

# NVG NEWSLETTER

29.2 October 2019

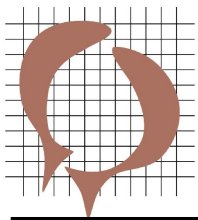
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## Foreword

*By Wouter Halfwerk*

Being preoccupied with our own thoughts and ideas can sometimes lead to ignoring information from our surroundings. My scientific legacy complaint in the previous newsletter was quickly tackled by Koenraad Kortmulder who informed me that there is actually a sign outside the old *van der Klauw* building informing people that Niko Tinbergen used to work there. So far for my open-minded perception I would say! Well, perhaps it just shows how complex perception can work and how important your experiences are in seeing your surroundings. Our upcoming, very first joint conference in Groningen together with the Dutch and Belgian zoologists will likewise be something different than what most of our members have been used to. For sure our experiences will colour our views on the event. Personally, I already miss the bowling of last year, but luckily we get to meet many new people in return and perhaps we can come up with some fun variants of the Morris maze in one of the nice bars Groningen has to offer. Let's make some new memories!

FOREWORD	1
THE VERY FIRST NVG-ZOOLOGY JOINT MEETING IN GRONINGEN	2
PHD WORKSHOP - INDIVIDUALITY AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR	3
IN THE SPOTLIGHT: SJOUKE-ANNE KINGMA	4
UPCOMING EVENTS: CONFERENCE ON "COSTS AND BENEFITS OF SOCIALITY"	6
UPCOMING EVENTS: PHD WINTERSCHOOL CHEMICAL COMMUNICATION	6



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### The very first NVG-Zoology joint meeting in Groningen

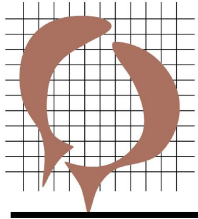
We are pleased to announce that for our 2019 annual meeting we will team up with the KNDV (Dutch Royal Society of Zoologists) and BZS (Royal Belgian Zoological Society).

In June, the board received the news that the KNDV planned to hold the annual Zoology meeting in Groningen, unexpectedly at the same dates as our NVG meeting. The theme of the KNDV meeting for this year is 'learning and cognition'. Given the similarity in research interests, many of our members have attended the KNDV meetings in the past, especially when it was organized by their home institute. This will be particularly conflicting with a KNDV topic that is so relevant to NVG. Given the conflict of interest and temporal overlap, the NVG board decided to approach the KNDV to organize a joint meeting.

We stick to our own program for the Wednesday (PhD workshop followed by dinner and the evening lecture) as well as Thursday morning. The joint meeting starts Thursday noon, with the Baerends lecture. On Thursday afternoon and on Friday we will have 3 parallel sessions. At any time, one parallel session will be fully dedicated to behaviour. On Thursday evening, the KNDV has planned a public lecture by Richard Morris (from the famous Morris-maze), and for Friday there will be 2 keynote lectures organized by the KNDV. Since it will be a joint meeting, all Zoology events will be open to NVG participants, and vice versa. This means that you will have a greater choice of talks, and new people will learn about NVG. This format is planned only for 2019, and then we will evaluate whether we like it.

The new format also means some changes for us. Most importantly, in Groningen at this time, we cannot have a hotel for all of us, but we have reserved discounted rooms in the Best Western Hotel. Download the reservation form [here](#). That also means that you will need to be quick to book if you want to stay there (deadline is 25<sup>th</sup> of October). Also, the locations for the evening sessions differ from the morning and afternoon sessions. Finally, registration is done via the dedicated conference website <https://zoology2019.com/registration/>.

If you have any specific questions or comments regarding the joint meeting feel free to inquire with Barbara Helm ([b.helm@rug.nl](mailto:b.helm@rug.nl)) or any other board member.



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## PhD workshop - Individuality and collective behavior

The 2019 NVG PhD Workshop will be organized by Jean-Christophe Billeter and Jolle Jolles and take place in Groningen on the 27<sup>th</sup> of November (preceding the NVG meeting). **The goal of the workshop is to facilitate contact and discussion among PhD students in behavioral biology.** The workshop is usually attended by about 20 PhD students and 2 senior researchers. The 2019 workshop will consist of three main parts:

1) **Dr Jolle Jolles** (MPI animal behavior, Konstanz, Germany) will introduce the topic **“Individuality and collective behavior”**. Jolle is a Dutch Behavioral Ecologist whose research focuses on the role of individual heterogeneity in collective behavior. Jolle uses custom developed experimental facilities that enable the automated recording and tracking of individuals in large groups of fish in combination with agent-based modelling to study how phenotypic variation affects the collective movements, decision-making, and group performance of large, dynamic schools of fish. He has been pushing a mechanistic framework for understanding the fundamental role of individual heterogeneity in collective behavior across animal species and phenotypic traits. Jolle will share his personal and professional experience working in the field of collective behavior.

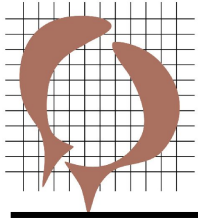
2) A series of **talks by PhD students** about their work plans (15 minutes talk + 15 minutes discussion). All students (including those who are not presenting) and the 2 senior researchers are present and contribute to the discussion. Students are encouraged to present the background and main aims of their PhD projects and then focus on the challenges they are encountering so that they can benefit from the collective input of the workshop members.

3) **Round table discussion**: a chance to start discussions and get feedback from both junior and senior scientists about a wide range of subjects that are on your mind: conduct of research, how to manage your scientific career, mixing career and life, relationship with supervisors and colleagues, etc... All matters discussed during the workshop are confidential and will not leave the room to ensure frank and open conversations.

**Registration fee for the PhD workshop:** Included in the package for PhD-students registration to the 2019 NVG meeting at <https://zoology2019.com/>

**For other information on the PhD workshop contact:**

Jean-Christophe Billeter: [j.c.billeter@rug.nl](mailto:j.c.billeter@rug.nl)



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## In the Spotlight: Sjouke-Anne Kingma

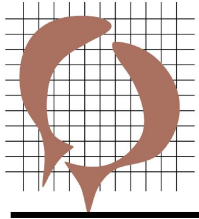


Dr. Sjouke A. Kingma was recently appointed as assistant professor in the Behavioural Ecology group at Wageningen University. At the same time, he has set up a large-scale research project 'the Social Savanna' in collaboration with researchers from the Universities of Groningen and Eswatini, focussing on the behaviour and reproduction of multiple wild bird species in a savanna ecosystem in eSwatini (formerly Swaziland).

Sjouke is interested in why animals live in groups and whether and how the social environment determines individuals' behaviour and physiology and their ultimate success in survival and reproduction. His main focus is on phenomena that are not easy to explain from an evolutionary perspective, like: why does altruism persist while individuals are predicted to be selfish, why do groups form while individuals in groups are surrounded by reproductive competitors, and, how can brood parasitism remain a stable strategy?

Beginning in his PhD (at the Max Planck Institute in Germany) and continuing into NWO Rubicon (University of East Anglia, U.K.) and NWO Veni fellowships (University of Groningen, Netherlands), Sjouke has focussed on answering these questions. He developed a research programme to pursue the broad range of mechanistic, ecological and evolutionary processes underlying dispersal decisions and group formation, and cooperation and conflict, especially between unrelated individuals. His work integrates conceptual and comparative work with field observations, molecular genetic analyses and experiments on several different social species. His current research is mainly based on the bird study in Eswatini (mousebirds, helmet-shrikes, babblers and bulbuls), and also includes comparative work and collaborations in research projects on birds in Australia and Seychelles.



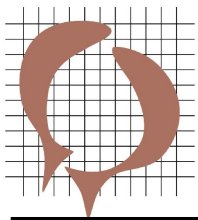


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While cooperation with family members can be explained through the indirect benefit of transfer of shared genes (kin selection), Sjouke's research shows that direct benefits provide an important alternative or additional adaptive explanation for cooperation and sociality. Young individuals that stay in groups are often in better condition, survive better and can ultimately produce more offspring; benefits derived through processes like mutualism and reciprocity. They may help others reproducing, especially when they can inherit the territory in the future. Dominant individuals in turn appear to benefit from the presence or help of young individuals in raising offspring and defending the nest or the territory. Current work focusses on whether these benefits of cooperation are especially important when ecological circumstances are harsh (e.g. whether helpers can buffer limited food availability, when predation risk is high or under extreme weather events). Interestingly, it appears that dominant group members may even sacrifice some of their own interests in return for help of others. His future work will follow up on this timely question: how can unrelated individuals resolve inevitable conflicts amongst each other?





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## Upcoming events: Conference on “costs and benefits of sociality”

The cognition, behavior and evolution network (CBEN) will organize a 2 day conference in Amsterdam from 14-15<sup>th</sup> of November 2019. The theme of this year's conference is “The costs and benefits of sociality”. We have confirmed very exciting keynote speakers, who are world-class researchers on this topic: [Joan B. Silk](#) (Professor, School of Human Evolution and Social Change, Arizona State University), [Simon Gächter](#) (Professor, Psychology of Economic Decision Making, The University of Nottingham), [Julia Fischer](#) (Professor, Cognitive Ethology Laboratory, German Primate Center), [Cecile Sarabian](#) (Postdoctoral Fellow, Primate Research Institute, Kyoto University). We would be grateful if you would consider attending. You can find more information about the conference (e.g., abstract submission, registration) [here](#).

## Upcoming events: PhD winterschool Chemical communication

From 2<sup>nd</sup> till 7<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 Astrid Groot and Marcel Dicke will organize a PhD winterschool on "Chemical communication" in Ede, the Netherlands. For more information on the program see: <https://www.pe-rc.nl/chemical-communication>

The next newsletter is planned for December 2019/January 2020.