



Young Professional Award

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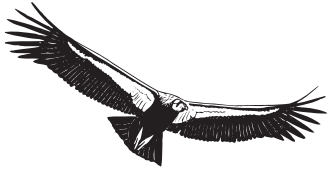
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AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

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YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD

The Cooper Ornithological Society is pleased to recognize the recipients of the Young Professional Award, now in its third year, Matthew Carling and Karl Berg. First awarded in 2009, the Young Professional Award recognizes early-career researchers for their outstanding contributions to ornithology. Two awardees are selected from applicants to deliver talks at the Young Professional Plenary session held at each annual meeting and are given 25 minutes each (20 minutes for presentation, 5 minutes for questions) to present their research to the entire conference body. The two awardees each receive a cash prize, a travel award, and are invited to a breakfast attended by the COS president, officers, and members of the student-presentation committee on the day prior to the plenary session. Candidates (primarily Ph.D. students near completion and postdoctoral fellows) must be COS members and must be in the final phase of graduate studies (last 9 months) or have graduated within three years of the previous annual meeting. More information is available at www.cooper.org/awards_and_grants/awards_and_grants.htm#students.

Matt Carling's research interests focus on trying to understand the mechanisms that result in the formation of new species of birds. Utilizing a variety of population genetic and phylogenetic tools, Matt's work explores the evolutionary forces responsible for generating and maintaining biodiversity. As a graduate student at Louisiana State University, where he worked with Robb Brumfield at the LSU Museum of Natural Science, Matt began focusing his attention on the zone of naturally hybridization between the Indigo (*Passerina cyanea*) and Lazuli (*Passerina amoena*) Buntings. After sequencing large amounts of DNA from birds collected across the hybrid zone, Matt discovered startling differences between the species in the levels of introgression among different genetic loci. This work was the first to demonstrate clearly the extent to which alleles

of loci located in different regions of the genome can move between species of birds and identified a region of the Z chromosome that may play a particularly important role in maintaining reproductive isolation between the Indigo and Lazuli Buntings. As the Fuller Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, working with Irby Lovette, Matt continued his work on the zone of bunting hybridization, exploring both the evolutionary forces shaping the early stages of divergence between the species and how the genetic structure of the hybrid zone has changed over the past 50 years. This research is continuing at the University of Wyoming, where he is currently an assistant professor. Matt received his bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Michigan and master's degree in zoology from the University of Idaho. Matt is especially grateful to the Cooper Ornithological Society for the opportunity to share his research with the ornithological community and hopes that the society will continue to showcase the incredible talents of early-career ornithologists.

Karl Berg's interests in tropical birds stem from a decade in Ecuador that began with a study of seed dispersal by toucans. Food-plant collections revealed an undescribed endemic genus and species of tree, described by David Neill as *Ecuadendron acosta-solisianum* in 1998. Karl then spent several years creating the first bird species lists for seven protected areas in Ecuador. To document avian diversity, he created a collection of audio recordings as vouchers for a large number of species. One of the most endangered birds in Ecuador is the Great Green Macaw (*Ara ambiguus*). Karl spent a year studying its movements in relation to food production, weekly monitored 100 trees, and provided some of the first evidence that larger trees produce more food—a central, but until then unsubstantiated, tenet of forest restoration. He returned to the USA and earned a master's degree under Victor Apanius at Florida International University. His thesis was the



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first study to identify the variables that trigger the onset of the dawn chorus in a tropical forest. Despite dawn choruses being a widely recognized example of community behavior in birds, their dynamics remained poorly understood. Karl found that birds that forage higher in the forest and have larger eyes tended to begin to sing earlier than those lower in the forest with smaller eyes. However, not all birds followed this pattern. Parrots were a persistent exception. To find out why parrots followed their own agenda, Karl visited the best-known parrot population—site of a long-term study of Green-rumped Parrotlets, led by Steve Beissinger, in the llanos of Venezuela. Here were hundreds of parrots with

permanent color bands, breeding histories, and complex vocal dialogues a few feet off the ground. It became apparent that this was the ideal population in which to learn about parrots' vocal communication. Karl then applied to the Ph.D. program at Cornell, where faculty member Jack Bradbury was overseeing studies of communication in wild parrots in seven countries and three continents. This turned out to have been an excellent choice, and Karl is now completing his Ph.D. thesis on vocal communication in parrotlets. He expresses a heartfelt thanks to the Cooper Ornithological Society for allowing him to share one of the chapters from his dissertation.