



NVG NEWSLETTER 32.1

December 2022

Foreword

By Kat Bebbington

Happy 30th birthday NVG! This year we are celebrating an important milestone in the history of our society, against the backdrop of a scientific community largely freed from the difficulties and restrictions of the last few years.

Nederlands Vereniging voor Gedragsbiologie was founded in 1992 (presumably before a sizeable proportion of our 2022 conference attendees were born) and at this year's annual meeting we were happy to award two of the founding members, emeritus Professors Ton Groothuis and Carel ten Cate, with honorary memberships to the Society. Since its beginnings, the NVG has undergone many changes in aims and scope but, in the words of one of our two new honorary members in his acceptance speech: "The NVG is alive and kicking"! Words that I think many of us would agree with after seeing the brilliant showcase of research from Masters students to professors, that was on show at the NVG meeting in Egmond a few weeks ago. Read on below for a full report of the meeting and associated PhD workshop.

As the spring of 2022 arrived in Europe, corona restrictions were easing and the scientific world was making tentative plans for the 2022 conference season – like many other conference organisers, the NVG board were exciting to be planning a fully "in-person" event but steeling our nerves for any fresh bouts of restrictions that the pandemic might yet throw at us. Happily, not only did our own conference go off without a hitch, but the whole 2022 season offered the international scientific community a vast array of conferences, meetings, symposia and workshops to choose from. Of particular prominence on the calendar for many of our members was the European Conference for Behavioural Biology, held this year on our home turf in Groningen. Dutch and Belgian behavioural biologists were out in full force: running symposia, giving talks and of course playing important supporting roles in the running of the conference.

To end this year of celebration I'd like to thank all our members for their continued support and contribution to the Society and to welcome all those young scientists that joined us for the first time this year. Let the last few years be a reminder to appreciate the wonderful opportunities that being part of a mobile international scientific community offer us!

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Report of the 2022 PhD workshop

By Danielle Crowley

Off the back of a discombobulating 2 years of online and hybrid meetings and events, the NVG PhD-workshop 2022 was finally back in person. Though the thoughts of COVID-19 may never be far away the workshop was highly successful with over 20 participants from various organisations making the journey to Egmond aan Zee. Overall the organisation and execution of the workshop by Christian Tudorache and Filipe Cunha provided a safe and confidential space to discuss current and relative topics of any PhD journey, which allowed for honest and fruitful conversations to emerge.

New for this year was the possibility for MSc students to also partake the workshop, which was highly rewarding as they were able to gain insight into the common challenges faced by PhD's regardless of experience as well as the wide range of people undertaking them. In such an uncensored environment, MSc students have the possibility to weigh up the pros and cons of undertaking a PhD as well as gain tools which can help them thrive when doing so.

Make your own yellow brick road

The selection of invited guest speakers was great addition to this year's PhD-workshop; from both Angela Stöger-Horwath and Sanne Moorman we gained an insight into the individual journeys that took them from PhD student to the stage in their careers which they currently find themselves. Instead of only a success story we were taken on a journey of challenges, decisions, wins and losses, which has ultimately shaped them. Such willingness and openness from both speakers ensured there was no room for a hierarchal boundary, which made listening and interacting with them authentic as we could openly discuss all topics and receive input on a mutual level. It was also nice that they themselves were at different stages in their careers and had in some cases "conflicting" opinions on some topics, this was interesting and reinforced that there is no magic yellow brick road to follow during a PhD and your career thereafter.

PhD presentations and discussions

Following an interactive and informative first half to the programme it was time for the PhD-workshop participants to present not only their projects but also themselves in a short 15min presentation. During these talks we were introduced into an array of interesting topics and study species, from the behavioural need optimisation of service dogs to emotional responses in long-tailed macaques and everything in between. Aside from work many participants also took the opportunity to discuss challenges and worries they either are or have experienced in the year(s) prior to the workshop. This led to productive discussions in the group with other PhDs and the guest speakers who were present throughout. These discussions were sincere and helpful with individuals reflecting upon their own experiences to offer support and guidance to others.

The past, the present and the future

For the final part of the programme was dedicated to an interactive round table discussion with Sjouke Kingma and Jerry Hogan. This started with a brief introduction from Christian and then



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the floor was given to each of the keynote speakers, who similarly to Angela and Sanne, told us the story of how they navigated their way through science to the positions they are/were in. First up was Jerry who gave a fascinating account of what it used to be like to work in behavioural science. He spoke of how he obtained his PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Harvard before completing a postdoc in ethology at the University of Groningen under the supervision of Gerard Baerends. Next up was Sjouke who provided a detailed insight to some of the challenges and successes of modern-day scientist. It was great to hear from both of these esteemed scientists and have the opportunity to learn how behavioural science has evolved over the years and gain an insight into what the future may look like.



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Report of the Annual NVG meeting 2022

The 2022 NVG meeting was held on the 24th and 25th of November in Hotel Zuiderduin in Egmond-aan-Zee. We welcomed 83 participants at the venue, where delegates had the chance to share coffee, meals and drinks against the picturesque backdrop of the north sea coast.



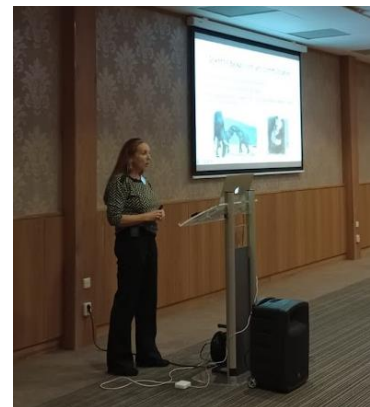
The sun setting over the beach at Egmond-aan-Zee



A packed bowling alley as conference delegates competed for the coveted prize of free drinks vouchers

Alongside the scientific programme, we were able to enjoy a great deal more socialising than last year. Of particular prominence was the return of the infamous NVG bowling competition on Wednesday night (congratulations to “Lane 3” for their resounding win, despite the Board’s many attempts to fiddle the numbers in their own favour!).

The scientific programme was hugely varied: more than 40 talks and posters were presented by the general membership, as well as two plenary lectures and three keynote speakers. The Dobberke lecture, the first of two plenary talks from renowned international behavioural biologists, was given by Dr Angela Stöger-Horwath from the University of Vienna. Dr. Stöger-Horwath is a specialist in mammal communication and her talk gave some fascinating insights into her work recording and interpreting elephant communication.



Angela Stöger-Horwath giving the Dobberke plenary lecture

Moving from the very large to the very small, and nicely demonstrating the considerable breadth of study taxa that were represented at the conference, our first keynote speaker of the next morning was Prof. Isabel Beets from KU Leuven. Kicking off the first of six talk sessions, Prof. Beets drew on a series of results from her great work on nematode worms to demonstrate how neuropeptides evolve and function to determine behaviour. The rest of the morning’s two sessions followed on a similar theme of learning, memory and cognition in fish, birds and primates. After the last talk, it was time to grab a packed lunch and head to the beach (one feature of last year’s social distancing measures that proved popular enough to bring back this year!), or to one of the hotel’s cosy seating areas for chatting and relaxing.



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Delegates listening to one of the many fascinating talks

The afternoon was devoted to animal communication. The session was introduced by our second keynote speaker Dr. Sanne Moorman from the University of Groningen, who showed us how zebra finches learn and memorise their songs. Along with a dive into the world of visual communication, there was more song on the programme that afternoon, but not just from avian biologists: we heard and learned about the mysterious soundscapes of marine fish, river systems and tropical rain puddles. Ending the day's talks was Prof. Frans de Waal, who gave the

BRILL Baerends lecture in the evening. His lecture on the evolution of emotions and empathetic behaviours in primates sparked many questions from the audience, taking us long past the scheduled end time and giving testimony to a truly engaging lecture which was a continued topic of conversation when the delegates eventually spilled out into the bar for drinks.

Heading our Friday programme was the final keynote speaker Dr. Sjouke Anne Kingma from Wageningen University, whose talk about the evolution of cooperative breeding was a convincing argument that this social behaviour evolves for many different reasons. The rest of the talks on social behaviour, and later on broader themes of behavioural ecology, again touched on a variety of species, environmental factors and behaviours.



Friday's keynote talk by Sjouke Anne Kingma on cooperation and conflict

After a buffet lunch, delegates gathered together to close the meeting. NVG Chairman Marc Naguib had the enjoyable task of handing out awards and prizes: Emeritus Professors Ton Groothuis (University of Groningen) and Carel ten Cate (Leiden University) were awarded honorary lifetime memberships to the NVG in recognition of their service to the Society since its founding year. And after intense deliberations, our juries were able to select two winners from among the many exceptional talks and posters. Read on to find out who they were on in the next section (how's that for a page-turner?):



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Winners of the NVG presentation prizes 2022

NVG poster prize 2022:

Lisanne Leenheer: The social interactions of three-spined sticklebacks – a mesocosm experiment

L. M. Leenheer, J. Gismann, F. J. Weissing, M. Nicolaus, University of Groningen

NVG oral presentation prize 2022:

Max Verheij: Arthropods as vertebrate brood predators: a review of current knowledge.

M. G. W. Verheij and F. C. R. Cunha, Wageningen University

Changes and additions to the NVG board in 2023

The NVG board would like to thank Saskia Arndt for her outstanding work as Treasurer for the Society since 2019. She has now completed her term in the role and will be leaving the board. She is replaced by Wouter Halfwerk, who has been serving in the board since 2019 in various roles (most recently as Secretary). Kat Bebbington, who has served as communications role since 2021, will become Secretary. The board would like to welcome its newest member, Vivian Goerlich, who will take over communications.

More information about the board can be found on the NVG website at

www.gedragsbiologie.nl/board

(Note that the website is currently in the process of being updated to reflect the latest changes to the board – we'll have it all up to date ASAP!)

Follow us on twitter on the website for regular updates and announcements - And keep your eyes open for our new Linked In profile to launch at the beginning of 2023! The next newsletter is also planned for early 2023.