientists made CT scans of the brain cases from four species of these ancient birds followed by creating 3D models of them and comparing them to similar (albeit smaller) ‘modern’ relatives. This revealed the size and shape of the brains, closely resembling that of chickens. Combined with their large forward-facing eyes and very large bills, Handley postulates that these big-brained birds fed on soft leaves and fruit.

*Dromornis stirtoni*, the most recent of the four species examined and the second-largest known bird to have ever lived, had a weird-shaped head suggesting an equally bizarre brain shape.



*Dromornis stirtoni*, the second-largest known bird to have ever lived, had a weird-shaped head suggesting an equally bizarre brain shape (Photo Credit: Pinterest)

**Popular Article:** Irving, M. Giant extinct bird brains reveal "extreme evolutionary experiments". New Atlas, March 23, 2021 <https://newatlas.com/science/dromornithidae-giant-extinct-bird-brains/>

**Original Article:** Handley, W.D.; Worthy, T.H. Endocranial Anatomy of the Giant Extinct Australian Mihirung Birds (Aves, Dromornithidae). *Diversity* **2021**: 13, 124. <https://doi.org/10.3390/d13030124>

### Why Woodpecker Bills Do Not Get Stuck in a Tree

When a woodpecker does what it does best, that is peck, some amazing natural forces and evolved adaptations come into play. According to studies, the chisel-like bills of average-sized woodpeckers hammer into wood at the rate of 16 times a second – that’s nearly a thousand blows a minute! Some liken the rate of fire of a woodpecker to a machine-gun, a sound that thankfully 99.99 percent of us are only familiar with on our TV and movie screens. But not just as fast as a machine-gun– doubly fast! That is an impact velocity of about 1,300 miles per hour! In short, the bird’s head travels more than twice the speed of a moving bullet. Also, special muscles in the head pull the bird’s braincase away from its beak during each blow and moreover, the skull and the beak are separated by a spongy shock-absorbing cartilage to combat G-forces a thousand times the force of

gravity. But here is a new piece of this incredible puzzle – since we often use the word ‘hammer’ in association with woodpeckers, what keeps the bill from just sticking in the tree, like a hammered nail would do? In a recent study, scientists took some high-speed videos of two black woodpeckers, a fairly good-sized bird in Europe, pecking away at hardwood trunks in zoos and then analyzed them frame by frame. They discovered another one of the bird’s secret weapons – they have the ability to move the upper and lower beaks independently! When the tip of the bill contacts the wood, the bird’s head rotates to the side a wee tiny bit, lifting the upper part of the beak and twisting it a little in the other direction. This action pulls open the bill enough to create free space between the beak tip and the wood at the bottom of the punctured hole to allow the woodpecker to retract its beak. As we find out more about the amazing adaptations of these wood-drilling birds, it puts them right up there with the hummingbirds, at least in my books!



Woodpeckers, like this black woodpecker, have the ability to move the upper and lower beaks independently to avoid getting their beaks stuck in the tree bark (Photo Credit: E-bird)

**Popular Video:** Pennisi, E. Video reveals why woodpeckers don’t get stuck to trees. American Association for the Advance of Science, January 7, 2021.

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2021/01/video-reveals-why-woodpeckers-don-t-get-stuck-trees>

## Tools for Research and Conservation



Photo by Hunter Haley on Unsplash

***Editor's note: If you have some late-breaking news on a new ornithological research tool that you would like to share with IOU members, send along a summary and a photo if you wish for inclusion in the next issue of *The Flutter*.***

### **The Latest from the E-Bird Folks: Habitat Regional Charts**

When birdwatchers head out to find their favorite species, they don't go to just any spot, they head to specific habitat types such as grasslands or evergreen forests where the species is frequently found.

Information on where to expect certain species has often been generalized across a species' entire range or a broad period in time such as the breeding and nonbreeding season—until now. The eBird Status and Trends project team released habitat regional charts for 649 species that show habitat associations for each species for every week of the year in states, provinces, or bird conservation regions where they occur.

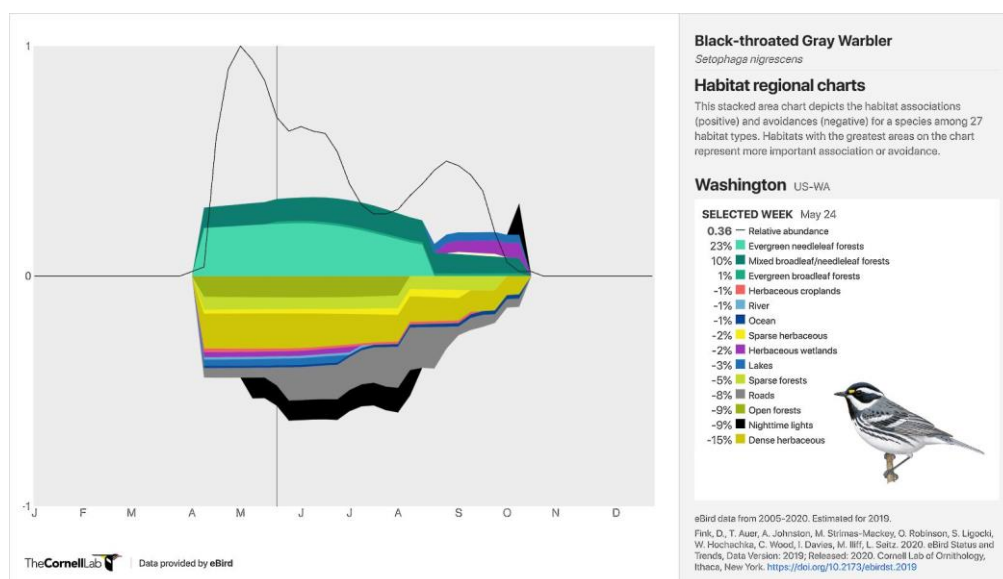
According to Viviana Ruiz Gutierrez, the assistant director of the Center for Avian Population Studies and Conservation Science Program at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, the real power of the habitat regional charts comes from the ability to visualize what is behind every eBird Status model depicting the predicted distribution and abundance patterns. Every map one sees depicting changes in abundance across space and time is based on information on how associations with different habitat types change every week; it's just not possible to see that information without the habitat regional charts.



The new habitat visualizations are interactive allowing one to see how habitat associations change over space and time, providing insights on a scale not possible before.

Static field guides, for example, tell us that black-throated blue warblers (*Setophaga caerulescens*) breed in large tracts of mature deciduous and mixed evergreen-deciduous woodlands with a thick understory of shrubs including hobblebush, mountain laurel, and rhododendron, but we know little how these associations might change across regions or time.

The habitat regional charts confirm that black-throated blue warblers are associated with deciduous and mixed-broadleaf forests throughout most of their breeding range, but as individuals migrate in the spring and fall, the habitat regional charts indicate that they are frequently associated with areas dominated by roads and nighttime lights along the east coast. Birds passing over Connecticut, for example, show a positive association with nighttime lights and roads, which could make them more vulnerable to building collisions. An estimated 365 – 988 million birds die in collisions with buildings annually, including a number of species of high conservation concern. Being able to identify when and where species may be vulnerable to nighttime lights can inform lights out initiatives designed to safeguard migrating birds as they pass.



An example of a habitat regional chart for one of 649 species created by the eBird Status and Trends project team that show habitat associations for each species for every week of the year in states, provinces, or bird conservation regions where they occur (Photo Credit: E-Bird Organization News, Cornell University)

**Popular Article:** Borgmann, K. Habitat regional charts return highlighting habitat associations for 649 species for every week of the year. E-Bird Organization News, Cornell University, March 31, 2021 <https://ebird.org/news/habitat-regional-charts-return-highlighting-habitat-associations-for-649-species-for-every-week-of-the-year>

## Bird Conservation in the News



Photo by Dr Dejan Stojanovic

**Editor's note:** *Please forward any conservation issues or ongoing efforts for inclusion in the next issue of The Flutter.*

### **Black Vultures Sadly Falling Out of Public Favour in the Eastern U.S.**

While vultures all over the world certainly have their fans, most notably among ornithologists and bird watchers, they are not loved by all! Take the state of Missouri in the U.S., for instance. They are facing a troubling increase in the population of black vultures, possibly due to habitat changes caused by climate warming as well as more available roadkill. It is not news to know that these aggressive birds, unlike their close cousins the turkey vultures, are prone to killing young calves and other livestock as they are born, usually by pecking their eyes out. Now, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is allowing some livestock owners to kill the birds as part of a program overseen by the Missouri Farm Bureau. The latter is handing out permits to farmers based on the numbers of vultures in their county, how many livestock animals have been killed by the birds, and how their county ranks in livestock production. Non-lethal methods like loud noises, bright lights, and even hanging effigies of vultures are not effective according to the farmers.



The Black Vulture is regrettably facing shifting public opinion in the U.S. (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

Understandably, the kill program does not sit well with bird-lovers, ornithologists, and wildlife conservationists in general, partly because black vultures are protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Worse, the culling has also been extended to the neighbouring states of Kentucky and Tennessee. Unfortunately for the vultures, public attitudes toward them have been changing from regarding them as sanitary engineers ridding the environment, including slaughterhouses, of unwanted carcasses, to now being spreaders of disease (not scientifically proven), predators of livestock, and general public nuisances. In terms of the latter, the birds apparently attack vehicles, tearing off the plastic and rubber moulding around the windows.

**Popular Article:** Pratt, W. A very aggressive, nasty bird: Missouri fights deadly black vultures. St. Louis Radio, March 29, 2021 <https://news.stlpublicradio.org/2021-03-29/a-very-aggressive-nasty-bird-missouri-fights-deadly-black-vultures>

### **“Fake News” Put to Good Use ‘Down Under’**

Scientists are taking a page from former U.S. President Donald Trump’s playbook and deploying a form of “fake news” to help save endangered shorebirds in New Zealand. The team led by Grant

Norbury of Manaaki Whenua Landcare Research spread misinformation in the form of bird smells to deceive predators and helped to reduce the numbers of birds lost without resorting to lethal means. Introduced rats, cats, ferrets, hedgehogs, and foxes are having monumental impacts on all manners of wildlife species worldwide, but especially in Australia and New Zealand. They eat eggs and kill endangered shorebirds that have learned to hide from local avian predators by building camouflaged nests among pebbles on the river shores. However, the four-legged predators can easily locate these nests by smell. Lethal methods, such as baiting, trapping and shooting, have not proven effective against these introduced predators. So, Norbury and his team distributed 'fake news' in the form of nest-like odours extracted from gulls, quails and chickens and smeared on the rocks near nesting sites that suggested to the predators that nesting had begun, even though the birds were yet to arrive! The predators were initially attracted to the odours. But within days, after realizing the scent would not lead to food, they lost interest and stopped visiting the site. At control sites where no fake news had been deployed, the predators filled their faces at the usual rate. The number of nests destroyed by predators almost halved. The next year the clever researchers flipped treatments at two sites and got the same result.

**Popular Article:** Banks, P. and C. Price. Scientists used 'fake news' to stop predators from killing endangered birds—and the result was remarkable. *Science X Dialogue*, March 11, 2021

**Original Article:** Norbury, G.L., C.J. Price, M. C. Latham, S.J. Brown, H.C. Ricardo, G.E. Brownstein, N. J. McArthur, and P.B. Banks. 2021. Misinformation tactics protect rare birds from problem predators. *Science Advances* 7(11) [DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.abe4164](https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abe4164)

## Conferences



Photo by Mikael Kristenson on Unsplash

**Editor's note:** *This list is by no means exhaustive. If I am missing some noteworthy events, please let me know so that I can include them in the next issue. Also, note that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some meetings are being cancelled, some are being postponed, some are being done*



*online, and some are still under consideration. Thus, since things are rapidly evolving, it is always best to check the actual web site for the conference you are planning to attend.*

## **2021**

May 3 - 6, 2021: The **Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)** will hold its annual European meeting virtually. For more information, visit <https://europe2021.setac.org/>

**Editor's note:** Other more local **SETAC** meetings planned for 2021 are listed on their web site:

[https://www.setac.org/events/event\\_list.asp](https://www.setac.org/events/event_list.asp)

October 9 – 12, 2021: The **Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.** and **Neotropical Raptor Network** will hold a joint meeting in Boise, Idaho. For more information, email Sarah Schulwitz

[Schulwitz.Sarah@peregrinefund.org](mailto:Schulwitz.Sarah@peregrinefund.org) or Rick Watson [rwatson@peregrinefund.org](mailto:rwatson@peregrinefund.org)

Late July 2021: **BirdsCaribbean** will hold its 23<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on the island of Trinidad.

For more information, visit <https://www.birdscaribbean.org/2020/02/birdscaribbean-2021-conference-to-be-held-in-trinidad/>

August 1 – 6, 2021: **The Ecological Society of America** will hold its 106<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Long Beach, California. For more information, visit <https://www.esa.org/events/meetings/future-esa-meetings/>

August 9 - 14, 2021: The **American Ornithological Society** and **Society of Canadian Ornithologists** will be holding joint annual meetings virtually. For more information, visit

<https://americanornithology.org/meetings/> or <https://www.sco-soc.ca/meetings>

September 20 – 24, 2021: The **World Owl Conference** will be held in Onalaska/La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA. For more information, visit <https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/futureconferences.html>

September 26 – 30, 2021: **The Wildlife Society** will hold its 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. For more information, visit <https://wildlife.org/learn/conferences-2/>

October 5 - 10, 2021: The **Asian Raptor Research Conservation Network** is meeting in Kuching, Borneo, East Malaysia. For more information, contact Chong Leong Puan, University Putra Malaysia [chongleong@upm.edu](mailto:chongleong@upm.edu)

November 15 - 19, 2021: The **Pan-African Ornithological Congress** will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. For more information, visit <https://www.paoc15.org/>

## **2022**

February 15-16, 2022: The 10<sup>th</sup> **International Conference on Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Development** will be held in London, U.K.

For more information, visit <https://waset.org/biodiversity-conservation-and-sustainable-development-conference-in-february-2021-in-london>

March 14 – 18, 2022. The **North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference** will be held in Spokane, Washington. For more information, visit <https://wildlifemanagement.institute/conference/future-locations>

June 27 - July 1, 2022. The **American Ornithological Society** is holding its 140<sup>th</sup> stated meeting in San Juan, Puerto Rico. For more information, visit <https://americanornithology.org/meetings/>

August 14 - 22, 2022: The **International Ornithological Union** will hold the 2022 IOCongress™ in Durban, South Africa. For more information, visit <https://www.internationalornithology.org/iocongress-2022>

August 14 - 19, 2022: The **Ecological Society of America** will hold its 107<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Montreal, Canada. For more information, visit <https://www.esa.org/events/meetings/future-esa-meetings/>

November 6 – 10, 2022: The **Wildlife Society** will hold its 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Spokane, Washington. For more information, visit <https://wildlife.org/learn/conferences-2/>

September 11 – 16, 2022: The 18<sup>th</sup> **International Behavioral Ecology Congress** will be hosted in Melbourne, Australia. For more information, visit <http://www.behavecol.com/meetings-conferences/>

March 30 - April 1, 2022: The **British Ornithologists' Union** annual conference themed upon "Avian Reproduction" will meet in Nottingham, UK. For more information, visit

<https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

????, 2022: The **International Conference on Genomics and Molecular Biology** 15<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held, the location to be determined. For more information, visit

<https://www.clocate.com/conference/international-conference-on-genomics-and-molecular-biology/35754/>

## **2023**

January 21 – 22, 2023: The **International Conference on Wildlife Ecology, Biodiversity, Conservation and Management** will be held in London, UK. For more information, visit <https://waset.org/wildlife-ecology-biodiversity-conservation-and-management-conference-in-january-2023-in-london>

March 20 – 24, 2023: The **North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference** will be held in St. Louis, Missouri. For more information, visit <https://wildlifemanagement.institute/conference/future-locations>

June 14 – 15, 2023: The **International Conference on Wildlife Biology and Conservation** will be held in Montreal, Canada. For more information, visit <https://waset.org/wildlife-biology-and-conservation-conference-in-june-2023-in-montreal>

August 6 - 11, 2023: The **Ecological Society of America** will hold its 108<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in Portland, Oregon. For more information, visit <https://www.esa.org/events/meetings/future-esa-meetings/>

## Courses and Workshops



Photo by Rita Morais on Unsplash

***Editor's Note: Workshops that benefit ornithologists are not easy to locate on the internet and they are often buried in the web site of an upcoming conference. If you know of any upcoming courses or workshops of interest to our members anywhere in the world, please forward the information to the editor.***

**Courses and workshops for PhD students, postdocs, and professional researchers, and those wishing to become ornithologists:**

**Ornithological Technical Services** is an industry leading scientific consultancy that specializes in aviation ornithology. Since 2003, we have provided expertise and delivered high standard projects relating to aviation wildlife hazard management, avian conservation, pest bird management and avian environmental impact assessments. For more information, visit

<https://www.ornithologicaltechnicalservices.com/training>

The **Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology** based in Ithaca, New York offers outstanding courses and workshops on ornithology that may be useful to those interested in improving their skills in the study and conservation of birds on both a professional basis and for citizen science. For more information, visit <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/education/>

The **British Trust for Ornithology** offers a wide range of **courses** each year around the country in a variety of venues and habitats, for **beginner birders**, developing surveyors and conservation professionals. For more information, visit <https://bto.org/develop-your-skills/training-courses>

## Courses and workshops for those wishing to become ornithologists:

Online Course: How to Become an Ornithologist | EnvironmentalScience.org Visit

<https://www.environmentalscience.org/career/ornithologist>

Online Ornithology Courses - Fat Birder Top fatbirder.com Visit

<https://www.coursef.com/ornithology-online-programs?rid=5e8fb68b8dcd2c6600c988a7>

“The Bird Course” taught by two former McGill University professors of ornithology is offered by The Western Section of The Wildlife Society. For more information, visit

[www.askprofessorbird.com](http://www.askprofessorbird.com) or email [workshops@twc-west.org](mailto:workshops@twc-west.org)

**Editor’s Note:** For more online courses in ornithology, visit <https://www.coursef.com/ornithology-online-programs>

## Grants, Fellowships, Internships, and Positions



Photo from unsplash.com

**Editor’s Note:** *If you know of other opportunities for ornithological grants, fellowships, internships and positions, please forward them to me for posting. The editor is also posting other databases rather than duplicating all pertinent listings in The Flutter.*

## General Grants and Awards Databases:

**Editor's Note:** This is a reasonably up-to-date database of recurring grants, awards, prizes, scholarships, fellowships, etc. in the field of ornithology. While it does include some of the opportunities listed below, there are other useful ones. For more information, visit <https://ornithologyexchange.org/funding/grants/>

### ***World-wide:***

**British Ecological Society Training & Travel Grants:** These grants help PhD students and postgraduate research assistants to meet the costs of specialist field training courses and to network and publicise their research by presenting their work at workshops and conferences.

Read more: <https://www.britishecologicalsociety.org/funding/training-travel-grants/>

**Captain David Simpson Award:** The Royal Navy Birdwatching Society administers a fund left by the late Captain David Simpson, MN for a scholarship in his name. A budget for research grants and conservation work is set each year at the annual meeting. Researchers are encouraged to apply for grant funding in support of scientific seabird studies with clear aims and objectives. Contact the General Secretary at [secretary@rnbws.org.uk](mailto:secretary@rnbws.org.uk) for details and read more at <http://www.rnbws.org.uk/about-us/>

**Chicago Zoological Society, Conservation Leadership Awards:** The awards were created in 2005 by the Board of Trustees of the Chicago Zoological Society to honour the lifelong legacy of animal welfare and the worldwide conservation leadership of George Rabb.

Read more: <https://www.czs.org/Chicago-Zoological-Society/Conservation-Leadership/Conservation-Awards>

**Darwin Initiative Funding for Biodiversity:** The Darwin Initiative is a UK government grants scheme that helps to protect biodiversity and the natural environment through locally based projects worldwide. Deadline: July 2021

Read more: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/darwin-initiative-applying-for-main-project-funding>

**Frank M. Chapman Collection Study Grant, Frank M. Chapman Fellowship, Frank M. Chapman Grant, American Museum of Natural History** comprise several continuous grant schemes aimed to assist ornithological research.

Read more: <https://www.amnh.org/our-research/vertebrate-zoology/ornithology/grants>

**Hawk Mountain, Graduate Student Program:** internship programs and competitive grants for graduate students working on raptors at major universities throughout the United States and elsewhere.

Read more: <https://www.hawkmountain.org/about/careers/graduate-student-programs>

**Holohil Grant Program:** supports endangered species research and educational work world-wide that makes significant use of Holohil transmitters for data collection.

Read more: <http://www.holohil.com/grant-program/>

**Idea Wild Equipment Assistance:** grants for the acquisition of field equipment. IDEA WILD encourages the use and reuse of equipment and gives preference to proposals that clearly explain how the equipment will be used when the project is finished.

Read more: <http://www.ideawild.org/apply.html>

**Professional Development Grants, World Wildlife Fund:** Professional Development Grants (PDGs) provide support for mid-career conservationists to pursue short-term, non-degree training to upgrade their knowledge and skills through short courses, workshops, symposiums, conferences, and professional exchanges.

Read more:

[https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1095/files/original/PDG\\_Guidelines\\_2020.pdf?1568057598](https://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1095/files/original/PDG_Guidelines_2020.pdf?1568057598)

**Small Grants for Nature Conservation, The Rufford Foundation:** funds nature conservation projects across the developing world.

Read more: <https://www.rufford.org/rsg/>

**Sophie Danforth Conservation Biology Funds:** supports conservation programs that protect threatened wildlife and habitats worldwide.

Read more: <http://rwpzoo.org/danforth-conservation-grants>

**Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.:** The Raptor Research Foundation, Inc. offers several grants to amateurs and students with limited access to alternative funding to support research on birds of prey and also gives out several awards annually to deserving individuals contributing to the biology and conservation of raptors world-wide.

Read more: [www.raptorresearchfoundation.org](http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org)

**The International Osprey Foundation:** research grants awarded annually for osprey and other raptor-related research in the United States and worldwide.

Read more: <https://www.ospreys.com/styled-4/index.html>

**Waterbird Society:** various grants to support projects producing significant scientific advances in the biology, ecology, or conservation biology of wading birds (i.e. herons, storks, ibises, and their taxonomic allies).

Read more: <https://waterbirds.org/awards/>

**Young Explorers Grants, National Geographic:** currently offering Explorers a variety of funding opportunities in the fields of conservation, education, research, storytelling, and technology, including birds.

Read more: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/funding-opportunities/grants/>

**British Ornithologists' Union:** Small research grants of up to £2,000 per project aimed at supporting small projects outright or to part-fund medium-sized research programmes.

Read more: <https://mailchi.mp/bou.org.uk/funding-ornithology-july-564053?e=1cb38bcd10>

## ***Africa:***

**African Bird Club Conservation and Expedition awards:** The ABC's Conservation Programme supports small- to medium-sized conservation and expedition projects in Africa. For Undergraduate Students, Masters Students, Doctoral Students, Postdoctoral, Early Professionals, and Established Professionals. Next deadlines: end of June, end of October.

Read more: <https://www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-awards>

**Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.:** Leslie Brown Memorial Grants offered specifically for research on birds of prey in Africa.

Read more: <https://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/grants-and-awards/leslie-brown-memorial-grant/>



## ***Australasia:***

**Australian Bird Study Association Research Fund:** Each year, the Association awards grants to its members to support specific projects that increase our knowledge of Australian birds. Usually, two grants are awarded. The purpose of the grants is to fund equipment purchases to enable new projects to get started, or to sustain long-term projects.

Read more: <https://www.absa.asn.au/grants-2/fund-for-avian-research/>

**Birds Queensland Research Grant:** Each year Birds Queensland offers small grants for research relating to the conservation of birds and their habitats in Queensland, especially those under threat.

Read more: [http://birdsqueensland.org.au/research\\_grants.php](http://birdsqueensland.org.au/research_grants.php)

## ***Nearctic:***

**Society of Canadian Ornithologists:** Each year, the SCO-SOC offers both prestigious professional awards and a variety of research awards to students. Read more: <https://www.sco-soc.ca/awards>

**American Ornithology Society:** a variety of research and travel awards aimed at student and post-docs and various prestigious awards for professionals, publications, service, and presentations.

Read more: [www.americanornithology.org](http://www.americanornithology.org)

**Wilson Ornithological Society:** a variety of research and travel awards aimed at students and various prestigious awards for professionals, publications, service, and presentations.

Read more: [www.wilsonsociety.org](http://www.wilsonsociety.org)

**Birds Canada:** jobs for ornithologists at all levels, as well as plenty of opportunities for citizen scientists dealing with birds; also offer annually two main research grants, one for Canadian-based species and another dedicated to murre populations.

Read more: [www.birdscanada.org](http://www.birdscanada.org)

**American Bird Conservancy:** offers job opportunities for ornithologists in the area of bird conservation in the U.S.

Read more: <https://abcbirds.org/about/employment/>

**Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology:** for those seeking jobs and volunteer positions as well as opportunities for students. Visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/home/jobs/](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/jobs/). They are also once again offering one UK Birder between the age of 16 - 18 the opportunity to win the Cameron Bepolka Scholarship to attend Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Event, in Ithaca, New York in 2021. For more information, visit

<https://www.cameronbepolka.com/sponsorship-to-attend-cornell-university-ornithology-event>

**Carolina Bird Club grants:** The CBC provides grants to support research, education and conservation of birds of the Carolinas and their habitats. Grant applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. The CBC Grants Committee meets quarterly to review applications.

Read more: <https://www.carolinabirdclub.org/grants/>

**Delaware Museum of Natural History, Collection Research Grants:** The Collections & Research Division of the Delaware Museum of Natural History announces the availability of graduate student grants in support of research in the Museum's collections.

Read more: <http://www.delmnh.org/collections-research/collection-research-grants/>

## ***Neotropics:***

**Neotropical Bird Club Awards and Grants:** for conservation work or research that has an intended conservation benefit. Next deadline: July.

Read more: <https://www.neotropicalbirdclub.org/conservation/conservation-fund/conservation-fund-guidelines/>

**Pamela and Alexander F. Skutch Research Award, Association of Field Ornithologists:** supports minimally invasive research into the life histories, especially social relations and reproduction, of little known birds of the continental Neotropics, including Trinidad and Tobago. Deadline: 15 July.

Read more: [http://afonet.org/wp\\_english/grants-awards/skutch-award/](http://afonet.org/wp_english/grants-awards/skutch-award/)

## ***Oceania:***

**Pacific Seabird Craig S. Harrison Conservation Fund, Pacific Seabird Group:** The Conservation Fund makes grants for conservation of seabirds in the Pacific Ocean, and for expanding seabird expertise in developing countries within or bordering the Pacific Ocean.

Read more: <https://pacificseabirdgroup.org/grants/>

## **Obituaries**



(Photo credit: Amazon)

***Editor's note: If you wish to include an obituary, tribute or memorial piece for some individual who has made contributions to ornithology and/or bird conservation in some meaningful way, please submit no more than 1,000 words and an accompanying photograph.***

### **In Memoriam: Storrs Olson, 1944 – 2021**

Storrs was born on April 3, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois, being named for his maternal grandfather, P. S. Lovejoy, a well-known Michigan conservationist. Storrs's father, Franklyn C. W. Olson (1910-82), was a physical oceanographer, whose PhD dissertation was on the currents of Lake Erie. At an early age, Storrs was exposed to pickled fish, warbler migration, Peterson's field guide, and an assortment of biologists at the F. T. Stone Laboratory of Ohio State University on Gibraltar Island at the western end of Lake Erie. In 1950, his father accepted a job at Florida State University and his family moved to Tallahassee, where Storrs grew up and lived until 1968. Although Storrs was originally interested in fishes and made a diverse collection of the ichthyofauna of the Florida panhandle, at age 12 his

direction was changed permanently by local ornithologist Henry M. Stevenson's invitation to participate in a Christmas bird count, in the course of which Stevenson found and collected an out-of-season prairie warbler. From that moment, the prospect of shooting birds seemed far more engaging than seining fish and a lifetime's course was set. Another important influence during Storrs's teens was Horace Loftin, then a graduate student at Florida State University working on a master's thesis on the phenomenon of boreal shorebirds summering far from their breeding grounds. Storrs and Horace spent many exciting weekends together on the Gulf coast trapping and marking shorebirds. Subsequently, Loftin moved his family to the Panama Canal Zone, where he taught and worked on a PhD degree on fresh-water fishes of Panama. Storrs moved in with him in 1963 and spent his first semester after high school at Canal Zone Junior College, with many expeditions to the "interior" for his first experiences in the tropics. He finished his undergraduate work at Florida State University in 1966 and returned to Panama for the summer as part of a project working on immunology of vultures.



The world of ornithology lost a great man in 2021 -- Storrs Olson

With his primary interests in systematics and anatomy, Storrs started graduate school at the University of Florida under Pierce Brodkorb. There he gained valuable exposure to fossil birds and the literature of avian paleontology as well as a lifelong friendship with one of ornithology's most unforgettable characters. Otherwise, Gainesville was not to his liking and he returned to Florida State University to complete his master's degree in 1968.

Because of the number of significant new records of birds that Storrs had obtained in Panama, he was contacted by former Smithsonian Secretary Alexander Wetmore who was engaged in preparing

a monograph of the birds of Panama. Storrs first visited Alex Wetmore and the National Museum of Natural History in 1967, and the contacts developed then led to a summer job in 1968 under Richard Banks, in what was then the Fish and Wildlife Service, inventorying the skeleton collection in the Division of Birds. Following this he was employed from 1968 to 1969 as resident manager, under F. S. L. Williamson, director of the Smithsonian's newly established Chesapeake Bay Center at Edgewater, Maryland. Through the connections between the Chesapeake Bay Center and Johns Hopkins University, Storrs was encouraged to apply to graduate school at Hopkins, where he matriculated at the School of Hygiene and Public Health in the Department of Pathobiology, headed by the eclectic and far-sighted Frederik Bang. With Smithsonian sponsorship, Storrs visited the remote South Atlantic islands of Ascension and St. Helena in 1970 and 1971, where he made important collections of fossil birds and many other items of natural history, which inspired subsequent expeditions by marine biologists because of all the novelties discovered on Ascension Island. Storrs completed his dissertation on the evolution of the rails of the South Atlantic islands and was awarded his ScD degree from Johns Hopkins in 1972. Meanwhile, he had moved into the National Museum of Natural History in August 1971 on a pre-doctoral fellowship, with the unstated intention of never leaving.

He next held a presidential internship and then worked as part of S. Dillon Ripley's research laboratory, completing a chapter on fossil rails for Ripley's monograph of the Rallidae published in 1977. Storrs was hired as a curator in the Division of Birds, National Museum of Natural History, in March 1975. He met his future wife, Helen James, in 1976 and they embarked on the first of dozens of trips to explore for fossil birds in the Hawaiian Islands in 1977. Their joint exposition of the diversity of the pre-human avifauna of the archipelago has been one of the milestones of systematic ornithology in the past century. Storrs has also conducted fieldwork in the West Indies, Bermuda, South Africa, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Spain, and Argentina, as well as additional work in Panama and the South Atlantic islands. His more than 300 publications treat modern and fossil birds from all parts of the world and all time periods. Storrs was elected to membership in the Washington Biologists' Field Club in 2001.

He was known to friends and colleagues as an excellent cook and connoisseur of fine and adventurous dining. He applied his scientific dissecting skills to his culinary efforts and treated his guests to a sampling of all parts of fish, fowl, or mammal, and the occasional reptile.

He is survived by his wife Johanna of Fredericksburg, whom he married in 2016, daughter Sydney

Olson of Bangor Maine, son Travis Olson and granddaughter Linnea of Portland, Maine, and sister Susan Wallace-Olson of Tallahassee, Florida.

The Storrs Olson Prize is awarded by the Editor for the best book review published in each volume of The Wilson Journal of Ornithology (beginning with volume 120).

**By Ellen Paul, January 23, 2021 (reprinted from the Ornithology Exchange)**

## Films and Videos



Photo credit: Wikipedia

The documentary film **“The Future of Birds”** film is so good that it deserves a repeat mention <https://www.mondefilms.com/synopsis> . The past IOU president, Dr. Lucia Severinghaus, and other members affiliated with the IOU – Yossi Leshem and Alexandre Roulin, feature prominently in the film.

## Contact:

For feedback or more information, or to provide information to be included in the next issue of the IOU Newsletter, please contact the editor at:

**David M. Bird, Ph.D.**

**Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology, McGill University**

**c/o 10980 Dunne Road, North Saanich, British Columbia, Canada V8L 5J1**

**01-1-778-351-0352**

[david.bird@mcgill.ca](mailto:david.bird@mcgill.ca)

[www.askprofessorbird.com](http://www.askprofessorbird.com)

**The next deadline for material from IOU members is July 15, 2021**

