

# ASAB Newsletter

Summer 2012



## *A note from the Newsletter Editor...*

Dear ASAB member,

Welcome to the Summer 2012 edition of the ASAB Newsletter! It seems everyone has gone Olympics mad this Summer. It usually takes something extraordinary to get me interested in sports in general, and watching sport in particular, but it seems I, like the rest of the world, have been captivated by the events of the last few weeks. So in this newsletter, we have an Olympics-inspired, competition-themed news section on page 2.

ASAB's annual Easter conference was a resounding success at Aberystwyth University. There was a great deal of media interest around the meeting which provided a fantastic platform for ASAB members to communicate their science to the public. Carrie Ijichi and Jenni Sanderson both share views from the conference on pages 3 and 4. Finally, we have news of upcoming meetings and deadlines so you can all set your calendars for the months ahead! Now, on your marks...

With all best wishes,

*Lisa Collins*

## **\*In this edition...\***

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## \*In the news...\*

### A brief look at some of the animal behaviour coverage in the media this Summer

A recent paper by Cheney et al (Anim. Beh. 84:21-27) showed that the level of **female-female competition** for long-term mates in chacma baboons is related to the sex ratio in the social group. Overt aggression was shown to increase as the number of females per male increased, an effect that was particularly apparent in subordinate females. In these mob attacks, oestrous females in a consortship with a male were targetted by other females in the group. Cheney et al propose that females may compete for long-term partners as such males are a form of protection for a female's young against infanticidal attacks from other males.

The purpose of **triumphant displays** performed by winners following fights has been investigated in little blue penguins by Mouterde et al (Anim. Beh. 83:605-611). Here, the impact of triumph calls on the behaviour and stress responses in surrounding penguins was assessed. The authors found that male penguins previously exposed to the vocal calls of others during a fight, showed higher heart rates when subsequently played the winner's call than when played the loser's call. Females showed equally high stress responses to both the winner and the loser. The authors suggest that this result supports the hypothesis that triumph calls serve to advertise a victory and establish a reputation for winning fights within a social group.

## \* Latest publication stats for Animal Behaviour \*

A recent article in the *Lab Times* (3: 34-36) presented the results of an investigation to determine publication statistics across Europe and worldwide. It considered only papers published in specialist animal behaviour journals (ie any publications in *Nature* or *Science* were not included). The results showed that papers written by academics in England, Germany, France, Netherlands and Scotland had the greatest number of citations, followed by Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Italy and Norway. However, these statistics will be influenced by the number of articles being produced by each country, so a more interesting comparison is to look at number of citations/number of articles written (all data for papers published between 1999 and 2010). Here we see that Scotland come out on top, followed by England, Netherlands and Sweden, and Switzerland (see Table 1).

Looking worldwide, we see that the citation number/number of articles written ratio is highest for South Africa, followed by Canada, USA and Europe (Table 2).

Country	Citation/article ratio
Scotland	18.8
England	18.5
Netherlands	17.9
Sweden	17.9
Switzerland	17.7
Austria	17.2
Wales	17.2
Belgium	16.2
Germany	16.0
Hungary	15.6
Norway	15.2

**Table 1:** Citation number/number of articles published across the highest scoring European countries. Adapted from Neumann (2012) *Lab Times* 3: 34-36.

Area	Citation/article ratio
South Africa	18.0
Canada	16.8
USA	15.7
Europe	15.6
Australia	14.2
New Zealand	13.3
Japan	7.2

**Table 2:** Citation number/number of articles published across the highest scoring countries/areas worldwide. Adapted from Neumann (2012) *Lab Times* 3: 34-36.

## \* ASAB Easter Meeting 2012 – Views from the Conference\*

The ASAB Easter meeting, held at Aberystwyth University, began on April 11<sup>th</sup> with a warm welcome reception from the conference organisers; Dr. Rupert Marshall and Dr. Roger Santer. The postgraduate workshop began with a talk by Dr. Sasha Dall from the University of Exeter entitled 'Publish or Perish', where he gave useful insights into the inner-workings of journals and how to get your work published. This was followed by a talk from Dr. Rick Stafford of the University of Bedfordshire who spoke about Citizen Science and tricks to coerce the public into collecting your data. Huw Merfyn Hughes talked about ways to use European funding and Emma Napper from the BBC Natural History Unit gave an inspiring talk full of stimulating video clips from the BBC archives of what it is like to work in the media.

A short bus ride from the University we found ourselves at Nant yr Arian forestry commission; a quiet lake-side clearing where over 50 red kites visit daily to be fed. On arrival the red kites could just be seen as dots far up in the sky but as we sat and waited they came closer and closer until they were skimming the ground just 5 metres from the voyeurs sat quietly in the bird hide. Meanwhile, back at the conference hall, others were being encouraged to use mathematical modelling and state of the art behavioural observation technology by Dr. Javier Gamarra of Aberystwyth University and Dr. Richard Lilley from Tracksys Ltd.

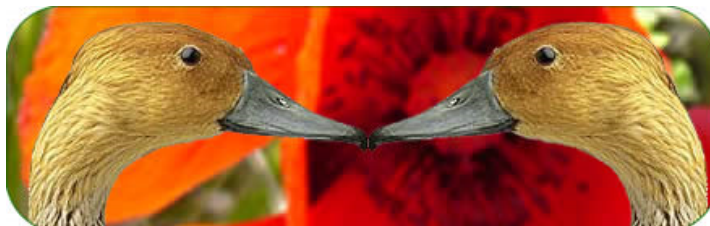
The evening session included a very useful career planning talk from the ASAB president Prof. Jane Hurst, where she shared her insights into how to move forward in the field of research. Charlotte Evans gave a practical demonstration from the ASAB Education department, testing our caterpillar counting skills we learnt how you can use different resources in education. Dr. James Law, of the team behind the iCub gave a talk about the use of robots in biological research. The conference then retired to Brynallwg; the university's own cosy farm house pub, where we were entertained by a fun-filled quiz from the conference organisers.

The conference was kicked off the next morning by a plenary lecture from Prof Lotta Kvarnemo of Gothenburg University about the mysteries of monogamy. Then came the first of a total of 33 student talks. The talks covered a huge, diverse array of subjects, from avian speciation in an Indonesian Archipeligo to sleeping behaviour in Barn owl nestlings, genetic effects in mice, amphipod sperm competition, and decision making in baboons among many others. All of the talks were well received with interesting and intriguing questions. Of special note was Andy Robertson's talk titled 'Investigating individual specialisation in the Eurasian badger', who won the Best Student Talk Prize with his explanations of using stable isotopes to investigate factors affecting individual foraging behaviours within social groups.

The conference boasted a huge array of posters, displayed with a stunning backdrop of the sunny Aberystwyth harbour, they were very well received and showed an amazing quality of work.

The conference also boasted a fine social night at the top of constitution hill, having walked down through Aberystwyth in the sunshine we all ascended the hill on the funicular railway to discover stunning panoramic views of the Cardigan Bay. There we celebrated and barn-danced into the night entertained by a man who may or may not have been named after a local bridge, and were left to wonder if this was the first time that scientific collaborations had been formed whilst dancing the hokey cokey...

**Jenni Sanderson**  
University of Exeter



## \* ASAB Easter Meeting 2012 – Views from the Conference\*

Going to one of your first conferences can be stressful - not so at Aberystwyth. After a long train ride (and countless sheep) we arrived into the charming station of this seaside town to be greeted by the yellow t-shirts and smiling faces of Rupert Marshall and his conference team. From that moment on it was clear that every consideration for our comfort and enjoyment had been made.

The first day made good use of the many scientific professionals attending who had several pearls of wisdom to share with us. We were taught how to build up our CVs to ensure a successful career in science by ASAB president Prof Jane Hurst; how to work with the media to promote our research by Dr Emma Napper; and that “you can’t polish a turd” by journal editor Dr Sasha Dall. In the afternoon some of us were lucky enough to visit Nant yr Arian forest where we saw the spectacle of fifty red kites thriving in the stunning Welsh hills. Back at the University we were treated to pizza and a pub quiz in the campuses farm-house pub. The warm atmosphere and friendly competition made mingling and chatting with fellow delegates easy and set the mood for the two days to come.

The second day began with plenary speaker Prof Lotta Kvarnemo and “The many mysteries of monogamy” followed by student talks from mice to mongooses. Speakers had come from across the world and highlighted the breadth and quality of current behaviour research. The evening poster presentation carried on in this vein with lively conversation in the bright and spacious conference hall over-looking the sea. The perfect end to the day was a trip up the cliff railway to view the sunset over Cardigan Bay followed by a fantastic spread and Tympath.

All too quickly (especially for some) the final day dawned but thankfully Prof Tim Guilford was there to revive us with his talk “Tracking bird navigation”. One of the highlights of the day was an explanation of stable isotopes that was comprehensible to a room full of hung-over behaviourists. For this considerable feat, Andrew Robertson was duly awarded “Best Student Talk” with Jodie Crane winning “Best Student Poster”. We were also privileged to see Dr John Skelhorn receive the ASAB 2012 Chris Barnard Award for Outstanding Contributions by a New Investigator. He proceeded to show us exactly why he deserves the award with a talk on his ingenious approach to separating masquerade from crypsis.

This Easter’s conference has shown that there is a flourishing community of early stage researchers in ASAB and that even our most established members are interested in and supportive of our progress. After such a positive experience all that’s left to say is *diolch yn fawr iawn Aberystwyth am amser gwych!*

**Carrie Ijichi**  
**Queen’s University Belfast**

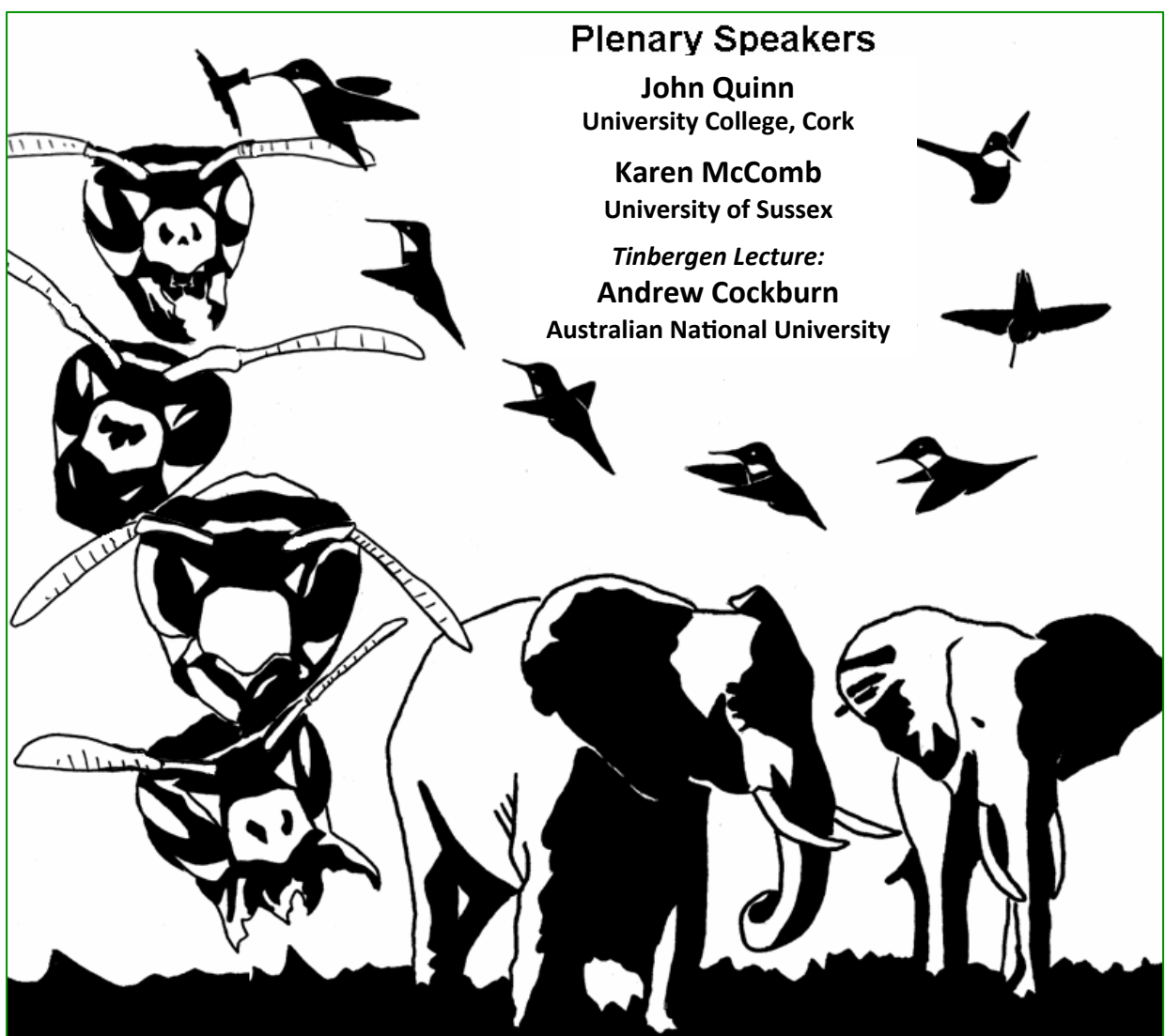


## ASAB Easter meeting 2012 prizes

**Congratulations to the winners of the ASAB Easter 2012 prizes:**

**Best Student Talk (Sponsored by Brill):** Andrew Robertson, Exeter University  
“Investigating individual specialisation in the Eurasian badger”

**Best Student Poster (Sponsored by Tracksys):** Jodie Crane, Sheffield University  
“Recognition of social group membership in a cooperatively breeding bird.”



## Plenary Speakers

John Quinn

University College, Cork

Karen McComb

University of Sussex

*Tinbergen Lecture:*

Andrew Cockburn

Australian National University



**ASAB WINTER CONFERENCE 2012**

# COGNITION IN THE WILD

**Organisers:**

**Sue Healy** ([susan.healy@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:susan.healy@st-andrews.ac.uk)) & **Andy Hurly** ([hurly@uleth.ca](mailto:hurly@uleth.ca))

**6-7th December, Zoological Society Meeting Rooms, London Zoo**

**Abstracts to Sue Healy by 15th August**

**No Registration Required**



## **\* Progress report on Behaviour 2013\***

### **Call for Symposia now open!**

Next summer, ASAB will be joining up with International Ethological Conference for the first time to host a major international animal behaviour conference. "Behaviour2013" will be held at the Sage, Gateshead and is being hosted by the Centre for Behaviour and Evolution at Newcastle University.

We are intending to make Behaviour2013 the biggest and best animal behaviour meeting of the year, and are aiming for in excess of 750 delegates (the number at the IEC in Rennes, France in 2009). We will endeavour to keep registration costs to the minimum possible to encourage attendance, and ASAB student members will be eligible for financial assistance towards their attendance from ASAB.

The following plenary speakers have already been confirmed:

**Iain Couzin, USA** – collective behaviour

**Jane Hurst, UK** – olfactory communication in rodents

**Kazuo Okanoya, Japan** – social factors in bird song learning

**Sharoni Shafir, Israel** – learning and decision-making in honeybees

**Barbara Webb, UK** – robot models of animal behaviour

We have additionally invited Sarah Pryke from Australia to give a talk and finally receive her ASAB Christopher Barnard award (awarded last year).

We are intending to have a substantial number of symposia on selected topics at the meeting, and the call for submitting proposals for symposia is now open. Symposia may be in any area of ethology. We are particularly encouraging submissions in the following areas that may not traditionally see the IEC as their first-choice conference:

**Applied ethology and animal welfare**

**Animal learning and cognition**

**Behavioural ecology**

**Human ethology**

**Neuroethology**

**Primate cognition and behaviour**

**Robot models of animal behaviour**

The deadline for symposium submissions is **1<sup>st</sup> September**, but be warned that you need to get preliminary abstracts from all of your speakers (typically 5) by that date, so don't delay! More information on the format of submissions is provided on our conference website: [www.iec2013.com](http://www.iec2013.com)

We are also currently looking for companies that might be interested in sponsoring the meeting in some way or in buying exhibition space. If you are interested in sponsorship or have ideas about companies we should approach please contact our sponsorship office: [amy@benchcom.co.uk](mailto:amy@benchcom.co.uk) or call +44 (0)191 2442826.

**Melissa Bateson, Conference President, Behaviour2013**

Email: [Melissa.Bateson@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:Melissa.Bateson@ncl.ac.uk)

## **\*Conference on “Non-invasive Monitoring of Hormones” \***

**23<sup>rd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> September 2012, University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna, Austria**

This conference, organised by the University of Veterinary Medicine Vienna (Biochemistry) and the International Society of Wildlife Endocrinology (ISWE; 3rd annual meeting), aims at bringing together scientists of different research fields sharing a common interest in non-invasive methods for monitoring hormones. Additionally, a PhD course on methods of non-invasive monitoring of steroid hormones will be offered the week prior to the conference (17th - 21st September 2012).

For detailed information visit: <http://www.vetmeduni.ac.at/en/noninvasive/>

## **\*BioNav Conference \***

**11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK.**

A new type of conference for the UK, bringing together scientists and researchers who study how animals navigate and scientists who design the navigation systems of autonomous unmanned vehicles. The common interest – Bionav – the incorporation of navigational techniques used by animals into advance navigation systems.

Keynote speakers:

Dr Mikel Miller, Chief Scientist, AFRL/RW, Eglin AFB, Fla, USA  
Professor K Lohmann, North Carolina University, USA  
Professor M V Srinivasan, University of Queensland, Australia  
Professor M M Walker, University of Auckland, New Zealand

Dates for the diary:

Deadline for synopses to reach [conference@rin.org.uk](mailto:conference@rin.org.uk): 1 October 2012  
Conference check-in: 1500-1800 Thursday 11 April 2013  
Ice-breaker reception: 1800 Thursday 11 April 2013  
Conference starts: 0900 Friday 12 April 2013  
Conference ends: 1230 Saturday 13 April 2013

For detailed information visit: <http://www.rin.org.uk/Events.aspx?ID=110&SectionID=23&ItemID=2054>

## **\*37<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Waterbird Society \***

**24 – 29 September 2013 in Wilhelmshaven, Germany**

The **Waterbird Society** will hold its 37<sup>th</sup> annual meeting in 2013 in Germany for the first time. The Institute of Avian Research “Vogelwarte Helgoland”, one of the oldest ornithological research institutes in the world, will be the host. The meeting venue is the Stadthalle, located in the centre of Wilhelmshaven on the German North Sea coast.

The three day scientific program will consist of plenaries, symposia, contributed papers and poster sessions. Saturday 28 September will be a joint scientific day with the International Wader Study Group (IWSG) annual conference (27 to 30 September).

Please check [www.waterbirds.org](http://www.waterbirds.org) for updated information.