

## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

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# Bulletin of the BRITISH ORNITHOLOGISTS' CLUB

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## CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

In November this year the Club will hold its 1,000th evening meeting since its inauguration on 5 October 1892. To celebrate this significant milestone, we are delighted to announce that, in conjunction with the Linnean Society, the Club will be holding two evening talks at the Linnean Society's premises at Burlington House, Piccadilly. On Friday 5 June, Prof. Jared Diamond, Univ. of California at Los Angeles, and a Club member since 2003, will be asking 'What's so special about New Guinea birds?', and on Monday 16 November Dr Jon Fjeldså, Univ. of Copenhagen, will present an overview of the current state of avian systematics and the challenges that remain. As usual, both talks will be free, but advance booking will be required. Full details, including times and booking arrangements, will be posted on the Linnean Society's and the Club's websites, so do check there if interested.

## 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.markettaverns.co.uk/the\\_barley\\_mow.html](http://www.markettaverns.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 to address in new ways by analysing DNA contained in faeces of ducks, geese and godwits (*Limosa* spp.).

**Friday 5 June—Prof. Jared Diamond—*What's so special about New Guinea birds?* Full details of this special joint evening meeting at the Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London, will be announced shortly.**

*Abstract.*—The tropical island of New Guinea has long played a pre-eminent role in ornithology, which caused it to be chosen as the site for the BOU's Jubilee Expedition in 1909. Part of the reason is New Guinea's

many species of extraordinary birds, such as its birds of paradise, whose male ornamental plumages carry sexual selection to extremes; its bowerbirds, whose males build the most elaborate display structures among animals; its megapodes, the only birds that incubate their eggs by natural heat sources rather than by body heat; its diversity of parrots and kingfishers, orders that probably evolved in New Guinea; Greater Melampitta *Megalampitta gigantea*, the only passerine known to roost underground; and its many bird groups convergent on but unrelated to the nuthatches, creepers, warblers, finches, wrens and sunbirds of the rest of the world. Another reason is New Guinea's equatorial location combined with its high mountains, resulting in a range of habitats from tropical rainforest in the lowlands to glaciers on the highest peaks at 5,000 m. Still another reason is its simple geographic layout: a single central cordillera with montane allospecies arranged from west to east, separating northern and southern lowlands with lowland allospecies arranged in a ring. New Guinea shouldn't be thought of as the world's largest tropical island, but instead as its smallest continent. New Guinea has proved to be ideal terrain for studying speciation, ecological segregation, and other biological phenomena. New Guineans themselves are walking encyclopaedias of knowledge about their birds. The illustrated talk will explain these and other features that make New Guinea birds special. The only disadvantage to visiting New Guinea is that, thereafter, you'll find the rest of the world boring by comparison.

*Biography.*—Jared Diamond is Professor of Geography at the University of California (Los Angeles). He divides his professional life between teaching geography to undergraduate students; field research on the birds of New Guinea and other south-west Pacific islands; writing books about human societies, aimed at the general public; and promoting sustainable environmental policies, as a director of the World Wildlife Fund and Conservation International. He is the author of the Pulitzer prize-winning *Guns, germs and steel*, as well as *Collapse*, and *Upheaval*, among other best-selling books.

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#### 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  
Sort Code: 20-45-45  
Account number: 53092003  
Account name: The British Ornithologists' Club

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.

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#### 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. 132–139 are also available on the BOC website: <http://boc-online.org/>

BOC Occasional Publications are available from the BOC Office or online at [info@boc-online.org](mailto:info@boc-online.org). Future BOC-published checklists will be available from NHBS and as advised on the BOC website. As its online repository, the BOC uses the British Library Online Archive (in accordance with IZCN 1999, Art. 8.5.3.1).