

"IOU Flutter"



The Official Newsletter of the International Ornithologists' Union

Volume 2, Issue 3 (August 2020)

IOU News!!!

Make sure that you mark your travel calendars for August 14-22, 2022 to attend the 2022 IOCongress® in Durban, South Africa. The IOU is pleased to partner with the University of KwaZulu-Natal to organize the IOCongress2022, once again in the great seaside city of Durban where it was last held in 1998! Many things involving ornithology and bird conservation have changed in those 24 years in the massive continent of Africa and It will be quite interesting 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. Visit <https://www.internationalornithology.org/blog/10791> for more information!

The call for Symposia is now open. Please see <https://iocongress2022.com/call-for-symposia/> and submit your symposium proposals. The deadline is officially set at September 1, 2020, but we will consider applications until December 1 2020.

Message from the President



Dear Colleagues and Members of the IOU,

My message in the most recent *The Flutter* (see

https://www.internationalornithology.org/sites/default/files/IOU_newsletter_Vol_2_2_April_2020_0.pdf) touched upon the turmoil and uncertainty created by Covid-19 which took everyone by surprise, even though scientists and the World Health Organization (WHO) have been warning for years about the almost certain arrival of an epidemic given the density and travelling habits of humans.

Covid-19 has already had serious effects on the human species and it is forcing us to learn to face a global crisis in the “here and now” without having the option to postpone actions to “later” or “the year 2050” as has been done with the other crisis in need of urgent action, namely the environmental crisis. I purposely use the term “environmental crisis” instead of the generally used term “climate change” because the latter does not appropriately describe the current situation. Too many people can take comfort in explaining it away as a continuously changing weather pattern, as a return of conditions that the earth has experienced previously, as a matter that technology and science can handle and that we humans can adapt to by being “resilient”.

It is understandable that many humans hope and believe that technology (air-conditioning, desalination plants, laboratory food production, etc.) can ensure the survival of the human species even with a “changed” climate. This belief in technology as the solution to “climate change” also nurtures a belief that climate change and the warming of our earth can be halted if only the carbon emissions could be controlled and reduced by “2050”. Hence, an entire industry of carbon trading

projects has developed, and endless discussions are held about the relative advantages of carbon trading *versus* carbon taxing. Many people have tried to reduce our “carbon footprint” by, for example, eliminating/reducing meat from our diet and/or reducing/eliminating air and car travel in favour of walking, bicycling, and train rides. The focus on carbon, however, deflects from the enormous crisis that the natural environment is facing, as well as from its root cause, namely the current overabundance of humans and the continuing growth in and expansion of the human population at the expense of our non-human co-inhabitants on our earth.

The effects of this organismal imbalance have been very visible to ornithologists and I doubt that any of us would disagree that the root cause of the environmental crisis is the overabundance of the human species. But we have generally been timid in raising this issue, fearing negative repercussions on our work and social standing if we raised this taboo subject. But who will raise this taboo subject if not the scientists who have the data and knowledge to support this claim? And if not now, when? Would it not be more honest to speak about the “human footprint” instead of the “carbon footprint”, since the latter is only a symptom of the former?

As far as I have been able to see from the ornithological literature, most ecological and population and distribution survey studies deal mainly with particular species and populations in their current environment today and with the tacit understanding that this environment is the natural one – seemingly unaware of the phenomenon of the shifting baseline syndrome. Even when a decline in population is mentioned, usually euphemisms, such a “intensification of agriculture” or “development”, are used. And when the frightening decline in birds and insects have become obvious to all, the finger-pointed culprits are the increasing numbers of glass windows, high-rise buildings, windmills, pesticides, and cats – not the increasing human population which is responsible for these growing problems! Even in studies of the ever-increasing number of urban birds (many of them “nature-refugees” as I was able to observe in Australia), the urban environment is described as the current environment to which birds have adapted.

Without going into the issue of whether to call our geological era the Anthropocene, we know that every corner of our earth has been affected by the human species. In Australia, where I have been spending my sabbatical since pre-Covid-19 February, it is understood that the first Australians have managed the environment and fundamentally adapted it for their own survival for at least 50,000 years. So have other humans as soon as they have set foot on a new piece of land, such as the Yaghan in the extreme southern tip of South America or, presumably, the Neanderthals in Europe. The human-induced changes have been accelerating ever since.

Hence, when we publish our studies, would it not be scientifically appropriate to describe not only the “natural” environment with which birds currently interact, and to which they have become adapted over millions of years, but also provide the data on the influence of the ever increasing human numbers and activities on this environment, such as habitat reduction, changes of weather patterns, fall-out from pesticides, urban pollution and mining (sometime hundreds of miles away), expanding agriculture, political decisions and changes in the laws affecting the environment, etc.? Such data are readily available from a great variety of sources, and ornithologists are often able to add to these data themselves. Of course, such changes may necessitate changes in what publishers deem to be acceptable manuscripts (e.g., increase in acceptable page numbers) and how reviewers evaluate the acceptability of papers. And, most of all, it will require some “civilian courage” by ornithologists to break a universal taboo subject – the current unsustainable increase in the worldwide human population. Once these issues will enter the primary scientific literature, it will almost certainly enter the expanding secondary science literature and, through it, the general media and human consciousness.

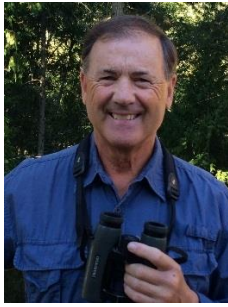
The IOU has decided to step forward to bring up the subject of human overabundance and its direct and indirect disastrous effects on birds, for example through its Working Group Ethics in Ornithology (see the profile below of its chair, Jane Popowich). At this stage, the IOU invites a free, open and non-judgmental discussion to “de-tabooitize” the subject of the unsustainable growth in human numbers at the expense of our non-human co-inhabitants of the only life-sustaining celestial object in the universe. I believe that we all are ready to start this conversation, not only because the Covid-19 crisis has provided us with time for reflection, but also because Covid-19 has demonstrated how fragile our current economic models are and how vulnerable humans have become as a result of our own way of life.

With best wishes and kind regards, until the next issue,

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

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From the Editor



Why Countries Should Have a National Bird!

No less than 106 of the world's 195 countries have official birds; 21 of them not official as yet. This includes tiny countries such as Israel (hoopoe), the Honduras (scarlet macaw), and Estonia (barn swallow). Some other well-known ones are the kiwi for New Zealand and the doctor bird for Jamaica. (I rather like that last choice!)

Birds do a lot for humans. They eat pests, pollinate our plants and crops, disperse seeds; their eggs and meat (yes, chickens are birds!) feed us and their feathers keep us warm. They have even helped us win wars by teaching our military about flight, camouflage, sentry systems, and acting as vital message carriers. Birds have saved human lives not just by serving as literal 'canaries in coal mines' but also by globally warning us of other environmental health hazards such as carcinogenic pesticides and industrial by-products. And sadly, it took the unbelievable senseless annihilation of literally billions of passenger pigeons on our continent to help promote a burgeoning conservation movement and herald a new era of environmentalism.

In many countries, the hobby of birdwatching injects a great deal of money into the economy in many ways. In my country, one in five Canadians spends an average of at least 133 days a year watching, monitoring, feeding, filming, or photographing the 450 or so different kinds of birds that make Canada their home. It almost doubles the 70 days a year Canadians spend gardening. Birds, being so numerous, so colourful and so diverse, are likely the most common types of wild animals we see on a regular basis. More than a quarter of Canadian households have installed feeders and bird houses in our backyards and almost ten percent of us have bought bird identification books and binoculars and taken trips specifically to see birds and attend hundreds of bird festivals all over North America.

However, we also celebrate birds because of their intrinsic value. Who can deny that birds entertain us in so many ways with their beauty, their song and their flight? How many great writers, artists, film-makers, and even aviators and astronauts were inspired by these amazing unique creatures?! If you ask a bird-watcher what they see in birds, they might respond by saying “What does one see in the works of Shakespeare, the paintings of Van Gogh, or the music of Mozart?” In short, a world without birds will not just be a biologically diminished world but also an emotionally diminished one. And if we lose our birds, we will lose ourselves.

Birds can also take credit for uniting nations. In 1789 George Washington became the first President of the United States and the American bald eagle became its official bird. The Founding Fathers chose the eagle because of its fierce beauty and proud independence. Americans today revere their bald eagle. Drive anywhere in the states and you will see flags and signs depicting the bird. Trained bald eagles are often flown at major sporting events such as the Super Bowl, the World Series and the Indianapolis 500. One bird named Challenger, a 28-year old rescue bird, has flown to the national anthem at no less than 350 public events in the past two decades! In 1970, the United States Postal Service adopted the ‘standing bald eagle’ as its official seal, reflecting the determined and undeniably American spirit of its employees.

The world is full of symbols, whether it be sports uniforms, company logos or even traffic signs. Some societies wear gold rings to symbolize the bond of marriage. Some symbols such as stop signs are highly functional, while others convey non-material cultural meanings. Some are somewhat trivial, for example blue ribbons or gold medals. But an official bird? It can be much more than that. Besides representing all of those wonderful things that birds do for us, a national bird can also symbolize the very nature of the citizens of a given country.

Canada does not yet have a national bird. But most ornithologists and bird-lovers in Canada are fighting to establish the Canada Jay as the country’s National Bird. This highly intelligent corvid is found in every province and territory (90 percent of its range is located in Canada!); it does not migrate but breeds in cold winter temperatures; and it is exceedingly friendly toward humans. Called the Gray Jay since 1957, its old name, the Canada Jay, was restored two years ago by the North American Classification Committee. We now await action from the Canadian federal government to officially establish this bird as the country’s national bird.

If your country is fortunate to already have a national bird, why not use it to help to draw attention to the challenges faced by all birds everywhere. And if your country does not, then take steps to choose one and promote it. Some words of advice though ---- put some major effort into

making the right choice, including getting your government involved in the decision right from the beginning!

My very best to all of you.....stay safe.....and sane!

Emeritus Prof. David M. Bird, Editor

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Member Profile

Editor's note: In each newsletter, we like to 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 or otherwise active in the organization, please send me a brief profile (250 words or so) of yourself written in first or third person, as well as a photo, just like the one below!



Jane Popowich (BFA)

Chair, Working Group Ethics in Ornithology – WGEO,

International Ornithologists' Union <https://www.internationalornithology.org/ethics-ornithology>

e-mail: WGEO@janepopowich.com

As an artist, my work has explored the intrinsic value of other species. Having lived and worked across Canada and in Britain, I am now based in Vancouver where birds continue to play a role in my art practice and bring delight from day to day. I am interested in the intersection of where science, and what scientists show and tell us in relation to biodiversity, is perceived and received by the public and how it does or does not inform our actions. I am honoured to be given the position of

Chair of the Working Group Ethics in Ornithology (WGEO). It was important for me to offer assistance and to speak up with hope. Included in the current world suffering we have a biodiversity crisis, and a climate crisis. This is an opportunity to explore existing structures and how they participate in current global challenges. Encouraging discussions, as well as questioning and strengthening connections, helps to share these concerns towards best practices and actions for the future of birds. The WGEO aims to help others in these times of dire predictions, and within urgent timeframes, to encourage excitement in what we already know, what new information we are learning, how things are changing and how we can best support and participate, with flexibility, in what is needed. The WGEO has started a project to build an IOU code of ethics, to create a reading list on this topic, and supports discussion about the impacts of human activities on birds.

Requests for Assistance

Editor's Note: This newsletter exists to help IOU members. If you need some help with a project of some kind, please forward a brief version like the one below for me to post.

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>

IOU Code of Ethics General Statement:

The Working Group Ethics in Ornithology – WGEO is establishing an IOU code of ethics and conduct practices. In particular, the IOU is in the process of developing guidelines for under-represented categories.

The IOU Code of Ethics will begin with the following categories:

1. Avoidance of glass collisions
2. Drones
3. Ecotourism

4. Ethical birdwatching
5. Ethical photography
6. Scientific collecting
7. Sports activities
8. Winter feeding

Please note that the IOU Code of Ethics will be a living document subject to change as it develops. It will be drafted with input from the WGEO group, members' suggestions and in coordination with codes of ethics of other organizations. Please see the WGEO reading list under 'code of ethics' for links to ethical codes and conduct practices of other ornithological organizations. The IOU code of ethics is to be published on the IOU Website.

Call for volunteers:

The IOU invites volunteers interested in contributing to the development of an IOU Code of Ethics and conduct practices to please contact a member of the WGEO. If interested, contact Jane Popovich at WGEO@janepopowich.com

Opinion Letters/Articles



Photo by Flavio Amiel on Unsplash

Oriole hybridization is a dead end: a study from the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology

A half-century of controversy over two popular bird species may have finally come to an end. In one corner: The Bullock's Oriole, found in the western half of North America. In the other corner: The Baltimore Oriole, breeding in the eastern half. Where their ranges meet in the Great Plains, the two mix freely and produce apparently healthy hybrid offspring. But according to scientists from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, hybridization is a dead end and both parent species will remain separate.

"The debate over whether Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles are one species or two goes to the very heart of what defines a species," said lead author Jennifer Walsh, a postdoctoral researcher at the Cornell Lab. "For a long time, that definition included the inability of one species to reproduce with any other. Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles clearly can mate where their ranges overlap in the hybrid zone, but that's not the whole story."

The oriole conundrum began with the birds long considered to be two distinct species. But the discovery that they interbreed caused the Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles to be lumped together under the name Northern Oriole in 1983, much to the consternation of birders and some biologists who felt that these birds were each highly distinct. In 1995, the American Ornithological Union reversed course and split them back into their two separate species. According to Cornell Lab researchers, this study may finally settle the lump-or-split debate.

The researchers examined genetic markers from almost 300 orioles (Bullock's, Baltimore, and many hybrids) from the woodlands on the banks of the Platte River in Nebraska and Colorado. They found the oriole hybrid zone has been shrinking since it was first intensively studied in the 1950s. The scientists say if hybridization conferred any survival advantage, the zone would have gotten bigger, with more mixing of genes between the parent species, and more hybrids. Instead, ongoing natural selection pressures are limiting the expansion of the hybrid zone and preventing the homogenization of the two species.

"I call hybrid zones the 'supercolliders of speciation,'" says Irby Lovette, co-author and director of the Lab's Fuller Evolutionary Biology Program. "Through these special matings, genes and traits are mixing and matching in new combinations—all of which helps us learn more about where biodiversity comes from, and therefore how new species arise."

The orioles are not alone in their flexible mating standards—about 10% of the world's bird species hybridize. Hybrid zones exist in the U.S. for Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees, Indigo and Lazuli Buntings, and others. But not all hybrid zones are following the same pattern as that of the orioles. For example, Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers have hybridized so much they may be moving toward a merger of the two species.

"We're learning that hybrid zones are really very dynamic, shifting and changing over time," said study author Shawn Billerman. "That aspect of hybrid zones has become recognized as common and widespread in the past 10 to 20 years with the rapid improvement in genetic sequencing."

Though the scientists feel the one-or-two species matter is probably settled, there are other questions they want to pursue. Their next steps are to identify the specific factors that are limiting oriole hybrid expansion, sequence the entire genome for both Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles, and determine the specific genes that cause differences in the appearance and behavior of the two orioles.

Original Paper: Jennifer Walsh et al, Genomic and plumage variation across the controversial Baltimore and Bullock's oriole hybrid zone, *The Auk* (2020). [DOI: 10.1093/auk/ukaa044](https://doi.org/10.1093/auk/ukaa044)

Recently Published Papers: Editor's Choice



Photo by chuttersnap on Unsplash

Andean Condors Can Fly Without Flapping for Five and a Half Hours!

Looking at an Andean condor, one might wonder how such an enormous bird flies at all, let alone achieves an altitude of over 16,000 feet (5,000 meters). This giant species of vulture can have a wingspan of 10 feet and a body weight comparable to a human toddler, between 20 to 30 pounds. Recently, researchers at Swansea University collaborated with scientists in Argentina to study the flight of Andean condors in their habitat. They sought to answer how often and in what weather conditions the large birds flap their wings in flight, thereby using precious energy to remain at or change their altitude.

By attaching special monitoring devices to young Andean condors, researchers were able to count each flap of the birds' giant wings. As it turns out, Andean condors spend precious little time and energy flapping their wings. During the birds' time in the air, less than one percent was spent flapping. Most flapping occurred during takeoff or flying close to the ground. These surprising

statistics—published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*—have some big implications.

Written by **Madeleine Muzdak** in *My Modern Met*, August 4, 2020

<https://mymodernmet.com/andean-condor-flying/>

Original Paper: H. J. Williams, E. L. C. Shepard, Mark D. Holton, P. A. E. Alarcón, R. P. Wilson, and S. A. Lambertucci. 2020. Physical limits of flight performance in the heaviest soaring bird. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 117 (30) 17884-17890

Birds in the news



Photo by Roman Kraft on Unsplash

Editor's note: *If you have some late-breaking news on some exciting ornithological research that you would like to share with IOU members, send along a summary and a photo if you wish for inclusion in the next issue of The Flutter.*

Three Hypotheses to Explain How Birds Use the Earth's Magnetic Field to Navigate During Migration

Every fall, billions of birds migrate south to their wintering grounds and in the spring, they do it all over again heading north to breed. Some birds like the bar-tailed godwit fly nonstop from Alaska to New Zealand, a one-way trip of over 7,000 miles! But probably the biggest mystery in ornithology is...how do they find their way?! While it is widely agreed that birds do use information deduced from the position of the sun, the stars, and geographical landmarks, it is well accepted that they also use the earth's magnetic field, in other words, the movement of iron in our planet's core. But how birds detect the magnetic field remains the vexing question. Today, researchers are focusing on three possible ways that a magnetic sense could work. One idea involves a form of iron with magnetic properties, called magnetite, acting as a sort of compass within cells that rotates to align with the magnetic field. While magnetite has been found in varying amounts and locations in their bodies, birds apparently cannot detect the difference between the polarities of north and south. Another contender, known as the radical-pair mechanism, hinges on a chemical reaction in a bird's eye that is influenced by Earth's magnetic field. It involves a protein known as cytochrome, but the process needs light to work and many birds migrate in the dark of night. A third hypothesis, formerly proposed in 1882, suggests that as a bird moves through Earth's magnetic field, small currents are generated in the creature's inner ear. Testings are currently underway on a scaled models of pigeons' inner ears placed in magnetic fields. But to date, no one has yet designed the so-called killer experiment to definitively come up with the answer. Is it magnetite, is it the eyes or is it the ears? Or even all three? Stay tuned.

Adapted from **"Earth to birds: Take the next left"** By Sophie Fessl in *Knowable Magazine*, July 16, 2020

<https://www.knowablemagazine.org/article/living-world/2020/earth-birds-take-next-left>

Hummingbirds Demonstrate a Concept of Numerical Sequence

Hummingbirds are again in the science news. Having already astounded us with their flying abilities and their amazing use of ultraviolet light detection, we have now learned that they can keep track of the most nectar-rich flowers in the order that appear in a given line-up of blossoms. In other words, they can remember the most productive flower and then the second, the third, and even the fourth. Apparently, lots of animals can count and some can even understand how things fit together in a sequence, but to date there have been no examples of a wild animal actually using that ability in a natural setting. The finding was discovered by Susan Healy of the University of St.

Andrews and her colleagues who studied rufous hummingbirds in the Rocky Mountains. These birds were chosen because they have well-defined feeding territories as well as excellent memories as to what is in them. The birds go from one nectar-rich flower to another just like a seasoned shopper in a department store. But how do they know how to do that? So, the researchers captured and marked nine hummers for identification and set up ten artificial flowers with the ability to add sugar water to them. By watching which flowers the birds chose, even when they were arranged in a different manner, the scientists were able to determine that the hummingbirds have a concept of numerical sequence, something never before seen in a wild vertebrate.

Adapted from “**Hummingbirds can count their way to food**” by Cathleen O’Grady in *Science*, Jul. 7, 2020

Original Paper: Tas I. F. Vámos, Maria C. Tello-Ramos, T. Andrew Hurly, and Susan D. Healy. 2020. Numerical ordinality in a wild nectarivore. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*
<https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.1269>

Research tools



Photo by Hunter Haley on Unsplash

Editor’s note: *If you have some late-breaking news on a new ornithological research tool that you would like to share with IOU members, send along a summary and a photo if you wish for inclusion in the next issue of The Flutter.*

Psychological warfare in vineyard: using drones and bird psychology to control bird damage to wine grapes

Bird damage to commercial crops is a significant problem across the globe, especially for high value

crops like wine grapes. Various bird control methods have been developed in the past to reduce bird damage. After a brief review of the current bird damage control strategies, Zihao Wang of the University of Sydney and his colleagues found the most effective methods, such as netting and hiring a human scarer, rely on intensive manual labour, as well as fragile and costly infrastructure. The cheaper methods, such as using alarm calls and predator models, are effective for no more than two weeks before the birds habituate to them. Wang and his team are proposing a novel Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV, more commonly referred to as drone) system incorporating bird psychology for efficient bird damage control. The UAV is equipped with a loudspeaker broadcasting distress calls, as well as a crow taxidermy installed on the undercarriage that appears as captured prey. This special UAV configuration is designed to engage birds' well-established abilities to learn to recognize and avoid novel predators, thus providing the benefit that a long-term fear response towards the UAV can be expected. The initial trials were carried out in vineyards around south-eastern Australia. Results indicated the UAV can deter large pest birds such as ravens and cockatoos in a 50-metre radius centred on the UAV for an extended period of time. The UAV can also effectively deter small pest birds such as silvereyes for brief time periods after exposure to the UAV. It is also evident from the results that while one UAV is sufficient to protect vineyards smaller than 25 hectares, multiple UAVs are needed to protect a large vineyard effectively.

Original Paper: Zihao Wang, Andrea S. Griffin, Andrew Lucas and K. C. Wong. 2019. Psychological warfare in vineyard: using drones and bird psychology to control bird damage to wine grapes. *Crop Protection* 120. 10.1016/j.cropro.2019.02.025.

Conservation



Photo by Dr Dejan Stojanovic

Editor's note: Please forward any conservation issues or ongoing efforts for inclusion in the next issue of The Flutter.

Stork chicks hatch in UK for first time in 600 years – why that's great news for British wildlife

In a spring marked by bad news, events unfolding in the crown of an old oak tree could offer a dose of optimism. Three pairs of white storks settled down to breed on the Knepp Estate in West Sussex, southern England, in March 2020. On May 15, it was announced that the first chicks had hatched – the first to be born in Britain since a pair nested on the roof of St Giles Cathedral in Edinburgh in 1416.

This was no chance event – we owe this precious conservation breakthrough to the efforts of all those involved in the White Stork Project, who have released over 100 storks at three sites in southeast England.

Stork bones have been found in the limestone caves of the Peak District dating from the late glacial period, between 43,000 and 10,000 years ago, and in human settlements from the Isle of Scilly to the Shetlands in the Bronze Age, as far back as 2,500 years ago. But their sparse remains suggest that they were probably always rare in the UK.

Despite this, the history of Britons living alongside storks is preserved in place names like Storrington, close to the Knepp estate, which in Saxon times was called “Estorchestone” – village of the storks. But storks, along with other large wetland birds like cranes and spoonbills, were erased from Britain after centuries of hunting and the draining of their wetland habitats.

If you wish to read more, visit <https://theconversation.com/stork-chicks-hatch-in-uk-for-first-time-in-600-years-why-thats-great-news-for-british-wildlife-137320>

Mass Killings of Critically Endangered Vultures in Guinea-Bissau

In Guinea-Bissau in recent months, the world's largest ever incident of vulture killings has caused the loss of around 5% of Guinea-Bissau's hooded vulture population in just a few weeks. More than 2000 Critically Endangered hooded vultures have been killed through deliberating poisoning in events that began unfolding in February 2020. With Guinea-Bissau containing important global populations of hooded vultures, this catastrophe threatens their

future existence on the planet.

Mass poisoning of vultures across Africa has been the primary cause of their rapid demise, with populations of some species plummeting by up to 97% over the last 50 years, and annual declines being largest in West Africa, even within protected areas. Hence, the hooded vulture, along with other endangered African-Eurasian vulture species, is listed on Appendix I of the Convention on Migratory Species to which Guinea-Bissau is a Party and is thus obligated to give these vultures the strongest level of protection.

Vultures play a vital role in the environment, keeping it free of decaying carcasses and likely help limit the spread of harmful diseases. This latest mass slaughter of vultures presents a huge setback to national and regional vulture conservation efforts, and threatens the continued survival of highly vulnerable species in Africa that have already suffered such great losses, as well as threatening the equilibrium of our natural systems across their entire range.

Initial toxicological analysis of samples taken from Guinea-Bissau shows that poisoned bait containing a carbamate pesticide, which is highly toxic to vultures, was used in the killings. In-country investigations carried out by national NGO - Organisation for the Defence and Development of Wetlands (ODZH) in collaboration with others, indicate that the killings were driven by belief-based use, whereby vulture body parts are used by people for ritual purposes. It is erroneously believed that vulture heads and other body parts can bring special powers and good luck to users, which has led to the indiscriminate killing of vultures for this purpose in many parts of Africa, but more so in West Africa.

From:

https://secure.avaaz.org/en/community_petitions/guineabissau_government_ecowas_au_and_the_internat_stop_the_mass_killing_of_critically_endangered_vultures_in_guineabissau/details/

To read more, visit <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/03/as-guinea-bissau-records-mass-vulture-deaths-poisoning-is-main-suspect/> and <https://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/investigating-mystery-behind-guinea-bissaus-mass-vulture-deaths>

Conferences



Photo by Mikael Kristenson on Unsplash

Editor's note: This list is by no means exhaustive. If I am missing some noteworthy events, please let me know so that I can include them in the next issue. Also, note that, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some meetings are being cancelled, some are being postponed, some are being done online, and some are still under consideration. Thus, since things are rapidly evolving, it is always best to check the actual web site for the conference you are planning to attend.

2020

October 19 – 21, 2020: The **2020 International Loon/Diver Symposium** hosted by the Biodiversity Research Institute will be held in Portland, Maine. For more information, visit <http://www.briloon.org/2020-loons>

October 5 – 9, 2020: The Standing Committee of the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** will hold its 73rd meeting in Geneva, Switzerland. For more information, visit <https://cites.org/eng>

October 12 – 13, 2020: The 10th **International Conference on Biodiversity and Conservation** will be held on-line. For more information, visit <https://biodiversity-ecosystem.conferenceseries.com/>

November 24, 2020: The **British Ornithologists' Union** annual meeting themed upon "Climate Change and Birds: Solutions to the Crisis" will be held as a Virtual One-Day Meeting. For more information, visit <https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

October 7 - 8, 2020: The **British Ornithologists' Union** is teaming up with the International Wader Study Group (IWSG) to jointly host the first ever International Shorebird Twitter Conference, an online global event, as part of the IWSG's 50th anniversary and ahead of its anniversary conference in Germany. For more information, visit <https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

November 16-17, 2020: The **International Conference on Genomics and Molecular Biology** themed on Advances in Genome and Molecular Biology Evolution Technologies will be held in Lisbon, Portugal. For more information, visit <https://genomics.insightconferences.com/europe/>

November 15 – 19, 2020: The **Society for Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)** will hold its annual North America meeting in Fort Worth, Texas. For more information, visit <https://www.expohour.com/setac-north-america-meeting-aa> *Editor's note:* Other more local **SETAC** meetings planned for 2020 and 2021 are listed on their web site: https://www.setac.org/events/event_list.asp

2021

October 9 – 12, 2021: The **Raptor Research Foundation, Inc.** and **Neotropical Raptor Network** will hold a joint meeting in Boise, Idaho. For more information, email Sarah Schulwitz Schulwitz.Sarah@peregrinefund.org or Rick Watson rwatson@peregrinefund.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/>

September 20 – 24, 2021: The **World Owl Conference** will be held in Onalaska/La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA. For more information, visit <https://www.internationalowlcenter.org/futureconferences.html>

October 5 - 10, 2021: The **Asian Raptor Research Conservation Network** is meeting in Kuching, Borneo, East Malaysia. For more information, contact Chong Leong Puan, University Putra Malaysia chongleong@upm.edu

March 30 - April 1, 2021: The **British Ornithologists' Union** annual conference themed upon "Restoring Bird Populations" will meet in Nottingham, UK. For more information, visit <https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

November 15 - 19, 2021: The **Pan-African Ornithological Congress** will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. For more information, visit <https://www.paoc15.org/>

April 2021: The Council of the **Wilson Ornithological Society** has approved planning for a meeting to be held jointly with the Northeast Natural History Conference in Albany, NY. For more information, visit <https://wilsonsociety.org/meetings/future-meetings/>

February 11 – 12, 2021: The **International Conference on Avian and Exotic Animals** will be held in Barcelona, Spain. For more information, visit <https://waset.org/avian-and-exotic-animals-conference-in-february-2021-in-barcelona> (Editor's note: For other similarly themed conferences too numerous to list here, visit <https://waset.org/wildlife-conferences>

September 26 – 30, 2021: **The Wildlife Society** will hold its 28th Annual Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. For more information, visit <https://wildlife.org/learn/conferences-2/>

Late July, 2021: **BirdsCaribbean** will hold its 23rd International Conference on the island of Trinidad. For more information, visit <https://www.birdscaribbean.org/2020/02/birdscaribbean-2021-conference-to-be-held-in-trinidad/>

2022

August 14 - 22, 2022: The **International Ornithological Union** will hold the 2022 IOCongress® in Durban, South Africa. For more information, visit <https://www.internationalornithology.org/blog/10791>

November 6 – 10, 2022: **The Wildlife Society** will hold its 29th Annual Conference in Spokane, Washington. For more information, visit <https://wildlife.org/learn/conferences-2/>

September 11 – 16, 2022: The 18th **International Behavioral Ecology Congress** will be hosted in Melbourne, Australia. For more information, visit <http://www.behavecol.com/meetings-conferences/>

March 30 - April 1, 2022: The **British Ornithologists' Union** annual conference themed upon "Avian Reproduction" will meet in Nottingham, UK. For more information, visit <https://www.bou.org.uk/bou-conferences/>

Courses and Workshops



Photo by Rita Morais on Unsplash

Courses and workshops for PhD students, postdocs, and professional researchers.

***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.*

Ornithological Technical Services is an industry leading scientific consultancy that specializes in aviation ornithology. Since 2003, we have provided expertise and delivered high standard projects relating to aviation wildlife hazard management, avian conservation, pest bird management and avian environmental impact assessments. For more information, visit

<https://www.ornithologicaltechnicalservices.com/training>

The **Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology** based in Ithaca, New York offers outstanding courses and workshops on ornithology that may be useful to those interested in improving their skills in the study and conservation of birds on both a professional basis and for citizen science. For more information, visit <https://www.birds.cornell.edu/home/education/>

The **British Trust for Ornithology** offers a wide range of **courses** each year around the country in a variety of venues and habitats, for **beginner birders**, developing surveyors and conservation professionals. For more information, visit <https://bto.org/develop-your-skills/training-courses>

Grants, Fellowships, Internships, and Positions



Photo from unsplash.com

Editor's Note: If you know of other opportunities for ornithological grants, fellowships, internships and positions, please forward them to me for posting. I am also posting other databases rather than duplicating all pertinent listings in The Flutter.

General Grants and Awards Databases:

This is an *up-to-date* database of recurring grants, awards, prizes, scholarships, fellowships, etc. in the field of ornithology. While it does include some of the opportunities listed below, there are other useful ones. For more information, visit <https://ornithologyexchange.org/funding/grants/>

World-wide:

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 second round of funding for 2020 is now open. Please note that awards may take up to 2 weeks to be processed, therefore events taking place in the first two weeks of July are eligible for application within the first round.

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. A budget for research grants and conservation work is set each year at the annual meeting. Researchers are encouraged to apply for grant funding in support of scientific seabird studies with clear aims and objectives. Contact the General Secretary at secretary@rnbws.org.uk for details and read more at <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 2021

Read more: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/darwin-initiative-applying-for-main-project-funding>

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

Read more: <https://www.hawkmountain.org/about/careers/graduate-student-programs>

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://c402277.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/publications/1095/files/original/PDG_Guidelines_2020.pdf?1568057598

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/danforth-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

The International Osprey Foundation: research grants awarded annually for osprey and other raptor-related research in the United States and worldwide.

Read more: <https://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. Full details of the 2021 grants including application kits will be available in early July 2020.

Read more: 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

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.wilsonociety.org

Bird 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

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/. They are also once again offering one UK Birder between the age of 16 - 18 the opportunity to win the Cameron Besselka Scholarship to attend Cornell Lab of Ornithology Bird Event, in Ithaca, New York in 2021. For more information, visit

<https://www.cameronbesselka.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. Information about the 2020 grants will be available soon.

Read more: <http://www.delmnh.org/collections-research/collection-research-grants/>

Neotropics:

Neotropical Bird Club Awards and Grants: for conservation work or research that has an intended conservation benefit. Next deadline: July.

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

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/

Oceania:

Pacific Seabird Craig S. Harrison Conservation Fund, Pacific Seabird Group: 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/>

Obituaries

Editor's note: This is a brand-new section for the IOU Flutter. If you wish to include an obituary, tribute or memorial piece for some individual who has made contributions to ornithology and/or bird conservation in some meaningful way, please submit no more than 250 words and an accompanying photograph.

**In memory of
Switzerland's Chief of the General Staff and Chief of the Armed Forces
Lt. Gen. Christophe Keckeis ("Pilo")**

And the amazing connection between the Israeli Air Force, Swiss Air Force and Barn Owls

April 18, 1945 - May 1, 2020

Prof. Yossi Leshem



On Friday, May 1, 2020, Lieutenant General Keckeis passed away, in a hospital in Lausanne, Switzerland, after suffering three heart attacks, at the age of 75. Lt. Gen. Keckeis was a glorified fighter pilot in the Swiss Air Force, with 4,700 hours of flight. In 1979, he hosted two Israeli Mirage pilots: Kobi Richter, commander of the 117 Squadron in Ramat David, and Eliezer Adar, a reservist. The pilots arrived on a secret mission, with the approval of then-Air Force commander, Maj. Gen. David Ivry, to pass their vast experience to the Swiss the secrets of the Mirage flights and air fights. The Israeli pilots stayed at the Swiss Air Force base in the town of Payerne, and for about a month flew with the Swiss. They were staying at Keckeis' home, and in the house of General Paul Leuthold, whose son, Colonel Michael Leuthold, is the Payerne base commander today. On the courageous friendship

formed between the pilots and their joint experiences, one can learn from the lecture given by Maj. Gen. Keckeis and Lt. Col. Eliezer Adar. They gave it in the seminar "The Way of the Vulture in the Sky", a joint venture of the Society for the Protection of Nature and the Israeli Air Force:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ee9AAVRn7Fc&list=PLNiWLB_wsOg7ZBGroAnMLmmZzxFAbEb3J&index=5&t=0s

Contact:

For feedback or more information, or to provide information to be included in the next issue of the IOU Newsletter, please contact the editor at:

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The next deadline for material from IOU members is November 15, 2020.

Please stay safe!!