



NVG NEWSLETTER 35.2

June 2025

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Foreword

By Vivian Goerlich

As a behavioural biologist, it is a challenge to not get distracted during this time of year. Opposite my (home) office window, red squirrels built their nest in a cavity in the next house's wall. The past few weeks, the young began to emerge, first only sticking their heads out, then climbing out a few centimeters, and finally, the first proper exploration eight meters down into the garden. During many online meetings I had to excuse myself, as it was just too exciting watching this major life event. Similarly, fledging as a young scientist may seem daunting, presenting your work for the first time, writing your first manuscript, defending your thesis. Therefore I'm very happy to announce that this year, again, with the financial support of the Burgers zoo, we are able to reimburse the participations costs for ten MSc students to present a talk at our next meeting in November. More info below! The NVG meetings provide a friendly environment for talking science and building your network (the bowling night is a perfect time to do so). And we're very happy to present an exciting



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line up of key note speakers. Note that this year, the meeting takes place a week earlier than usual, **19 – 21st November**. Hope to see you in Egmond aan Zee!

Annual NVG meeting 2025

Save the date: 19-21st November, Hotel Zuiderduin, Egmond aan Zee

Baerends & Dobberke lectures & key-note speakers confirmed

We are very happy to announce the Baerends and Dobberke lectures and key-note speakers for the NVG meeting.

Further details on the programme and registration will be sent in time – also keep an eye on our social media!

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

Linkedin <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/1837777/>

Website <https://www.gedragsbiologie.nl/>

Burgers' zoo provides scholarships for Master students

Thanks to the scholarship of Burgers' zoo we again can offer free attendance to 10 Master students to participate in the meeting by covering their conference fee and stay in a shared room.

To be eligible, you must:

- Be a MSc student
- Present either a talk or poster
- Have the approval of your supervisor to attend and present
- Upload your abstract during registration and tick the box confirming that you are eligible to apply for the funds (and that there are no other funds to cover the costs).



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Keynote speakers

We are very happy to announce the Baerends and Dobberke lectures and keynote speakers for the NVG meeting!

Dobberke lecture



sociality.

[Rita Covas](#) (CIBIO/University of Porto) is broadly interested in the causes and consequences of sociality and cooperation, at the individual and population levels. She studies these topics in populations of the Sociable Weaver and Southern-Ground Hornbills in South Africa. She is also interested in adaptation to island environments and what this can teach us about the evolution of life-histories and behavioural traits, such as reproductive characteristics, ornamentation, immunity, and

Baerends lecture



animal welfare and can be used for conservation purposes.

[Elodie Briefer](#), of the University of Copenhagen, studies the cognition and vocal communication of mammals and birds. Her research aims to improve our understanding of how animals use vocal signals to convey information about their identity or status, how emotions influence communication and cognition, and how the transmission of this information affects social interactions and relationships. This knowledge will ultimately help to improve

Keynotes



the gut microbiome, influence these neurobiological systems.

Like humans, great apes exhibit striking diversity in social behaviour, communication and personality. In her research, [Nicky Staes](#) (Royal Zoological Society of Antwerp/University of Antwerp) explores the biological mechanisms underlying this variation across and within species, focusing on how neurochemicals such as serotonin, dopamine, oxytocin, vasopressin and sex hormones shape the social brain. She also investigates how genetic and epigenetic differences, as well as



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[Suzanne van der Veldt](#) is a behavioural neuroscientist and is based at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. She studies how brain circuits in mice support adaptive behaviour—particularly learning, memory, and emotional responses—and how these processes may differ between sexes.

Her research focuses on the septohippocampal system, a network involved in spatial navigation and the regulation of approach avoidance behavior. Using in vivo neural recordings combined with cell-type specific activation in mice, she investigates how animals assign emotional meaning to places and experiences, and how these associations guide future behaviour.



[Jonathan Benichov](#) is an Assistant Professor in Avian Neurobiology at the Institute of Biology, Leiden University. His research focuses on the neural circuits that coordinate interactive vocal behavior in songbirds. Using a combination of behavioral assays, neurophysiological recordings, and computational approaches, Jonathan aims to uncover how animals flexibly adapt their vocal behavior in real time, across social contexts.

PhD workshop

As usual, the PhD workshop will take place on the Wednesday preceding the annual conference. The goal of the PhD workshop is to facilitate contact and exchange among PhD students in behavioural biology. About 20 PhD students discuss current topics in science with two invited speakers, all of whom will be present throughout the day. The workshop is organized by Dr. Christian Tudorache and Dr. Felipe Cunha. Sign up during registration!



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Announcements

NVG Summer lecture

We would like to organize a lecture, open to public, during April/May 2026 (more or less half way between conferences). We invite volunteers, ideas for topics and/or suggestions for speakers to contact us via: v.c.goerlich@uu.nl

Report on BCBNL day (26th March)

By Sanne Moorman



Network for researchers in brain, cognition and behavior research in NL

BCB-NL, Young NeurolabNL and NeurolabNL organized an event on the topic of “Current state, challenges, and future perspectives of brain, cognition and behavior research in NL”.

It was a day full of:

- ✨ inspiring keynotes by Prof. Eveline Crone on research-societal connections and Dr. Lisanne Stone from WO in Actie

- 💡 engaging discussions with great panelists: Prof. Suzanne Dickson (President of the European Brain Council), Prof. Marie-José van Tol (Chair of the Netherlands Brain Initiative, Nationaal Plan Hoofdzaken), Jeanet Bruil (Head of the Dutch Research Agenda, NWA, at the Dutch Research Council, NWO), and Prof. Eveline Crone (Professor in Developmental Neuroscience in Society)

- 😌 introspection about our workplace well-being thanks to a workshop by Agnieszka Bojanowska, PhD

- ✍️ creative co-creation sessions drafting a White Paper

I am very enthusiastic about the White Paper we are now finalizing with the participants from the event. It is titled “The importance of Brain, Behaviour and Cognition research in changing times and landscapes: Challenges, opportunities and future prospects”. This paper will be published and shared online soon. It is intended as a resource to showcase the important BCB research we are doing in the Netherlands, and advocate for more societal and political support. It includes a section about the importance of fundamental research, and the importance of animal experiments. We are invited to submit it to an international academic journal, who is



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interested to share our Dutch case of democratic development of the science agenda, and our take on the global challenges and opportunities for BCB research. Please keep an eye out for updates: once finalized, we will invite you to sign a list of support (if you're not already a co-author).

<https://neurolab.nl/>

Meetings & conferences

58th Congress of the International Society for Applied Ethology, 4-8th August 2025, Utrecht, NL

There's still time to register: <https://isae2025utrecht.nl/registration/>

A bit out of the box, the interdisciplinary conference of the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and the Environment, taking place in Utrecht 14–17 April, 2026. Talks on (urban) ecology are invited! <https://easlce2026.sites.uu.nl/>

NVG board

As you have seen in the email sent by Marc Naguib, Michelle Spierings will take on the role of chair the NVG board and we welcome Hugo Loning as new treasurer. We thank Marc, for his dedication and contribution during the past years!

Currently the board comprises:

Chair: Michelle Spierings

Secretary: Kat Bebbington

Treasurer: Hugo Loning

General member: Sanne Moorman,

PhD representatives: Robin van Iersel, Davide Bottacini

PhD workshop: Christian Tudorache

PR: Martijn Hammers, Vivian Goerlich

Belgian representative: Wendt Müller

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

Have a lovely summer and hope to see you in November! Meanwhile, you can also register as a member via: <https://www.gedragsbiologie.nl/membership/>

And if you have news to spread, e.g. vacant positions, feel free to contact us via v.c.goerlich@uu.nl