

## **“IOU Flutter”**



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

**Volume 2, Issue 1 (December 2019)**

### **IOU News!!!**

The 2022 IOCongress® will be held in Durban, South Africa. The IOU is delighted to partner with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to organize the IOCongress2022 again in Durban, more than two decades after the first IOCongress in Africa in 1998. It will be quite rewarding 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, and I trust that you will want to be part of the IOCongress there in 2022! Visit <https://www.internationalornithology.org/blog/10791> for more information!

### **Message From the President**



It gives me great pleasure to introduce several news items in this my first message as the IOU president (2018-2022).

I am especially happy to introduce David M. Bird as our new editor of *The Flutter*, the IOU Newsletter. His first issue is full to the brim with interesting items, and I am looking forward to many

more issues of *The Flutter* under his editorship. I also would like to take the opportunity to thank our previous newsletter editor, Juan F. Masello, for his pathbreaking work in starting *The Flutter*.

The top news item of this issue of the newsletter is certainly the announcement of the 28<sup>th</sup> International Ornithological Congress<sup>®</sup> (IOCongress<sup>®</sup>) being held in Durban (South Africa), August 14-20, 2022. I can hardly wait to revisit this great city at the east coast of Southern Africa! I was there for the first time in 1995 as a member of the scientific program committee for the 22<sup>nd</sup> IOCongress in Durban, which I later attended in 1998 when I was elected Secretary of the predecessor organization of the IOU. Since then, both Durban and South Africa have undergone significant developments and it will be exciting to discover them.

The convenor of the IOCongress will be Professor Colleen T. Downs, the National Research Foundation Chair in Ecosystem Health in the School of Life Sciences at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, who attended the 22<sup>nd</sup> IOCongress in Durban as a student. The scientific program will be organized by the Scientific Program Committee (SPC) chaired by Dr. Juan F. Masello, Principal Investigator in the Department of Animal Ecology and Systematics at the Justus Liebig University Giessen in Germany.

Next, I would like to call your attention to the new Council (2018-2022), the governing body responsible for the handling of the scientific programs and membership support of the IOU <https://www.internationalornithology.org/iou-permanent-committees>. Colleen Downs will join the Council as the IOCongress Convener, and Dr. Pat Latas has recently joined the Council as the chair of the Membership Committee. We are still looking for nominations to fill the chair of the Communications and Publications Committee.

The Working Groups form the backbone of the scientific programs of the IOU <https://www.internationalornithology.org/working-groups>. They typically work on issues of global scope and importance, which require a global approach. The Working Group on Avian Nomenclature is the oldest one, having been active since 1950. The Working Groups Psittaciformes and Asian Ornithology were formed in 2010 and have quickly grown in significance. The Working Groups Avian Morphology, Gondwanan Ornithology and Ethics in Ornithology are the youngest groups, and currently two other working groups are in the state of formation.

Finally, I would like to introduce you to three communications professionals whose contributions create the presence of the IOU on the internet. Our webmaster is Sascha Rösner <https://www.internationalornithology.org/tech-admin> who has built and managed the new IOU web page. Our social media tasks are managed by Roelant Junker for Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/InternatOrnithol/> and Rowan Martin for Twitter

<https://twitter.com/InternOrniUnion> . Please follow them!

With best wishes and regards, until the next issue,

**Dominique G. Homberger, President, International Ornithological Union**

[ioupresident@internationalornithology.org](mailto:ioupresident@internationalornithology.org)

### From the Editor



Allow me to introduce myself as the new editor of *The Flutter*. I have been working with birds since 1973 when I first began studying the efficacy of using artificial insemination in American kestrels as surrogates for endangered peregrine falcons as my M.Sc. thesis at McGill University. I then completed my Ph.D. on forced renesting in kestrels in 1978 when I also took over the reins of the Avian Science and Conservation Centre in 1978 based on McGill's Macdonald campus. Fifty graduate students, 180 publications in peer-reviewed journals, and ten or so books and edited proceedings later, I finally retired from McGill in 2013 as an Emeritus Professor and moved with my wife, Toni, to North Saanich just north of Victoria on Vancouver Island. I have not retired from ornithological research, occasionally being involved in collaborative research on the declining American kestrel, but more substantially on the application of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (AKA drones) to avian research and conservation. Over the last four decades, I have also dedicated myself to public outreach, focusing on helping the public to better understand birds as well as to conserve them. One day sooner or later, I hope to announce in this newsletter that the federal government of Canada has officially endorsed the Canada Jay as "its bird", a special project in which I am involved with these days. In any case, if you would like to know more about me and my personal efforts in the world of ornithology and bird conservation, I invite you to visit my web site at [www.askprofessorbird.org](http://www.askprofessorbird.org), which is designed to help non-professional folks learn about birds. Meanwhile, please consider *The Flutter* to be "*your voice for birds and ornithology*". I must say that

I am excited about the potential of this relatively new vehicle to share knowledge of ornithology and bird conservation with like-minded folks all over the world. Specifically, our goal is to keep the members of the International Ornithological Union informed on what is happening in the world for both birds and ornithology, so please feel free to send along items that might be included in future issues.

***Dr. David M. Bird, Editor, The Flutter, IOU***

## **Member Profile**

In each newsletter, we feature a brief profile on hard-working volunteers who make the International Ornithological Union an effective and useful organization for ornithologists all over the world. If you are an officer or Council member of the IOU, please send me a profile of yourself (and a photo) just like the one below!

**Dr. Frank Erwin Rheindt:** I have been a dedicated birdwatcher since my early childhood years. This lifelong passion was the driving force for me to enter academia as an evolutionary biologist. After stints at Duke, Uni Melbourne and Harvard, I am now an Assistant Professor at the National University of Singapore, where many of my projects touch upon the diversification process and conservation genetics. My passion has allowed me to travel to all seven continents to witness our planet's amazing diversity of birds. My work has contributed to the discovery and description of a significant number of new bird species. Owing to my interest in speciation and taxonomy, I have become a member of the IOU's Working Groups on Avian Nomenclature and on Avian Check-listing, as well as a Commissioner of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. With a main research focus on Asia, I have become involved as a Vice-Chair of the IOU's Working Group on Asian Ornithology to promote avian biology across this vast continent, including in countries with less academic opportunity. My greatest aspiration as a member of the IOU Council is to assist the IOU in its ongoing expansion of focus into our planet's tropical and subtropical regions, where most avian diversity lingers. University Web Page: <http://www.dbs.nus.edu.sg/staff/frank.html> Lab Webpage: <https://avianeonus.com/>



## Requests for Assistance

### **Registering parrot research in Australasia and Oceania (IOU survey)**

Please help us building a comprehensive and up-to-date database about ongoing parrot research by filling out this register for the Australasia-Oceania region of the Working Group on Psittaciformes (WGP):

<https://forms.gle/dctpbhiSHS2wjcrU7>

## Opinion letters



Photo by Flavio Amiel on Unsplash

The new IOU web page is a great tool that allows colleagues from all over the world to share Letters, Opinions, and Perspective Articles on all aspects of ornithology, ranging from ecosystems to molecules, from fundamental to applied research, and from education to policy discussions. Feel

free to share one with IOU members in the next newsletter! Here is one from me just to get the ball rolling!

### **High Levels of Mercury in North American Peregrine Falcons**

You know, with peregrine falcon populations booming all over the world, including in Canadian cities, after we banned the use of organochlorine chemicals I had pretty much thought that these birds were out of the woods and doing very well, thank you very much. But a recent report from Nevada has created some warning bells among biologists that maybe things are not so rosy for the fastest animal on the planet. Mercury, a highly toxic element, is showing up in the feathers of peregrine falcons from coast to coast. Joe Barnes, a fellow peregrine biologist, has tested no less than 700 individual peregrines in Nevada, Washington, Maryland and Texas and he has found alarmingly high levels of mercury. And some of these birds were breeders from Greenland migrating south through North America! He found levels ranging from 10 to 23 parts per million. Why is that alarming. Well, it's known that levels of 5 to 15 parts per million can affect breeding success in various wildlife species. Peregrines frequently prey upon birds that consume fish in marine ecosystems polluted with mercury, so it is not surprising that they are accumulating the element in their bodies. What is puzzling is that their breeding success has not appeared to have been affected, at least not yet. Nevertheless, it is worth further study. And once again, peregrine falcons are proving to be that virtual canary in a coal mine, telling humans that the environment we share with these falcons is unhealthy. But will we even listen?

---- David M. Bird, Emeritus Professor of Wildlife Biology, McGill University

## Grants, Fellowships, Internships, and Positions



Photo by Tyler Lastovich on Unsplash

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

**Club 300 Foundation for Bird Protection:** Projects we have supported include conservation and research on many rare, threatened or little known species. Applications for each year must be received by July 31st.

Read more: <http://www.club300.se/Birdprot/Birdprotection.aspx>

**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. The next round of funding will open in July 2018.

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. Researchers are encouraged to apply for grant funding in support of scientific seabird studies with clear aims and objectives.

Read more: <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

Read more: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/darwin-initiative-funding-schemes-and-how-to-apply>

**Frank M. Chapman Collection Study Grant, Frank M. Chapman Fellowship, Frank M. Chapman Grant, American Museum of Natural History:** 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.

Rad more: <http://www.hawkmountain.org/science/training/graduate-student-program/page.aspx?id=315>

**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://www.worldwildlife.org/initiatives/professional-development-grants>

**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/conservation/dansforth-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: <http://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. The closing date for applications is 31 August 2017.

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

## **Nearctic:**

**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.wilsonsoociety.org](http://www.wilsonsoociety.org)

**Bird Studies 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 Bespolka Scholarship to attend Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Event, in Ithaca, New York from June 25 – 28, 2020. For more information, visit

<https://www.cameronbespolka.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/>

**Harold Mayfield Research Award:** for undergraduate and graduate college students conducting research projects that will enhance knowledge of the flora, fauna, or geology of the Toledo area.

Read more: <http://www.toledonaturalist.org/donate/>

**Lillian C. Stoner Award, New York State Ornithological Association:** a fund to enable a student to attend the Annual Meeting each year.

Read more: <http://www.nybirds.org/FedAwards.htm>

**Maryland Ornithological Society, Avian Research Grants:** a number of research grants to encourage the study of birds in Maryland.

Read more: <http://www.mdbirds.org/education/grants/grants.html>

### ***Neotropics:***

**Neotropical Bird Club, awards grants:** for conservation work or research that has an intended conservation benefit. Next deadline: July.

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

**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:***

**Craig S. Harrison Conservation Fund:** 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/>

Editor's note: If you know of more grants, please, let us know. Thank you!

## Editor's Choice



Photo by chuttersnap on Unsplash

Soravia, C., Aguado-Giménez, F. & Avilés, J.M. The reliability of achromatic displays is island-dependent in nocturnal Storm Petrels. 2019. *IBIS*. DOI: 10.1111/ibi.12772

This paper, just published in *Ibis*, begins with this rather intriguing introduction: “*Up above the sea’s grey flatland, wind is gathering the clouds. In between the sea and clouds proudly soaring the Petrel, reminiscent of black lightning*” (The song of the Stormy Petrel, Maxim Gorky, 1901). For the Russian writer Maxim Gorky, the European Storm Petrel *Hydrobates pelagicus* was the free spirit that welcomes the storm of revolution. Before him, it was the bearer of bad weather for sailors. Its habit of foraging in open sea carried by the wind and its frequent nocturnal activity, especially during breeding, gives the Storm Petrel its evocative nature.” Soravia and her colleagues examine UV light reflectance in these birds to conclude that while the achromatic plumage pattern of Storm Petrels, “*reminiscent of black lightning*”, does have the potential to act as a signal of the condition of the bearer, the information conveyed is not always true, sometimes varying with environmental conditions. Read more: <https://www.bou.org.uk/blog-soravia-storm-petrel-plumage-signal/>

## Birds in the news



Photo by Roman Kraft on Unsplash

**Amazon Rainforest on Fire!!** We hope that by the time you read this newsletter there has been some relief to the over 9,000 wildfires (an 80 % increase over last year!) raging out of control in The Amazon rainforest, home to one in 10 species on earth, The blazes, largely set intentionally to clear land for cattle ranching, farming, and logging, have been exacerbated by the dry season. Next to climate warming, this may well be one of the greatest threats to avian biodiversity on the planet with both immediate and long-term impacts. While birds can fly away to escape the flames, where are they going to go? The fires are spreading into Bolivia, Paraguay, and Peru. For more information, visit <https://www.msn.com/en-sg/news/techandscience/what-the-amazon-fires-mean-for-wild-animals/ar-AAGgLhn>.

**Scientists Implant False Memories in Birds to Teach Them Songs They've Never Heard** In a study published recently in *Science*, scientists have been able to teach birds simple songs they've never heard before by selectively activating specific neurons in their brains - effectively implanting false memories. Using the process of optogenetics, where light is used to control living tissue, the team was able to activate certain neuron circuits in the birds and get them to memorise new tunes. The study could teach us more not just about birdsong, but also how vocal learning and language development happens in the human brain as well. For more information, see <https://www.msn.com/en-ph/money/other/scientists-implant-false-memories-in-birds-to-teach-them-songs-theyve-never-heard/ar-AAIIIOs>

## Research tools



Photo by Hunter Haley on Unsplash

**Motus Wildlife Tracking System:** The latest technology for tracking birds is taking North America by storm. Called the Motus Wildlife Tracking System (Motus, latin for ‘movement’), this international collaborative research network uses a coordinated automated radio telemetry array to track the movement and behaviour of small flying organisms such as bats, large insects like butterflies, and of course, birds. Tiny and somewhat inexpensive digitally-encoded radio transmitters worn by them broadcast signals several times each minute. These signals are detected by automated radio telemetry stations or towers that scan for signals 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. When results from many stations are combined, the array can track animals across a diversity of landscapes covering thousands of kilometers. For more information, visit [www.motus.org](http://www motus org).

**Application of Unmanned Vehicle Systems or Drones to Bird Studies:** Throughout the world, ornithologists are now using drones to detect, count, track, and even disperse birds. Researchers are now using drones to record the nest contents of several raptorial bird species nesting in North America, South Africa, and Scandinavia as well as monitor their respective behavioral responses. Other studies include counting shorebirds in flocks of dunlins and colonially nesting species such as common terns and common murres; mapping breeding habitat of threatened least bitterns and American kestrels; detecting heat signatures from bird nests; and radio-tracking songbirds and dispersing nuisance birds from farmers’ crops in Canada and Australia. Compared to using manned light airplanes or helicopters, flying drones can be cheaper, greener, less obtrusive, and much safer (the number one source of mortality for wildlife biologists is dying in a plane or helicopter crash!). And more recent research in Australia suggests yet another benefit – acquiring more accurate and precise counts of target birds. For more information, contact David Bird at [david.bird@mcgill.ca](mailto:david.bird@mcgill.ca).

**Combining Whole Genome Sequencing and Migration Tracking Technology:** It is widely known that there is a genetic component to migration. A new study led by researchers at Penn State and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is the first to pinpoint a single gene associated with the complex suite of traits that determine migratory behavior in birds but also associated with a neurological disorder in humans. Recent studies in birds have identified large regions of the genome, encompassing hundreds of genes, associated with migration, but it has been more difficult to pinpoint the specific roles of any single gene. The researchers studied migration patterns in golden-winged warblers and blue-winged warblers, genetically similar species that breed in the Midwest and northeastern United States. Some birds of each species migrate to wintering grounds in Central America, from Panama to Guatemala, while others travel further to South America, primarily Venezuela. Birds will usually return to similar breeding grounds and wintering sites each year. According to the researchers, the gene appears to be a target of natural selection in birds that winter in South America. For more information on this gene and its important role in migration, see the original paper: David P. L. Toews, Scott A. Taylor, Henry M. Streby, Gunnar R. Kramer, Irby J. Lovette. Selection on VPS13A linked to migration in a songbird. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2019; 201909186 DOI: [10.1073/pnas.1909186116](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1909186116)

**Using microphone arrays to investigate microhabitat selection by declining breeding birds:**

Understanding the microhabitat preferences of animals can help managers to develop better conservation and recovery strategies but is challenging. Traditional methods are limited by cost, accuracy, and human resources. This study investigated avian microhabitat preferences using microphone arrays that are capable of accurately localizing vocalizing birds. The objective was to identify the microhabitat associations of two common species in steep population decline, the Boreal Chickadee *Poecile hudsonicus* and the Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*. A total of 68 eight-channel arrays were deployed at random locations in Labrador, Canada during the 2016 avian breeding season. The next year the research team returned to the 18 array locations where the target species had been detected the previous year and characterized the microhabitat at the exact locations where they had been detected. They also characterized the microhabitat at randomly determined control locations. Results show that Boreal Chickadees select trees with greater diameter-at-breast-height that are surrounded by greater stem density. We did not find evidence that Cape May Warblers exhibit microhabitat selection during song production. The study shows that microphone arrays are an effective tool for identifying preferred microhabitat that could be incorporated into future conservation or recovery strategies. For more information on this useful

tool, see the original paper: Jeffrey Ethier and David Wilson. Using microphone arrays to investigate microhabitat selection by declining breeding birds. *Ibis* doi:10.1111/ibi.12785

## Conservation



Photo by Dr Dejan Stojanovic

### Birds Vacuumed to Death in the European Olive Industry

The next time you reach for that bottle of olives, particularly one containing European olives, for your martini or for hors d'oeuvres for a party, you might want to think of this horrifying fate for some of the world's birds --- being sucked up in a huge vacuum cleaner and then sold to rural hotels to be served as fried birds. Allow me to explain. According to a recent study published in the prestigious scientific journal, *Nature*, by Luis Da Silva and Vanessa Mata in May 2019, more than two million birds are being sucked out of olive trees in Portugal and Spain every year. Olives are harvested from October through January, which coincides perfectly with the migration patterns of songbirds seeking those warm climates to spend the winter. The birds roost in the trees during the night and that's precisely when the olives are harvested. They taste better when harvested at night with the cooler temperatures. Blinded and stunned by the bright lights of the vacuum-like harvesting machines, the sleeping birds are literally sucked right off their perches into them. We're talking warblers, thrushes, wagtails, finches and robins, and likely even endangered species. To add insult to injury, the machine operators sell the dead birds to local rural hotels for human consumption. In one region of Portugal alone, a half-dozen birds are killed each night per hectare of olive tree grove, which amounts to close to a hundred thousand birds lost per year. For now, there does not seem to be much will to do anything about it, but if we North Americans decide to stop

eating their night-harvested olives and thus, hurt their pocketbooks, maybe that will get their attention! For more information, see <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-019-01456-4>.

### **One in Four Birds Lost in North America Since 1970**

In less than a single lifetime, North America has lost more than one in four of its birds, according to a report in the world's leading scientific journal. Published in *Science* by researchers at seven institutions, the findings show that 2.9 billion breeding adult birds have been lost since 1970, including birds in every ecosystem. The losses include iconic songsters such as Eastern and Western Meadowlarks (down by 139 million) and favorite birds at feeders, such as Dark-eyed Juncos (down by 168 million) and sweet-singing White-throated Sparrows (down by 93 million). The disappearance of even common species indicates a general shift in our ecosystems' ability to support basic birdlife, the scientists conclude. For more information on these findings, see either or both of these editorials written in The New York Times and the Toronto Globe and Mail, respectively: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/opinion/crisis-birds-north-america.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/opinion/crisis-birds-north-america.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>

### **Hurricane Dorian Devastates Bird Life in the Bahamas**

The northern Bahama Islands have been utterly devastated by Hurricane Dorian. This Category 5 storm battered the Abacos and Grand Bahama for more than two days with 185 to 220 mph winds and a storm surge in excess of 23 feet. The damage to communities, lives, and habitats is unprecedented and heart-breaking. The Abaco parrot is in dire need of help. The long-time partner of **Birds Caribbean**, the **Bahamas National Trust**, needs all the help they can get to help birds survive, and clean up and restore vital habitats. They need funds to carry out bird surveys, provide supplemental feeding, repair and replace damaged equipment and infrastructure, and restore their national parks on these islands. Please share this message with others. For more information, contact Lisa Sorenson

Executive Director, Birds Caribbean [Lisa.Sorenson@birdscaribbean.org](mailto:Lisa.Sorenson@birdscaribbean.org)

## Conferences



Photo by Mikael Kristenson on Unsplash

### **Selected upcoming congresses and meetings of interest to ornithologists in 2020 and beyond:**

August 10 - 15 2020: The **North American Ornithological Conference** (NAOC) will host the annual meetings of the **American Ornithological Society, Wilson Ornithological Society, British Ornithologists' Union, Association of Field Ornithologists, Canadian Society of Ornithologists, CIPAMEX, Neotropical Ornithological Society, and Birds Caribbean** in Puerto Rico. For more information, email [NAOC@americanornithology.org](mailto:NAOC@americanornithology.org)

August 23 - 28, 2021: The **American Ornithological Society** is holding its annual meeting in London, Ontario, Canada. For more information, visit <https://americanornithology.org/meetings/>

October 4 - 8, 2020: The **Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.** and **Neotropical Raptor Network** are holding 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)

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

April 7 - 9, 2020: **British Ornithologists' Union** annual meeting themed upon "Restoring bird populations: scaling from species to ecosystems" will meeting in Nottingham, UK. For more information, visit <https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

March 30 - April 1, 2021: **British Ornithologists' Union** annual meeting themed upon "Avian reproduction" will be held in Nottingham, UK. For more information, visit  
<https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

March 30 - 31 2020: The 14<sup>th</sup> **International Conference on Genomics and Molecular Biology** themed on Advances in Genome and Molecular Biology Evolution Technologies will be held in London, UK. For more information, visit <https://genomics.insightconferences.com/>

September 27 – October 2, 2020: The 18th **International Behavioral Ecology Congress** will be hosted in Melbourne, Australia. For more information, visit  
<http://www.behavecol.com/meetings-conferences/>

November 15 – 19, 2020: The Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry will hold its annual North America meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information, visit  
<https://www.exphour.com/setac-north-america-meeting-aa>



Photo by Rita Morais on Unsplash

#### **Courses and workshops for PhD students, postdocs, and professional researchers:**

May 2 – 20, 2020: The Bioacoustics Research Program at the **Cornell Lab of Ornithology** will offer a week-long introductory-level Sound Analysis Workshop. The workshop usually held twice per year is intended primarily for biologists interested in analysis, visualization, and measurement of animal sounds. Read more: <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/brp/sound-analysis-workshop/>

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 me.

## **Contact:**

For feedback or more information, or to provide information to be included in the IOU Newsletter,  
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