Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award, 2010

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Dustin R. Rubenstein

Dustin Rubenstein on the California coast at Pt. Reyes, California, August 2006.
(Photograph by Kate Rubenstein.)

The Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award recognizes outstanding and promising ornithological research contributions made by persons early in their career with the hope and expectation that such individuals will provide future leadership in ornithology within and beyond North America. The AOU is proud and confident of its selection of Dr. Dustin R. Rubenstein as this year's recipient of the Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award.

Rubenstein is a behavioral and evolutionary ecologist who studies the causes and consequences of sociality in animals. His integrative research is focused on understanding the evolution of complex breeding systems in vertebrates and invertebrates. Broadly, he examines how physiological mechanisms, behavioral decisions, and other individual-level processes influence population-level processes. Specifically, he seeks to understand how ecology shapes individual reproductive decisions and interspecific patterns of sociality by unraveling the interactions among physiology, life history, and behavior at a variety of different levels. He employs a suite of laboratory techniques (molecular genetics, endocrinology, immunology,

stable isotope analysis), field methodologies (behavioral observations, field manipulations), and statistical and theoretical approaches (comparative analyses, game-theory modeling) to answer a broad range of questions in diverse taxa, including reptiles, crustaceans, and, of course, birds.

As an undergraduate at Dartmouth College, Rubenstein used stable isotopes to study the migratory patterns of the Black-throated Blue Warbler (*Dendroica caerulescens*) with Richard Holmes and C. Page Chamberlain. His undergraduate thesis became a first-authored publication in *Science*. After Dartmouth, he was awarded a Reynold's Scholarship to study the behavior and physiology of Galápagos Marine Iguanas (*Amblyrhynchus cristatus*) with Martin Wikelski, and it was there that Rubenstein first became interested in behavioral and physiological adaptations to unpredictable environments.

Rubenstein entered a Ph.D. program at Cornell University under the mentorship of Stephen Emlen and Paul Sherman. For his doctoral dissertation, Rubenstein studied the evolution of cooperative breeding in African starlings. His field research on Superb Starlings (*Lamprotornis superbus*) in Kenya focused on the role of spatiotemporal environmental variation in the evolution of complex social and mating systems. After completing his Ph.D. at Cornell, Rubenstein was awarded a Miller Research Fellowship at the University of California, Berkeley where he was based in the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology. While at Berkeley working with Roy Caldwell and Eileen Lacey, Rubenstein continued to study African starlings and also began studying sponge-dwelling snapping shrimp (*Synalpheus* spp.) to investigate the evolution of sociality in a comparative and experimental context.

In fall 2009, Rubenstein began an assistant professorship in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Environmental Biology at Columbia University in New York City, where he is establishing an integrative laboratory designed to study the behavior, life history, and physiology of birds and other animals.

In addition to his productive research career, Rubenstein has always been a dedicated teacher and mentor. As a graduate student at Cornell, he codeveloped an intensive field course with Irby Lovette, and over the past 6 years they have taken more than 100 students to study tropical biology in the wildlife-rich savannas of Kenya. Similarly, Rubenstein has mentored many undergraduate and graduate students in the laboratory and field. Because of these accomplishments, the AOU is proud to award Dustin R. Rubenstein the Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award for 2010.

Award criteria.—The Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award recognizes outstanding and promising work by a researcher early in his or her career in any field of ornithology. Candidates should excel in research and show distinct promise for leadership in ornithology within and beyond North America. Each candidate is required to have received a doctorate degree within 5 years of being nominated and must be a member of the AOU at the time of nomination. Candidates cannot have received the award previously. The award consists of a framed certificate and an honorarium provided through a gift to the endowment of the AOU honoring Ned K. Johnson, a lifelong supporter and former president (1996–1998) of the AOU. This award, presented for the first time in 2005, is funded by the Ned K. Johnson Fund of the AOU.