



NVG NEWSLETTER 35.1

February 2025

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Report of the Annual NVG meeting 2024

Dear friends and members of the NVG,

We hope you had a joyous and relaxing holiday time. Though January has rushed by, we would like to take a moment and look back on the past NVG meeting, which took place 27-29 November 2024 in Egmond aan Zee. With an impressive number of 96 participants, we had the opportunity to enjoy an exciting mix of presentations and posters. Thanks to the Stichting Lucy Burgers, providing financial support, also 11 MSc students had the opportunity to present their excellent work. The prizes for the best poster and the best oral presentations went to Connor Proudfoot, who showed that long tailed macaques learned to crash a computer programme, and to Nick Dam, who presented his work on vocal imitation in parrots using R2D2 as model, congratulations!

We had the pleasure to listen to the inspiring talks of our five invited speakers; Rose Thorogood opened the meeting with the Dobberke lecture. She took us along her several years of field work, investigating anti-parasitoid behaviour in warblers across different habitats. Rose emphasized the importance of replicating research, ideally under varying environments when investigating behavioural repertoires, as absence of evidence is not evidence of absence!

Thomas Blankers showed us that nematodes are excellent model species to investigate behavior and behavioral plasticity as foundations of evolution and ecology. Moreover, nematodes rule the world, illustrated by an impressive AI generated image (generally, compliments to the speakers for their creativity in the use of AI). *And if you're feeling creative, the NVG is still deliberating about a new logo, your suggestions are very welcome!*



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Sounds, vocalizations and noise were prominent topics, and we experienced the fear induced by a leopard growl in the dark or the threat of an approaching white shark and the joy of performing music in a social setting. Pralle Kriengwatana asked the question whether non-human animals, especially birds, enjoy music and whether we can use vocalizations to identify emotional states. She also urged to be critical when using interventions - such as music - we first need to understand its architecture and possible mechanism how it might affect animals before applying it on a broad scale.

The Baerends Lecture was held by Andy Radford, who showed us an entertaining mix of field studies on the use of sound in animals. The response to sound and noise is especially important in the context of anthropogenic noise, which interrupts biological processes not only on land but underwater, as well. But there is hope, as the inspiring example on the application of animal sound showed that coral reefs might be restored more efficiently by using a reef soundscape to retain more larval fish.

Karline Janmaat gave the final key note lecture, showing us her intriguing research on the parallels on the use of orientation between humans and our close relatives, chimpanzees, in their quest to find the ripest fruit. Karline expanded on vocalizations and music, as well, as engaging in synchronous movements and singing, trigger positive emotions, at least in human animals.

As every year, the PhD workshop preceded the meeting, during which the invited speakers shared their personal experiences on the soft skill topic of the year, followed up by a discussion on current topics. Andy Radford & Rose Thorogood, together with Gert van Maanen (editor in chief Bionieuws) elaborated on science popularization. It was a very successful workshop with 15 participants from all over the Benelux. During the workshop, they learned how to write press releases, and the subsequent presentations by Andy & Rose gave insight into their way to disseminate scientific knowledge to the broad public. Also during the workshop, AI was put to work and ChatGPT was asked to evaluate the press releases on the societal impact – which lead to some eye opening insights on the immense value of our research.

We hope you carry the inspirational, exciting, valuable and supportive spirit of the NVG meeting throughout your academic year and to see you at the NVG meeting 2025. The dates will probably slightly change as we were made aware that planning the meeting at the end of November usually coincides with Thanksgiving, which likely is impracticable for some of our members. We will keep you updated! A note on our social media presence, we left X, as many choose to do so currently, see also the statement by NWO (<https://www.nwo.nl/en/news/nwo-stops-using-social-media-platform-x>), but you can find us on Bluesky

<https://bsky.app/profile/gedragsbiologie.bsky.social>.

We remain active on LinkedIn and via our newsletter, and if you have news to spread, e.g. vacant positions, feel free to contact us! Members of NVG who plan to organize behavioural biology-related meetings or activities can request funding for support.



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Winners of the NVG presentation prizes 2024

NVG poster prize:

Connor Proudfoot: Emotionally arousing software hacking is socially learned in long Tailed macaques *Connor Proudfoot*¹, *Paula Escriche Chova*¹, *Dian Zijlmans*¹, *Eythan Cousin*¹, *Tom Roth*¹, *Edwin de Laat*¹, *Edwin van Leeuwen*¹, *Sophie Waasdorp*²

1 Utrecht University ; 2 Biomedical Primate Research Centre, Rijswijk

NVG oral presentation prize:

Nick C.P. Dam: ArtooDetoo: What imitating a Star Wars droid reveals on allospecific vocal imitation in parrots and starlings.

Nick C.P. Dam^{1,2}, *Henkjan Honing*^{3,4}, *Michelle J. Spierings*^{1,2,5}

1Institute of Biology, Leiden University ; 2 Leiden Institute for Brain and Cognition, Leiden University, 3 Music Cognition Group, Institute for Logic, Language, and Computation, University of Amsterdam ;4 Amsterdam Brain and Cognition, University of Amsterdam ; 5 Department of Behavioral and Cognitive Biology, University of Vienna

Changes and additions to the NVG board in 2024

Wouter Halfwerk finished his final term. The board would like to thank Wouter for his service as treasurer (and inventor of the rules for the legendary bowling night!). Michelle Spierings will act as new treasurer. Kat Bebbington's second term as secretary was approved and we welcome our new member Sanne Moorman, RUG, to the board!

Hannah de Waele leaves as PhD representative and Bawan Amin leaves the Kascommissie, thank you both for your contribution! We're still looking for replacement, nominations/volunteers are welcome.

More information about the board can be found on the NVG website at www.gedragsbiologie.nl/board



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Announcements:

Fourth annual Utrecht University IEB PhD seminar on Animal Behaviour

Dear fellow PhD's

We would like to invite you to attend the fourth annual Utrecht University IEB PhD seminar on Animal Behaviour. It is organized by the Animal Behaviour & Cognition group at Utrecht University on 18-20 June 2025, in collaboration with Wageningen University and Research. The topic this year is the "Automated Tracking of Animal Location and Movement". We will focus on the potential applications of automated tracking in wild, captive and domesticated animals, address a wide range of techniques such as physical trackers and computer vision, and discuss the benefits and challenges of such techniques, also in relation to our own research projects. For this, we have invited two leading scientists as keynote speakers, as well as other researchers working in this field. You can find more information on the seminar below and in the attached invite. Feel free to forward this e-mail to fellow PhD's from other universities that might be interested, or to PhD supervisors who may want to share it in their network!

The 2.5-day seminar will feature keynote talks, discussions, workshops and a "bring-your-own-data" session, where we also invite you to bring your ideas for applying automated tracking in your own work. If you aren't yet familiar with automated tracking, this PhD-seminar can help you think about if and how automated tracking could aid you in your research. Participants will all be PhD's with varying backgrounds, who are asked to prepare for the seminar by reading literature, preparing a pitch about their research and how they think automated tracking could be applied and/or what they would like to take away from this seminar. Participation will earn you 1.2 ECs.

A cap of a maximum of 30 participants will provide us the opportunity for in-depth discussions on questions such as:

- What data can be collected using automated tracking and what questions can hereby be answered? When is automated tracking not a suitable method?
- How do remote sensing techniques, e.g. RFID tags, compare to using digital tools such as computer vision?
- How do we ensure we keep asking the right questions?
- In what fields do we expect new developments in terms of automated tracking?
- How do you validate data collected automatically, when you are not there to see it?

The fee to participate will be €300,- for UU-IEB and WUR-WIAS PhD students. For PhD students from outside these programs or from other universities, the participation fee will be €350,-. Sign up through:

https://forms.uu.nl/universiteitutrecht-beta/tracking_of_animal_movement

Feel free to contact Eva van Dijk (organizing PhD student; e.s.j.vandijk@uu.nl) when you are interested or when you have questions.

With kind regards,

Eva van Dijk



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ISAE 2025: abstract submission deadline 15 February 2025!

Dear colleagues,

Planning to join us in the beautiful city of Utrecht for 58th ISAE (International Society for Applied Ethology), focusing on animal behaviour and animal welfare of farm, lab, zoo and companion animals? We would very much like to welcome you and hope that you will present a talk or a poster during the congress or organize a workshop!

Submit your abstracts now through (deadline 15 February 2025):

<https://isae2025.exordo.com/>

Travel awards are available to provide support to delegates to attend ISAE 2025 (deadline to submit applications is 15 February 2025):

<https://isae2025utrecht.nl/travel-awards/>

Registration fees are available and registration will open in February (early-bird deadline 15 May 2025): <https://isae2025utrecht.nl/registration/>

We have an exciting list of plenary speakers, ranging from insect welfare to clinical ethology of companion animals: <https://isae2025utrecht.nl/plenary-speakers/>

The congress will be preceded by an exciting satellite workshop on positive animal welfare: <https://isae2025utrecht.nl/satellite-workshop/>

We look forward to welcoming you to Utrecht in August 2025!

Prof. Bas Rodenburg, Chair of the Organising Committee

Dr. Liesbeth Bolhuis, Chair of the Scientific Committee

