A note from the Newsletter Editor…

Dear ASAB member,

Welcome to the Spring 2013 edition of the ASAB Newsletter! Although, given that the wind is howling at 70mph outside the windows and we’re in the middle of a blizzard, I have to say that I’m not really tempted to venture out too much just yet! However, I have faith that all will be as it should by the time the ASAB Easter meeting comes around, in just a few weeks in Lincoln. This looks to be another great meeting, so if you haven’t registered already, make sure you get your details in quick!! Speaking of meetings, the Winter meeting in December at London Zoo was a great success. In addition to some fantastic speakers and posters, which you can read about on page 3, we also had a changing of the guard in ASAB Council. Professor Tim Birkhead, University of Sheffield, UK, has taken up the reins as ASAB President from Prof. Jane Hurst. Prof. Hurst did a fantastic job as President for the last five years and we send our thanks to her for all the hard work she put into running the Society. We also say a big welcome to Prof. Birkhead!

I hope you enjoy catching up on all the news from ASAB since the Autumn.

With all best wishes,

Lisa Collins

*In this edition...*

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In the news...
A brief look at some of the animal behaviour coverage in the media this Autumn

Two studies have recently been published highlighting the effects of pesticides (a common crop pesticide and the other a pesticide to kill the honeybee mite, Varroa) on the learning abilities of honeybees. The work showed that exposure for 4 days to levels of pesticides expected in the wild was associated with 30% of honeybees failing to learn or performing badly in memory tests (Palmer et al., 2013, Nature Comm. 4: 1634; Williamson & Wright Feb 2013 online, J Exp Biol).

A recent paper by Jolles et al (2013, Anim. Beh. 85: 742-754) has shown heterogeneity and structure within mixed-species flocks of birds, that is based on species, sex and social relationships. Monogamous pairs, for example, tend to fly closer together than to other birds in the flock. These results throw into question how such groups make collective decisions, given most previous models of collective decisions in bird flocks assume homogeneity and independence between individuals.

A study on the communication between flowers and honeybees, part-funded by ASAB, was recently published in Science Express (Clarke et al 2013, Science Express). The team showed that in addition to producing bright colours, patterns and scents to attract bees, flowers also emit electrical signals which can transfer information to their insect pollinators. Plants typically emit a weak negative charge, whereas bees acquire a positive charge as they fly. When a bee lands on a flower, this changes the electrical potential temporarily, which could perhaps tell other passing bees that it has recently been visited.

*Being an ASAB member*

ASAB is nothing without its members, and their passion for the study of animal behaviour. On ASAB Council, we are continually inspired by the many activities the membership undertakes to promote intellectually rigorous and ethical animal behaviour research. We are also very grateful for those members who publicise ASAB, encouraging students and colleagues to join us, or letting the public know what ASAB does and what it stands for. Central to that is our commitment to the highest standards of scientific and ethical integrity. As such, we would like to remind all our members that ASAB membership does not constitute an academic qualification or any form of professional accreditation or validation. This means that “ASAB” should not be presented after a member’s name on professional documents, websites and so on, in case it implies a qualification or an accreditation. Nor should mention of ASAB membership be used to suggest any such qualification or accreditation. Similarly, members are asked not to use the ASAB logo without due authorisation from Council. Whilst we are very happy for the Association to be broadly advertised, it is important that our logo is not used to suggest accreditation or approval for a website, organisation or company where none has been given. For those members seeking qualifications in animal behaviour or professional accreditation for clinical applications of animal behaviour, please visit the ASAB website for further details on Education, Ethics and the Accreditation Scheme (http://asab.nottingham.ac.uk). If any ASAB member feels that the ASAB logo or similar is being used to misrepresent the Association, or if there are any other enquiries, please feel free to contact the Secretary (david.shuker@st-andrews.ac.uk).

David Shuker,
Secretary of ASAB, on behalf of ASAB Council.

From conforming vervets and name-calling dolphins to insect spatial information integration, the Animal Behaviour Winter Meeting was every bit as diverse and entertaining as was expected from such a title as “Cognition in the Wild”.

Researchers from as far afield as Chile and Australia joined those coming from slightly closer to home, including the UK and Europe, at the London Zoological Society to present and listen to cutting-edge advances in the field of animal cognition, but with a particular warranted emphasis on naturally collected data.

The first day kicked-off with a fascinating plenary by Karen McComb who treated us to an array of cleverly designed experiments probing how wild elephants perceive and recognize the human populations around them and to what extent the early social environment can impact on normative adult social behaviour. One quite pertinent conclusion of the talk was that, just as in humans, traumatic experiences early on in an elephant’s life can have considerable long-term social effects.

The social-cognition work continued with observational and experimental work by Erica van der Waal and Andy Whiten describing how emigrating vervet monkeys trained to avoid one of two coloured food options, for example pink food (compared to a tasty blue variety), in their home group were willing to overcome their initial aversion and conform to the group norm when seeing all other individuals in their new group happily feasting on it. Humans are big social conformers and these wild observations provide important data suggesting our primate relatives may also be socially malleable in a similar way.

Talks then shifted gear slightly to focus on spatial cognition from a variety of species. Theresa Burt de Perera presented her work on three-dimensional space representation in fish whilst Andy Hurley provided a highly entertaining summary of his extensive work on the phenomenal spatio-cognitive skills of humming birds.

The first day was wrapped up with a well-deserved wine reception and a meander through the extensive array of interesting posters contributed by graduate students and a refreshing number of post-grads.

John Quinn took centre stage on day two of the meeting presenting his recent research looking at variation in cognition between great-tits and ultimately what affect this has on an individual’s reproductive life history. Intriguing results demonstrated that those individuals who could solve specific cognitive tasks (“solvers”) went on to produce larger clutches than those individuals who could not solve the task (“non-solvers”). Careful consideration of a range of other mitigating explanatory factors demonstrated that this was most likely because solvers were more efficient at exploiting their natural environment.

From problem solving in the woods of Wytham we then switched to the savannah of the Masai Mara where Sarah Benson-Amram presented her work on novel technical problem solving in hyenas. Not only did we learn about the sheer strength of a hyena’s jaw, but we also found out that, whilst social learning doesn’t seem to play a role, there is quite considerable individual variation in successful problem solving. Careful observations indicate that those that were successful were also more adventurous in their
individual strategies and ultimately less neophobic.

After lunch and a stroll around London Zoo courtesy of an underground shortcut provided by the Zoological Society of London, Andrew Cockburn gave the 2012 Tinbergen Lecture. Andrew Cockburn’s work on cooperative breeding birds has been highly influential in the fields of animal behaviour and his talk aimed to bring a cognitive dimension to the observational and experimental work he has been conducting across Australia over the last 30 years.

The meeting ended in the Kalahari Desert with a re-visititation to the meerkat alarm call system. Marta Manser succinctly showed that, in addition to their terrestrial and aerial alarm calls, meerkats are also capable of signaling the behaviour of objects in their external environment, specifically if they are “moving”. Although at the surface level, this seems very intuitive, this is the first evidence of its kind indicating that animals are not just attentive to objects in their surroundings, but also critically, what they are doing.

All in all, Sue Healy and Andy Hurly did a commendable job at bringing together such a disparate array of researchers, from different corners of the world, working on a range of topics and species, yet uniting them under a shared interest of animal cognition in the wild. If the talks and posters are anything to go by, we are in for an exciting few years to come.

Simon W. Townsend  
Institute of Evolutionary Biology and Environmental Studies, Zurich

*New in Animal Behaviour*

A new programme to help post docs stay current with free access to research when between posts was launched by Elsevier in November 2012. Please see: http://elsevierconnect.com/staying-competitive-in-between-research-positions/ for more information.

To celebrate 60 years of Animal Behaviour, a series of twelve anniversary essays will be published throughout 2013 in the journal. These essays, along with the original celebrated paper on which they are based, will be free to access for a year.

The first four essays have now been published:

**January:**  “All’s Well that begins Wells: celebrating 60 years of Animal Behaviour and 36 years of anuran behavioural ecology” Mark A. Bee; Joshua Schwartz; Kyle Summers, in discussion of K.D. Wells’ 1977 paper “The social behaviour of anuran amphibians.”


**March:**  “Receiver psychology: a receiver perspective” Candy Rowe, in discussion of T. Guilford & M.S. Dawkins’ (1991) paper “Receiver psychology and the evolution of animal signals”.

2013 has already been a busy year for the education committee.

The Association for Science Education conference in Reading was a big success. ASAB shared the biology stand with a number of other learned societies and biological associations.

Andrew Robertson from Cardiff University gave a talk on behalf of ASAB as part of the Biology in the Real World Series. You can watch his presentation on stable isotopes here:


Andy explains why using stable isotopes in animal behaviour research is brilliant. Stable isotope analysis is a proven and powerful tool to investigate animal behaviour without direct observation. Find out more about this fascinating technique and discover how Andrew is using this method in his own PhD research. He is investigating individual and group foraging specialisation in the Eurasian badger by combining data on individual diets derived through stable isotope analysis, with ecological information on badger individuals and groups.

The ASAB workshop was well attended with delegates wanting to learn more about teaching animal behaviour in schools.

Thanks to Lisa - one of our new resources is available to download directly from the ASAB website. KEEPING OURSELVES SAFE NEAR DOGS is written by Kendal Shepherd (BVSc, CCAB, MRCVS) and adapted for classroom use by Jean Archer, Science Co-ordinator, Moss Park Junior School, Stretford, Manchester. This resource has been designed with year 5 and 6 pupils in mind and is suitable for other year groups and PSHE lessons. This is a free resource and is made of two parts: A set of comprehensive teacher’s notes, background information, glossary, suggested activities and answers, as well as, a pack of sixteen worksheets.

Crawling Caterpillars has also been published. This is a DVD film resource by Dr Michael Dockery, Tor Yip and Harry Gallimore. Young people use their observation and measuring skills to answer this question ‘do moth caterpillars move in a straight line when they seek a refuge?’ This resource has two elements

1. A set of teachers notes, which includes background material, instructions, analysis, answers and suggested follow-up work.
2. A DVD containing background moth information and footage of the practical from which the pupils information and footage of the practical from which the pupils carry out their observations. Please email: behaviour@cardiff.ac.uk if you would like a copy.

Finally, if you have some exciting news or interesting animal facts please share it on our facebook page. We are on our way to 300 likes and would really like the page to be as interactive as possible. So join in and receive an almost daily fix of animal behaviour, interesting links and upcoming news. You can find us here: https://www.facebook.com/ASABEducation

Charlotte Evans
ASAB Education Officer
behaviour@cardiff.ac.uk

ASAB at the Association for Science Education conference. Photo: C. Evans.
CALL FOR ABSTRACTS
The organising committee of Behaviour 2013 the joint meeting of the 33rd International Ethological Conference and the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour invites the submission of abstracts for talks and posters. Submissions may be in any area of behaviour.

We welcome all those taking a biological approach to animal (or human) behaviour. We encourage participants addressing any of Tinbergen’s four questions, including function (behavioural ecology), mechanism (cognition, neuroethology), development and phylogeny; and we have already accepted symposia in all of these areas. To see a full list of our accepted symposia, please visit www.iec2013.com/symposia.php

To submit your abstract and for information on registering your place visit www.iec2013.com.
Deadline for abstract submissions: 7th April 2013

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE...
Five plenary talks showcasing different areas of behavioural research
Special talk from the winner of the ASAB Young Investigator Award 2011
33 symposia spanning all areas of behaviour and applied ethology
Additional contributed talks (200+) organised into themed sessions
Contributed posters (400+) with dedicated poster sessions
Special event: “A celebration with Aubrey Manning”
Academic publishers’ workshops
Trade exhibitions of books, journals, equipment etc.

ABOUT US
Behaviour 2013 will be the 33rd International Ethological Conference, and will be held in Gateshead, England between 4th and 8th August 2013. The event is a joint meeting of the International Ethological Conference (IEC) and the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (ASAB).

EARLY BIRD BOOKINGS
Register now to make the most of our fantastic early bird rate of £395.00, giving you access to our packed five day programme of plenary talks, symposia, contributed talks and posters. Deadline for early bird bookings is 7th April so secure your place early and make a £100 saving by registering now. To book your place visit the website www.iec2013.com and confirm your place at the largest gathering of researchers in the field of animal behaviour this year.

We look forward to welcoming you to NewcastleGateshead, UK in August!
The Marine Biological Association Postgraduate Conference is an annual scientific gathering of postgraduate students doing research in marine biology and related fields.

For more information contact: ibern-mba@aber.ac.uk, or visit our website at http://users.aber.ac.uk/mpcstaff

Abstract Deadline: 15th March 2013
Registration Deadline: 29th March 2013

For sponsorship opportunities please contact us at: ibern-mba@aber.ac.uk

Find us on: 

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10th Marine Biological Association
Postgraduate Conference
IBERS, Aberystwyth University, Wales
May 8th – 10th 2013
*BioNav Conference*

11th – 13th April 2013, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK.

A new type of conference for the UK, bringing together scientists and researchers who study how animals navigate and scientists who design the navigation systems of autonomous unmanned vehicles. The common interest – Bionav – the incorporation of navigational techniques used by animals into advance navigation systems.

Keynote speakers:

- Dr Mikel Miller, Chief Scientist, AFRL/RW, Eglin AFB, Fla, USA
- Professor K Lohmann, North Carolina University, USA
- Professor M V Srinivasan, University of Queensland, Australia
- Professor M M Walker, University of Auckland, New Zealand

For detailed information visit: [http://www.rin.org.uk/Events.aspx?ID=110&SectionID=23&ItemID=2054](http://www.rin.org.uk/Events.aspx?ID=110&SectionID=23&ItemID=2054)

*37th Annual Meeting of the Waterbird Society*

24 – 29 September 2013 in Wilhelmshaven, Germany

The Waterbird Society will hold its 37th annual meeting in 2013 in Germany for the first time. The Institute of Avian Research “Vogelwarte Helgoland”, one of the oldest ornithological research institutes in the world, will be the host. The meeting venue is the Stadthalle, located in the centre of Wilhelmshaven on the German North Sea coast. The three day scientific program will consist of plenaries, symposia, contributed papers and poster sessions. Saturday 28 September will be a joint scientific day with the International Wader Study Group (IWSG) annual conference (27 to 30 September).

Please check [www.waterbirds.org](http://www.waterbirds.org) for updated information.

*Ento '13 International Symposium and Annual National Science Meeting*

4th-6th September 2013, University of St Andrews, Scotland

“Thirty years of Thornhill & Alcock: The Evolution of Insect Mating Systems”

Symposium Convenors: David Shuker (david.shuker@st-andrews.ac.uk) and Leigh Simmons (leigh.simmons@uwa.edu.au). National Science Meeting Convenor: Graham Stone (graham.stone@ed.ac.uk)

The International Symposium will celebrate 30 years of Thornhill and Alcock's ground-breaking book The Evolution of Insect Mating Systems. The book has had an enormous impact on multiple generations of entomologists and behavioural ecologists, and we will celebrate that achievement and explore the progress we have made in understanding insect mating systems and reproductive behaviour since 1983. The original book covered many aspects of insect mating systems, from the evolution of sex and sexual systems, through to how ecology and sexual selection interact to shape the mating systems we see. Much has happened in the three decades since the book was published, including major advances in our understanding of the evolution of sex, sexual selection (especially mate choice and post-copulatory sexual selection), the mechanistic basis of reproductive behaviour, and of course sexual conflict. Insects have played a major role in all these developments, as the symposium and the accompanying volume will highlight.

Symposium speakers to include: Göran Arnqvist (Uppsala); Boris Baer (University of Western Australia); Roger Butlin (University of Sheffield); Trish Moore (University of Georgia); Ben Normark (UMASS); Leigh Simmons (University of Western Australia); Per Smiseth (University of Edinburgh); Rhonda Snook (University of Sheffield); Nina Wedell (University of Exeter)

For further details please: [http://www.royensoc.co.uk/content/ento-13-4-6-september-2013](http://www.royensoc.co.uk/content/ento-13-4-6-september-2013)