

# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

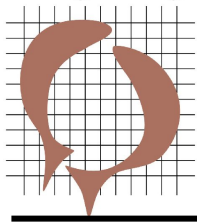
---

## Foreword

*By Wouter Halfwerk*

I am afraid I forgot what I wanted to say in this foreword. I should have written it down while I was still thinking about it. I remember when I was thinking about it, on the way back from the NVG-Zoology meeting in Groningen. I remember I was thinking I should not forget what I was thinking and while I was thinking this I remembered the lecture by Richard Morris, on the benefits of forgetting. I remember I was looking out of the window of the train and saw a roe deer in a meadow. I remember I thought of something funny I could say in relation to the meeting, this roe deer and this foreword. I remember I was thinking about training myself to remember things, perhaps I should have paid better attention to Boris Konrad's lecture on the method of loci. Or I should have learned to write things down, to organize my life, not having to constantly remember everything, or keep track in the back of my mind. Instead you will have to do with this alternative. If only I would have remembered.

FOREWORD	1
NVG PHD WORKSHOP, 27 <sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2019- A SHORT REPORT	2
PRIMER: NWO RESEARCH COMMUNITIES LIFE SCIENCES	3
REPORT OF THE VERY FIRST NVG-ZOOLOGY MEETING IN GRONINGEN	5
First Dobberke lecture at NVG2019 by Jolle Jolles (in Dutch)	5
Eerste Dobberke Lecture bij Nederlandse Vereniging voor Gedragsbiologie	5
Day 1 of Zoology2019	6
Day 2 of Zoology2019	7
WINNERS OF THE NVG POSTER AND PRESENTATION PRIZE 2019	8



# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

## NVG PhD workshop, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2019- a short report

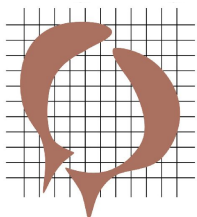
*By Lauren Seex & Apu Ramesh*

The 2019 NVG PhD Workshop was organised by **Prof. Jean-Christophe Billeter**, University of Groningen, the Netherlands with special guest **Dr. Jolle Jolles**, Max Planck Institute of Ornithology, Konstanz, Germany, at the Grand Café Time Out, Groningen. Eighteen PhD students from universities across the Netherlands, at various stages (from starting and writing their first research paper to being in their final year and looking ahead into life after PhD) formed the main part of the workshop. The day started with a talk by Jolle on his research on individuality and collective behavior with emphasis on the path he had taken throughout his career. He discussed his achievements and struggles which paved the way to the open and frank discussions regarding PhD life, a feat that is seldom an option with more advanced academics.

Jolle's introduction was followed by several talks from PhD students on their research, successes and strains that led to many critical questions being asked and answered in a non-judgmental and friendly atmosphere. The workshop was one of a kind as it involved open discussions about some of the fears and trepidations that surround a huge undertaking such as a PhD and the complexities involved, without judgement. It was very useful, in this regard to have the two senior scientists sharing their journeys through a successful PhD and into academia. We here summarise the main take-home messages for those missed this opportunity.

**What is a PhD?** Although there are many technical descriptions regarding 4 years and 4 chapters and defending, it is, at its core, a learning experience. We build skill sets and make contacts and learn about new exciting experiences. However, the way we experience our own accomplishments is often obstructed by the lens in which we criticize ourselves. It is often not possible to recognize our own hard work and worth. In the workshop, we were reminded how crucial it is to celebrate success, no matter how small. Indeed, when looking around the room it was impossible to not be impressed by the work others had done, and how easily they appeared to take it in their stride. The individuals around us are the next generation of researchers and as important as it is to network with professors we admire, it is just as important to grow together with our own cohort of peers. The people surrounding us are future collaborations waiting to happen. This begs the question, if we can identify their successes, why not our own?

**Supervisors and supervising.** We enter into research because we love learning, although it can be hard at such an inexperienced stage at our career to know how to steer the ship. We have so much input from the literature, colleagues and supervisors. It was an obvious worry that came up of how to balance your own input with those of others and how to manage your (sometimes multiple) supervisors. It is important you are willing to take advice, but also develop your individuality over time. When things go wrong (and things will go wrong), be ready to take the wheel and lead your



# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

supervisors where you know you need to go. In a similar vein, by realizing virtues and failings of your previous supervisors, you can learn to supervise better. Learning that it is okay to say no if you don't have the time or space, delegating responsibilities when needed and understanding with students you get what you put in were three core messages that came up when discussing supervision.

**Publish or perish?** Publishing, and in particular, what, how, why and when was addressed by multiple students. Is it better to have many short papers or one large and comprehensive paper? When should we first publish? Is it better to dive in as soon as possible and learn the process or wait until you deem your results good enough? The answer, like almost everything in research is to read. Being on top of literature in your area of interest helps to understand the types of papers and how to write one. Moreover, it assists with identifying where to publish which can help streamline much of the writing. With respect to writing articles, the experienced people in the group agreed that the best way is to dive in and start writing up results so as to get into the rhythm of working on project and publishing. In other words, best way to do it is to start doing it.

**Finding balance in life.** The balance between our work and personal life is never an easy consideration. Often times, it can feel like the two are mutually exclusive. Inspiring stories from experiences where people 'have it all' showed that it is possible. Despite the instability and distance from family, we can make our own family and rely on others to help get us through. Finally, we ended with the question: when to give up? Although this may seem innately negative, it may simply ask the question what is a PhD to you? Is it the start of your career in academia, or a stepping stone to industry? Do you enjoy it or do you prefer to move onto something else? The answers are only available through continued reflection and persistence.

It will all be okay.

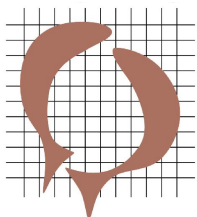
## Primer: NWO research communities Life Sciences

*by Katharina Riebel, vice-chair ENW advisory committee Round Table Life Sciences*

The information below was provided to participants during the General Assembly at the annual NVG-meeting by Prof. Ton Groothuis (chair NWO research community 'Organisms in their Environment') and dr. Katharina Riebel (vice chair Round table Life sciences) and is here summarised again to make this information available to all NVG members.

### **What are 'NWO research communities'?**

The NWO Science domain (ENW) is advised by 7 disciplinary advisory committees, the so-called [Round tables](#). Most of the disciplines within ENW have a well



# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

organised field with structures that allow rapid communication between the field and the round table, thus maximising input and expertises. Until now, such a unifying organisation allowing bottom-up input has been lacking for the Life Sciences. The past year, the Round Table Life Sciences and the ENW team Life Sciences at NWO have worked on contacting researchers across subdisciplines and research institutions to find a form to organise the field at large in the new '*NWO research communities Life Sciences*'. This new open form of community building aims to enable fast bottom-up and top-down communication between the ENW-board, the round table and the field including all active scientists in the Life Sciences. The five new '*NWO research communities Life Sciences*' have now been launched officially (as of September 2019) and are open for registration ([detailed information on the different research communities can be found here](#)).

## Why join?

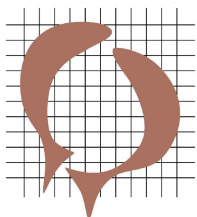
You are not committing yourself to extra work unless you chose to do so, but joining means that you can gain information on new developments and that you can have your voice heard *before* new policy suggestions reach the decision stage. For example, the research communities are currently drafting strategic papers to arrive at an inventory of current Life Sciences research in the Netherlands. The first drafts of these strategic papers were distributed to all research community members for feedback and input. The information provided by these strategic papers will be crucial for the work of the *sectorplan taskforce* currently preparing a '*sectorbeeld*'. Next to providing valuable input for a '*sectorbeeld*', these strategic papers will also provide the *Round Table Life Science* and NWO boards with information on the current scientific challenges, perspectives and positions of the field. In addition, experiences in the other NWO Domain Science disciplines, where these strategic papers have already been written over the past years, showed that the process of writing these papers facilitates that scientists in a particular field start to organise themselves. This allows to react to or advance important field related issues, to arrive at joined research efforts or to influence national policy making. This will work the better the more researchers join, so please spread the word! And [join here](#).

## Glossary

*'Taskforce sectorbeeld biologie'* In October 2019, the beta deans installed this taskforce. It consists of one representative for each university (assigned by each dean) to work on and provide the deans with a widely supported view (*sectorbeeld*) of biology in The Netherlands. Note that the '*sectorbeeld*' is not a sectorplan but a document that will provide important input for policy making regarding potential future sectorplans.

*Round table Life Sciences*: one of [seven disciplinary advisory committees](#) that advises the ENW board

*NWO Research Communities Life Sciences*: provide the Round Table and Board with advice from across the field and receive information from the Board/Round table. Open for all PI's in the Life Sciences to join.



# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

## Report of the very first NVG-zoology meeting in Groningen

The NVG kicked-off the meeting in the university academy building in the center of Groningen with another 'first' namely the first Dobberke lecture (sponsored by the Dobberke foundation). See below for a detailed description (in Dutch). Roughly 70 attendants were welcomed by the organizer, Barbara Helm and treated to a short introduction on the *namegiver* of the foundation (by Judith Smit, based on information she found in the Dobberke foundation's archives).

### First Dobberke lecture at NVG2019 by Jolle Jolles (in Dutch)

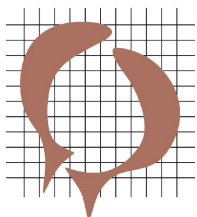
#### Eerste Dobberke Lecture bij Nederlandse Vereniging voor Gedragsbiologie

*The role of individual heterogeneity in the collective behaviour of animal groups*, door Jolle Jolles (MPIO Konstanz) gehouden op 27 november 2019, tijdens de Zoology/NVG 2019 meeting, te Groningen.

Na een inleiding door Ruud van den Bos (NVG), hield Jolle Jolles zijn voordracht.

Onderzoek naar groepscoördinatie gaat er vaak van uit dat individuen in principe hetzelfde zijn. Jolles denkt juist dat we moeten onderzoeken hoe individuen in een groep van elkaar verschillen en hoe dit bijdraagt aan groepscoördinatie. Dit bekeek hij vanuit zijn eigen onderzoek (deel 1) en bouwde hij uit tot een algemeen kader (deel 2).

In het eerste deel van zijn lezing vertelde hij hoe zijn interesse in individuele verschillen begon: hij onderzocht persoonlijkheid in stekelbaarzen langs twee veel gebruikte maten. Stekelbaarzen variëren in de persoonlijkheids-as 'shy-bold' en in de persoonlijkheids-as 'sociability'. Deze correleerden niet, maar hingen beide wel op een eigen manier samen met bewegingssnelheid. In zijn onderzoek naar groepsvorming, te beginnen bij de kleinste groep van twee dieren, bleek dat vissen van dezelfde persoonlijkheidstypes makkelijker bij elkaar bleven. Zij vormden dus makkelijker groepen. Vanuit het perspectief dat individuen verschillen en dat dit groepscoördinatie kan beïnvloeden, onderzocht hij ook coördinatie in grotere groepen dan twee individuen, bij vissen die wel of niet geïnfecteerd zijn met parasieten, hoe visuele informatie coördinatie beïnvloedt en onderzocht hij of



# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019



predatie de selectie van groepscoördinatie beïnvloed. Naast zorgvuldig opgezette experimenten en gebruik van slimme automatische tracking-technieken, onderzocht hij groepscoördinatie met behulp van computersimulaties (Agent Based Models).

Dit werk zette hem aan het denken (deel 2): mogelijk moeten we niet onderzoek

doen gebaseerd op de gebruikelijke indeling van fenotypische variatie, zoals soort, sekse, grootte, leeftijd, gezondheid, maar moeten we zoeken naar meer basale componenten, zoals voorbewegingssnelheid, draaisnelheid, bewegingsinertie en agiteerbaarheid. Het voorstel is dat fenotypische variatie herleid kan worden tot deze basale componenten en dat deze groepscoördinatie beter verklaren. Tevens kan hiermee ook de terugkoppeling van groepscoördinatie op individuele eigenschappen en hun variatie beter bestudeerd worden. Dit is allemaal verwoord in een artikel dat binnenkort gepubliceerd wordt in Trends in Ecology and Evolution (TREE).

Deze prikkelende ideeën en zijn bevindingen gaven aanleiding tot flink wat vragen en een geanimeerde discussie.

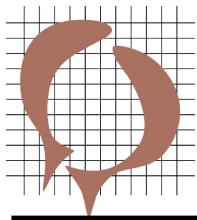
De eerste Dobberke lezing bij de NVG bewerkstelligde wat de bedoeling is: een podium geven aan interessante ideeën en aanmoedigen tot discussie en nadenken.

Namens het NVG bestuur, Liesbeth Sterck

## Day 1 of Zoology2019

The joint-meeting was held in the Hanze plaza centre in Groningen and started with a dedicated NVG session that was mostly focused on the evolution of learning and cognition from a wide range of animals, including parrots, lizards, fishes and lemurs. The morning was kicked-off by Jorg Massen, newly appointed tenure tracker at Utrecht University who introduced the roughly 120 attendants to some amazing features of parrots social learning and cognition. After the lunch the meeting was continued by the BRILL Baerends lecture Prof. Susanne Åkesson, who introduced us to the world of navigation and migration. We were treated to some interesting stories on the amazing variety of mechanisms that long-distance migrating songbirds





# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

have adopted to find their ways from the breeding to wintering grounds and back. After the first plenary talk, the remaining part of the day was organized in three smaller sessions, either organized by the NVG, the Dutch or the Belgian zoologists. Topics ranged from understanding expression patterns of all known nematode brain cells to the effects of anthropogenic noise on social behavior in birds. The day was



ended by a very interesting talk by Tomás Ryan on the concept of the engram, where memories or formed and stored and can be experimentally erased and restored upon request (at least in rat models).

In the evening we all transported to the Aletta Jacobshall to listen to the fascinating story of Richard Morris, one of the pillars of memory research of the past three decades.

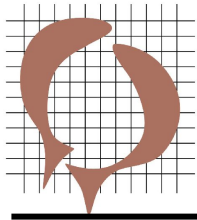
The day was ended (at least by some, or those who managed to navigate to it) at Café de Keyzer.

## Day 2 of Zoology2019

The second day started with a plenary talk from Guy Bloch on the social clock of the honeybee. Using clever experimental design and the ability to restrict access to the hive to certain groups of bees Guy showed us that bees that have never left the hive use social interactions with foraging bee to reset their internal clock. So instead of responding to light as zeitgeber, they respond to vibrations caused by their relatives.

After the lunch we were treated to another interesting plenary talk by Caroline Nieberding on mate choice learning and how a previous adaptive feature may become maladaptive in a world experiencing climate change. The last plenary of the day was given by Boris Konrad, who is a world champion memory athlete. He introduced us to the method of loci, or memory palace, in which you can make use of the excellent memory formation properties of our spatial navigation system. By associating a list of things you need to remember to specific





# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

locations along a real (or fictive) journey you can quickly learn to memorize arbitrary things (such as the ten biggest cities of Europe). He demonstrated this by memorizing the order of the 52 cards in a pack in a little over a minute (see photo where he calls out the order of the cards, which is shown in the back).

The day was ended by announcing various student awards, including our NVG prizes for best poster and talk, this year both won by students from Antwerp University (see below)

Many thanks to the organisers, our very own Barbara Helm and Robbert Havekes for making this very first joint meeting happening!

We will send around an online enquete in Januari to get your input on this joint meeting, which will inform the board on any future collaborations with the KNDV/BZV

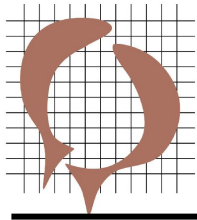
## Winners of the NVG poster and presentation prize 2019



### NVG student - presentatie prijs 2019:

**Jonas Torfs**, University of Antwerp: *Comparative Cognition: Using Lacertid Lizards as a Study System*. Coauteurs: Gilles de Meester, University of Antwerp; Raoul van Damme, University of Antwerp.





# NVG NEWSLETTER 29.3

December 2019

---

NVG student poster prijs 2019:

**Mira Van den Broeck**, University of Antwerp: *Behavioural similarity in territorial aggressiveness within pairs of free-living great tits (*Parus major*)*. Coauteurs: Bert Thys, University of Antwerp; Marcel Eens, University of Antwerp.

The next newsletter is planned for Spring 2020