

## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

Source: Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club, 139(4) : 307-310

Published By: British Ornithologists' Club

URL: <https://doi.org/10.25226/bboc.v139i4.2019.a1>

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# Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

Vol. 139 No. 4

Published 16 December 2019

## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 995th meeting of the Club was held on Monday 16 September 2019 in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, London, SW1P 2EE.

Twenty-eight people were present: Miss H. Baker, Ms. A. H. Belman, Mr P. J. Belman, Mr R. Bray, Mr S. Chapman, Dr R. Cheke, Mr G. de Silva Wijeyeratne, Mr D. J. Fisher, Mr G. M. Kirwan, Mr R. Langley, Mr R. Malin, Dr C. F. Mann, Mr D. J. Montier, Mrs M. Montier, Dr P. Morris (*Speaker*), Ms E. Pilanen, Mr A. Pittman, Dr R. Prÿs-Jones, Mr R. Prytherch, Mr N. J. Redman, Dr P. Rudge, Dr D. G. D. Russell, Mr S. A. H. Statham, Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*), Ms. Z. Varley, Ms. J. White, Mr P. Wilkinson, Ms. A. Wilson.

Pat Morris gave a talk entitled *The Hastings Rarities—taking the long view*. He explained that it is now more than 50 years since hundreds of bird records were dismissed as potentially fraudulent on the grounds that it was unlikely that so many rare species would turn up within a short period of time and a limited area around Hastings, in south-east England. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference between the number of records within that area and time compared to other areas of Kent / Sussex, and with later periods. In ornithological terms, it makes limited difference, as many of the suspect species have been found subsequently in the same area. It has long been widely accepted that fraud occurred and that a local taxidermist, George Bristow, was responsible for perpetrating this. Bristow was unable to defend himself, having died, and the taxidermy profession was besmirched. Although protests were made at the time the issue appears closed. However, there remain worrying doubts when the evidence is examined closely. At the same time, in retrospect there may be further evidence to confirm Bristow's guilt. A lively debate followed Pat's talk.

The 996th meeting of the Club was held on Monday 18 November 2019 in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2EE.

Thirty-four people were present: Dr Tim Birkhead (*Speaker*), Ms. C. Boutle, Mr R. Bray, Cdr. M. B. Casement, RN, Mr S. Chapman, Ms C. Coull, Mr G. de Silva Wijeyeratne, Mr R. Dickey, Ms R. Dunne, Mr D. J. Fisher, Mr M. Grigson, Mr P. Harris, Mr M. Howard, Ms. J. James, Dr C. F. Mann, Mr A. Merritt, Mr G. Micali, Mr D. J. Montier, Mr A. Morgan, Mrs R. Morgan, Ms. A. Nixon, Mr C. Ozog, Dr D. Prÿs-Jones, Dr R. Prÿs-Jones, Dr A. Richford, Dr P. Rudge, Dr D. G. D. Russell, Mr J. Salmon, Mr S. A. H. Statham, Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*), Dr J. Verhelst, Mr P. Ward, Ms. J. White, Mr P. Wilkinson.

Prof. Tim Birkhead gave a talk entitled *The wonderful Mr Willughby—the start of scientific ornithology*. The first scientific bird book was *The ornithology of Francis Willughby*, named in Willughby's honour by his friend John Ray after Willughby's death at the age of just 36 in 1672. These two men were pioneers of the scientific revolution and changed the way we think about birds. Until recently it was widely assumed that Ray was the brains and Willughby a mere 'talented amateur', but after a decade of research Tim has been able to show that Willughby was every bit as brilliant as his co-author and friend John Ray. In his talk he told the story of Willughby's short but spectacularly productive life—a story every ornithologist should know. Those wishing to learn more can consult the following two books on the topic that Tim has produced: Birkhead, T. R. (ed.) 2016. *Virtuoso by nature: the scientific worlds of Francis Willughby*. Brill, Leiden (contributions by specialists on different aspects of Willughby's life and work); and Birkhead, T. 2018. *The wonderful Mr Willughby: the first true ornithologist*. Bloomsbury Publishing, London.

### Report on the joint meeting on Neotropical birds with the Neotropical Bird Club and Natural History Museum, in the Flett Theatre, NHM, London, 26 October 2019

For the third time in nine years, these three organisations came together to spend a day reflecting on the biology and conservation of the astonishingly diverse Neotropical avifauna. Whereas the morning session focused on critical conservation needs in three diverse areas of South America, the afternoon comprised three more wide-ranging talks on avian biology, encompassing mimicry, behavioural physiology, and discoveries, including new species, feats of vagrancy, remarkable behaviour, etc. We were particularly fortunate to have one of Brazil's foremost ornithologists, Luís Fábio Silveira, to open the event by delivering an outstanding plenary lecture on a key threatened area, the Pernambuco Centre of Endemism, in relation to which he currently holds a major grant to research conservation requirements. This was followed by a succession of

high-quality presentations, much appreciated by an enthusiastic audience of some 70 people. Outlines for each talk are provided below, and both the BOC and NBC are grateful to the NHM for providing an excellent London venue for the event to take place.

**Luis Fábio Silveira** (University of São Paulo, Brazil)

*Avoiding extinctions in the most threatened area in the Neotropics: the Pernambuco Centre of Endemism, Brazil*

The Brazilian Atlantic Forest is a hotspot with very rich biodiversity but also a high level of deforestation and degradation. The Pernambuco Centre of Endemism (PCE), originally distributed to the north of the São Francisco River in the states of Paraíba, Alagoas and Pernambuco, is today the most endangered Atlantic Forest region and one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world, as only tiny and isolated habitat fragments remain (c.3% of its original distribution). Moreover, this is also the least studied Atlantic Forest region. Whereas in recent years four bird species there have been recognised as extinct, new bird and mammal species are still being described. Our lack of knowledge concerns not only the composition of the biodiversity, but also 'where' and 'why' it is concentrated. It is therefore essential to not only research the taxonomy and systematics of birds and mammals in the PCE, much of which is at risk of being lost before scientific recordings can be made, but also to use this knowledge to propose and apply conservation management practices, and to communicate the results of this research and the importance of the PCE to the general public.

**Christian Devenish** (Manchester Metropolitan University)

*Conservation of dry-forest endemic birds in north-west Peru*

Conservation ecologists face the dual challenge of working with difficult-to-study species and providing ecological metrics to support both global conservation efforts and local conservation management prescriptions. Christian presented metrics identifying distributions, site-level and global abundance, site-contextualised habitat requirements, and threat analyses for dry-forest endemic birds in the globally important Tumbes region of Peru. Results from his field studies revealed extreme variation in abundance within species across the study area, although species' broad distributions were generally congruent. From this, Christian has been able to recommend key sites for the conservation of threatened Tumbes endemics, including extensions of existing protected areas and unprotected sites, especially in the south of their ranges. Threats and opportunities were discussed within the local economic context, especially export agriculture and farming communities. His research has recently been published as a policy document by the Peruvian National Parks authority, and is available at: <http://sis.sernanp.gob.pe/biblioteca/?publicacion=1917>.

**Martin Schaefer** (Fundación Jocotoco: [www.jocotoco.org](http://www.jocotoco.org))

*Using science to protect Ecuador's most threatened birds*

Private reserves are effective in protecting threatened biodiversity, yet their owners rarely use science to direct their conservation activities. Martin's talk presented 13 years of ecological work on the globally threatened El Oro Parakeet *Pyrrhura orcesi* and Pale-headed Brush Finch *Atlapetes pallidiceps* in Ecuador. Via targeted conservation actions, Fundación Jocotoco has quadrupled the population of Pale-headed Brush Finch within nine years. Their work has also elucidated the truly cooperative breeding system of El Oro Parakeet, mirroring other *Pyrrhura* species. Cooperative breeding is characterised by delayed nesting and the effective population size is low, with only 42% of adults reproducing in any given season. Moreover, the distributional range of this species has shifted a dramatic 300 m elevationally within just 30 years. Genetic data show that even forested valleys can become dispersal barriers. These data have permitted Fundación Jocotoco to adjust reserve design in order to protect this endangered species and many other endemics in Ecuador.

**Alexander Lees** (Manchester Metropolitan University)

*Diversity in avian mimicry*

Apparent cases of visual mimicry – where the plumage of one species converges on that of another unrelated species, are surprisingly common in birds and especially prevalent in the Neotropics. Alex's talk gave an overview of the different forms of mimicry, such as Müllerian, aggressive and Batesian mimicry, which are suspected to occur in birds, and highlighted the cutting-edge science being used to uncover these patterns.

**Samuel Jones** (Royal Holloway London)

*The physiology / behaviour nexus in a Central American cloud forest songbird, the Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush *Catharus mexicanus**

Very little is known concerning how energy usage relates to season and behaviour in tropical species. Tropical birds are known, however, to have lower metabolisms than temperate species, suggested to be a product of 'slower' lifestyles (such as smaller clutch sizes and greater adult survival). Using a variety of behavioural and physiological techniques, Samuel has explored seasonal shifts in territorial behaviour and physiology in Black-headed Nightingale-Thrushes *Catharus mexicanus*, a Central American cloud forest endemic. His study has offered an intriguing insight into the energy costs of long periods (often 5–6 months) of intense territorial defence, and how energy usage may shift with season in other tropical forest songbirds.

**Joseph Tobias** (Imperial College London)*Frontiers of knowledge: a quarter-century of Neotropical discovery*

The launch of the Neotropical Bird Club coincided with a period of intense ornithological exploration by field ornithologists, birders and sound-recordists. Unsurprisingly, the 25-year period since has witnessed some dramatic discoveries, from new species to staggering range extensions and unexpected taxonomic changes. Joe's talk showcased the most spectacular of these discoveries from around the Neotropical region, and made some predictions as to what we might expect from the next quarter century.

Robert Prŷs-Jones

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**Changes among Associate Editors**

After eight years as an Associate Editor of *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.*, with this issue we bid farewell to Frank Steinheimer. Frank now heads one of the largest natural history collections in Germany, based at Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg. This university institute has been managed by Frank for 11 years, but his duties have increased tremendously in recent years due to engagement with several large third-party-funded projects, the planning of a public museum and new magazine spaces, as well as his political engagements (Frank is a member of Halle's environmental council). We thank Frank most warmly for his considerable contributions to the Bulletin, especially his knowledge of zoological nomenclature.

In his stead, the Club has been fortunate to engage the assistance of Lincoln Fishpool as a new Associate Editor, and he has already been involved with the Bulletin's workload since June 2019. Fishpool began his professional life as an entomologist, working on a number of agricultural pest problems in different parts of Africa, during which time his interest in Afrotropical ornithology steadily grew. In 1993 he joined BirdLife International to coordinate their then Important Bird Areas (IBA) programme for Africa and was lead editor of the resulting directory of sites, published in 2001. Part of his subsequent role for BirdLife included membership of their taxonomic working group, in which capacity he contributed to the *HBW and BirdLife International illustrated checklist of the birds of the world* (2014, 2016). With a particular interest in African bulbuls, he co-authored the account of the Pycnonotidae for *HBW* and has published several papers on the group. Now retired, he maintains an interest in the taxonomy of Afrotropical birds and in birding in the region.

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**Errata and Addenda**

In *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 139(3): 215–227, as a result of an inadvertent substitution by the lead author, the version of Sydenham Edwards' picture of the Harlequin Hummingbird that appears in Fig. 6 of the published paper (p. 221) is in fact not that from Audebert & Vieillot (1802), but rather the very similar one from Lesson (1829, pl. 72). This has no wider implications for any argument presented in the text.

In *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 139(3): 272, the legend to Fig. 2 should read: Figure 2. (a) Red-legged Brushturkey *Talegalla jobiensis* and (b) Thick-billed Ground Pigeon *Trugon terrestris*, camera trapped in the Lake Kutubu WMA. (c) New Guinea Vulturine Parrot *Psittichas fulgidus*, photographed on the Agogo Range. (d) Greater Melampitta *Megalampitta gigantea*, camera trapped on the Agogo Range. In addition, since publication, Brown Quail *Coturnix ypsilophora* (August 2019) and Golden-backed Whistler *Pachycephala aurea* (December 2019) have been recorded in disturbed habitats at Moro, bringing the Lake Kutubu WMA tally to 218 species.

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**REFEREES**

I am grateful to the following, who have reviewed manuscripts submitted to the Bulletin during the last year (those who refereed more than one manuscript are denoted by an asterisk in parentheses): Juan Ignacio Areta, Bruce M. Beehler (\*), Tim Birkhead, K. David Bishop, Walter Boles, Vincent Bretagnolle, Michael Brooker, Rod Cassidy, Alice Cibois, Nigel Cleere, Nigel J. Collar, Marco Aurélio Crozariol, Nicholas Daudt, Ron Demey (\*), Edward C. Dickinson, Paul Donald, Simon Dowell, R. J. Dowsett (\*), Guy Dutton, Chris Filardi (\*), Brian Finch, Clemency Fisher, L. D. C. Fishpool, Harold F. Greeney, Floyd Hayes, David Holyoak, Colin Jackson, David James, Justin Jansen, Flemming Pagh Jensen, Leo Joseph, Peter Lack, Łukasz Ławicki, Mary LeCroy, Yang Liu, Wayne Longmore, Jeff Marks, R. McGowan, Michael Mills, Mark O'Brien, Jente Ottenburghs, Michael Patten, Manuel Plenge, Thane Pratt (\*), Robert Prŷs-Jones (\*), Roger Safford, Richard Schodde (\*), Manuel Schweizer, Frank Steinheimer (\*), Bert Theunissen, Magnus Ullman and André Weller. — THE HON. EDITOR

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**FORTHCOMING MEETINGS**

See also BOC website: <http://www.boc-online.org>

**BOC MEETINGS** are open to **all**, not just BOC members, **and are free**.



Evening meetings are in an **upstairs room at The Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, Westminster, London SW1P 2EE**. The nearest Tube stations are Victoria and St James's Park; and the 507 bus, which runs from Victoria to Waterloo, stops nearby. For maps, see [http://www.marketaverns.co.uk/the\\_barley\\_mow.html](http://www.marketaverns.co.uk/the_barley_mow.html) or ask the Chairman for directions.

The cash bar opens at **6.00 pm** and those who wish to eat after the meeting can place an order. **Talks start at 6.30 pm** and, with questions, last c.1 hour.

**Monday 23 March 2020—6.30 pm—Beth Okamura—*How birds shape freshwater biodiversity.***

*Abstract.*—Ever wondered how volcanic islands, garden ponds and gravel pits develop a rich biota? Or why rowan trees grow near pines? The answers in part involve patterns of bird visitations. Darwin appreciated that avian activities might help to explain the widespread distributions of taxa that live in disjunct habitats. This conundrum famously led him to examine the attachment and survival of recently hatched snails on ducks' feet. This talk will consider how our understanding of dispersal of freshwater invertebrates has improved since Darwin's era. I will particularly focus on evidence for waterbird-mediated dispersal of freshwater animals that are poorly known but that have substantial ecological and practical impacts—colonial invertebrates called bryozoans (or 'moss animals') and their myxozoan parasites ('slime animals'). I will illustrate how these unappealingly-named animals serve as 'model systems' that demonstrate the profound effect of waterbird movements on the development and dynamics of freshwater communities, and consequent impacts on water supply and emerging fish diseases.

*Biography.*—Beth Okamura is a Merit Researcher at the Natural History Museum, London. Prior to this she held positions at the Univ. of Oxford and Bristol, before becoming a Prof. in Aquatic Biology at the Univ. of Reading. Her Ph.D. from the Univ. of California, Berkeley, focused on the ecology and evolution of marine invertebrates, but her move to Oxford led to her long-term interests in how animals that live in isolated lakes and ponds manage to disperse and persist across the landscape. She has particular interests in the role of waterbirds as vectors of dispersal—a question that she is now beginning address in new ways by analysing DNA contained in faeces of ducks, geese and godwits (*Limosa* spp.).

**Monday 18 May 2020—6.30 pm—Speaker and title to be announced.**

**Friends of the BOC**

The BOC has from 2017 become an online organisation without a paying membership, but instead one that aspires to a supportive network of Friends who share its vision of ornithology—see: <http://boc-online.org/>. Anyone wishing to become a Friend of the BOC and support its development should pay UK£25.00 by standing order or online payment to the BOC bank account:

Barclays Bank, 16 High Street, Holt, NR25 6BQ, Norfolk  
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Account number: 53092003  
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Friends receive regular updates about Club events and are also eligible for discounts on the Club's Occasional Publications. It would assist our Treasurer, Richard Malin (e-mail: [rmalin21@gmail.com](mailto:rmalin21@gmail.com)), if you would kindly inform him if you intend becoming a Friend of the BOC.

**The *Bulletin* and other BOC publications**

Since volume 137 (2017), the *Bulletin* of the BOC has been an online journal, published quarterly, that is available to all readers without charge. Furthermore, it does not levy any publication charges (including for colour plates) on authors of papers and has a median publication time from receipt to publication of five to six months. Prospective authors are invited to contact the *Bulletin* editor, Guy Kirwan ([GMKirwan@aol.com](mailto:GMKirwan@aol.com)), to discuss future submissions or look at <http://boc-online.org/bulletin/bulletin-contributions>. Back numbers up to volume 136 (2016) are available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library website: [www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639#/summary](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/46639#/summary); vols. 132–136 are also available on the BOC website: <http://boc-online.org/>

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