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CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 981st meeting of the Club was held on Tuesday 22 September 2015 in the upstairs room at the Barley Mow, 104 Horseferry Road, Westminster, London SW1P 2EE. Thirteen members and five non-members were present. Members attending were: Miss H. Baker, Mr S. Chapman, Dr R. A. Cheke, Mr D. J. Fisher, Mr R. R. Langley, Mr R. W. Malin, Dr C. F. Mann, Mr M. Montier, Mr R. Pritchett, Dr R. P. Prŷs-Jones, Mr A. Simmons, Mr S. A. H. Statham and Mr C. W. R. Storey (*Chairman*).

Non-members attending were: Mr R. Borello, Mrs W. Borello, Mr W. Budd, Mrs M. Gauntlett, Mrs M. Montier and Dr Hazel Jackson (*Speaker*).

Dr Hazel Jackson, Durrell Institute of Conservation and Ecology at the Univ. of Kent, spoke on *Molecular phylogeography and mechanisms of invasion success in Ring-necked Parakeets across Europe*. Increasing human-mediated transport of species around the world has led to invasive species becoming one of the largest global conservation challenges of today. Studies in molecular ecology can help us to unravel how evolutionary processes are important for informing conservation and invasion biology by understanding genetic mechanisms that enable populations to grow and adapt in a changing world. Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* are one of the most widely introduced parrot species in the world, with breeding populations in more than 35 countries. Native to southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, they have been transported around the globe due to their popularity as pets, and these charismatic parakeets are now a staple feature of urban gardens and parks across Europe. To understand underlying evolutionary mechanisms that enable invasive Ring-necked Parakeets to be so successful, I conducted a genetic investigation on parakeets from across their native and invasive ranges.

Phylogenetic reconstructions of patterns of evolution suggest that Asian Ring-necked Parakeets diverged c.2.5 million years ago and are ancestral to those found in Africa. Invasive populations across Europe, and in the Indian Ocean, predominantly originate from Asia, with surprisingly few individuals from Africa involved. Evidence from genetic phylo-groups, trade data and drivers of population growth highlight how multiple introductions and patterns of climatic similarities between the native and invasive ranges are mechanisms for invasion success, permitting parakeets to avoid problems associated with a small founding population size, such as inbreeding or high juvenile mortality. These findings are important to inform future policy for managing invasive species, and have already been applied to conservation and invasion management by improving the ability of ecological niche models to predict areas suitable for future invasions of Ring-necked Parakeets.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The *Hon. Editor* is pleased to welcome a new member of the Bulletin Editorial Board. Bruce Beehler is an ornithologist, conservationist and naturalist. He is currently a Research Associate in the Division of Birds at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC. After conducting doctoral fieldwork in Papua New Guinea, Beehler worked for ten years at the Smithsonian, followed by stints at the Wildlife Conservation Society, US Department of State, Counterpart International, Conservation International, and the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. Beehler is an elective Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union, and has served on the boards of RARE, the Livingston-Ripley Nature Conservancy, and American Bird Conservancy. He has published ten books and authored scores of technical and popular articles. Today, his field research is focused mainly on wildlife in the USA, but his museum research continues into the avifauna of the New Guinea region.

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): Michael Andersen, J. I. Areta, John Atkins, Adrian Azpiroz, Andrew Black, Mark Brigham, Michael Brooke, R. Terry Chesser, Alice Cibois, Adrian Craig, Brian Cresswell, Pierre-André Crochet, Marco Aurelio Crozariol, Jack Dumbacher, Guy Dutton, James Eaton, Andrew Elliott, Errol Fuller, Gary R. Graves, Steven M. S. Gregory, Philip Hall, Steve N. G. Howell, Julian P. Hume, Matthieu Le Corre, Mary LeCroy, Alexander C. Lees (*),

Wayne Longmore (*), Clive F. Mann, Michael S. L. Mills, Jiri Mlíkovský, Ulf Ottosson, David Parkin, Robert Payne (*), Alan Peterson, Peter Pyle, H. D. Pratt, Robert Prŷs-Jones, Pamela C. Rasmussen, Bruce Robertson, Phil Round, Roger Safford, Richard Schodde, Elizabeth Schreiber, Jean-Claude Thibault, Colin Trainor, Andreanna Welch, David R. Wells, James Wiley and Iain Woxvold. — THE HON. EDITOR

REVIEW

Robb, M. & The Sound Approach. 2015. *Undiscovered owls*. The Sound Approach, Poole. 308pp + 4 CDs. ISBN 978-90-810933-7-8.

Many birders will empathise with the Sound Approach's conclusion that 'Owls force us out of our comfort zone'. Personally speaking, I have on many occasions ignored an unknown nocturnal noise from a hammock on tropical expeditions when a similar diurnal vocalisation would have had me 'all ears'. Owls are 'hard' and as a consequence even in the relative *terra cognita* of the Western Palearctic the night is still ripe for discovery. The Sound Approach's latest offering, *Undiscovered owls*, is an intriguing tome led by Magnus Robb that focuses on vocal variation in Western Palearctic taxa. Understanding the extent of vocal variation (and how this relates to molecular differentiation) is likely to be key to arriving at a more representative species-level taxonomy for a group that often exhibits little morphological variation. This is not to mention frequent plumage polymorphism in owls, which we now know to be associated with elevated speciation rates (Hugall & Stuart-Fox 2012).

The book's style is informal, in keeping with other titles in the series, and it is written accessibly for a non-academic audience. The nine Western Palearctic owl genera are each afforded individual chapters with the greater part of each species account given over to vocal analyses that include extensive treatment of age and sex variation. As with previous volumes in the series, the reader is directed towards the critical aspects of this vocal variation via annotated sonograms. The recordings are generally fantastic with few exceptions and transport the listener to exciting soundscapes in the corners of the Palearctic. However, I (and other commentators) do feel that CDs are becoming dated. I played them in my car (about the only CD player I own) and was disappointed to find that there were no announcements, so my journey was punctuated by an assortment of hisses and growls for which I had to periodically stop to refer to the book—an mp3 format would surely be more user-friendly? The book is a visual treat too, replete with brilliant images and sketches by the talented Håkan Delin, which capture behaviour and habitat equally well. A minor gripe is the absence of true 'plates', especially given that the book does feature some artwork by the field guide maestro Killian Mullarney, which would have been useful given the subtleties of differentiating several visually cryptic taxa.

I was impressed by some of the taxa treated of which I have no personal field experience, e.g. Cape Verde Barn Owl *Tyto (alba) detorta*, Arabian Eagle Owl *Bubo (africanus) milesi* and Maghreb Wood Owl *Strix (aluco) mauritanica*, whilst other taxa flagged as splits are relatively less phenotypically distinctive and in some cases existing molecular data do not strongly support the authors' alpha taxonomy. That said, the authors are quick to admit that their taxonomy 'does not follow any existing authority, nor does it pretend to be one' However, there is a trade-off here, given the need for rigour it would have been nice if the novel taxonomic hypotheses had been supported with a little more academic rigour and incorporated the usual scientific protocols to assess the significance of the results. This would have perhaps been best achieved within a 'dry' scientific paper that could have preceded the book and its 'birder friendly' digest replete with all the personal anecdotes and tall tales that are another a hallmark of the series.

It would be a disservice to all involved not to dwell on the team's fantastic discovery of a *Strix* owl in northern Oman. The Sound Approach Team initially described this taxon (using images and sound-recordings, without the benefit of a voucher specimen) as a new species 'Omani Owl' '*Strix omanensis*' (Robb *et al.* 2013). Specimen collection continues to be a polarising and prickly subject, but in this instance, as in some others (e.g. Nguembock *et al.* 2008, Peterson 2013), the description of a new species without a complete physical type meant that controversy wasn't slow to follow. Kirwan *et al.* (2015) re-examined the 19th-century type of Hume's Owl *S. butleri* and concluded it to be diagnosably different from all other specimens, necessitating the description of a new taxon—Desert Tawny Owl *S. hadorami* for everything but the type. This left 'Omani Owl' in taxonomic limbo, albeit with a prognosis by Kirwan *et al.* that it would prove synonymous with Hume's type specimen. This hypothesis has now been confirmed within an as yet unpublished study by Robb *et al.* (2015), which neatly resolves what has proved to be a rediscovered owl.

Undoubtedly, we face significant taxonomic inflation of global owl lists and the genuine discovery of new species as molecular and vocal analysis toolkits take over. Recent validation of species status for Cyprus Scops Owl *Otus (scops) cyprius* by Flint *et al.* (2015) builds directly on the work of the Sound Approach, although their work commenced even earlier, and the book's other taxonomic hypotheses will doubtless be tested in the coming years. Ultimately, this inspiring book gives considerable hope to amateur and professional ornithologists alike that we don't need to visit the ends of the earth to make major ornithological discoveries. Go boldly forth into the night with sound-recording gear...

Alexander C. Lees

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