

# Section 1. ATTEMPTS TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH JEFF PODOS AND HIS STUDENTS: Threats of criminal harassment

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## Introduction

(See also the file entitled “Email review of 2004 in-house Podos paper”)

Below are the eight emails that I can find, probably the eight in the files of the University of Massachusetts police. Perhaps there are others. I do not intentionally omit any, and those that are here express the nature of the attempted communications.

Not to prejudice the reader on any of these emails, but after each email I comment briefly on the content and intent of the email.

Here is a summary of those comments:

I repeatedly attempt to engage the authors on the substance of the science (emails 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8)

I offer to come to UMass to talk face-to-face (2) or talk on the phone (3; giving my phone number, 7), or communicate in any way possible (4, 6)

I offer a last minute appeal to talk these things over before my review document is sent out to a larger audience (7)

In exasperation, and in hopes of moving science forward, as required by the journal *Animal Behavior*, I send the review document to all cited authors, asking for a dialogue, before submitting a revised review for publication (8)

Next (9), I offer the transcript of the threatening call from the University Police, followed by 10) the absurd statement from the police that I must tell everyone else in the world that they cannot communicate with Podos either.

11) Finally, I offer one more email on this topic. Podos justifies criminal harassment charges based on my October 2004 email to him (yes, 12 years ago), in which I point out to him the difference between science and marketing, and that he was more interested in marketing a good story than doing good science:

**"In my view, science is the search for truth regardless of how good the story is, whereas "marketing or advertising" is the search for a good story regardless of the truth, or regardless of how good the data are."**

7/9/2014

**1) 9 July 2014 "I wondered if you could help me understand why in the paper you focused only on trill rate."**

Subject: chipping sparrows

To Sarah Goodwin, first author of Goodwin and Podos (2014)

Hello Sarah:

Chipping sparrow season is almost over, I assume. It can be a long field season.

In talking with Mike Beecher at Univ of Washington, I learned that for your 2014 *Biology Letters* paper you did analyses not only on trill rate but also on frequency

bandwidth and the combination of the two measures. I wondered if you could help me understand why in the paper you focused only on trill rate.

Thanks.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

KROODSMA: Professional ethics dictate that we engage each other about published papers and disputes that arise, so here was my first attempt at what seemed a reasonable approach. I received no response, and it was also about this time that all communication ceased from UMass Biology to Mike Beecher and a student at the Univ of Washington; they had raised some serious issues, even suggesting that the Goodwin and Podos (2014) paper be retracted.

I received no response.

10/1/2014

**2) 1 October 2014 “ . . . if you’d like to talk some of these things through, let me know, and I’ll come over to UMass”**

Subject: Motor constraints . . . talking it over . . .

Hello Jeff:

It’s been ten years since we last communicated (October 2004). I had sent you an in-house review of one of your papers, and I think I never heard back from you.

Now we meet again, so to speak, as I attended Sarah’s and your talk at AFO/WOS. I squirmed as I heard it, and more so when I read the Biology Letters paper. Then I read some more of your papers on the motor constraints hypothesis, squirming even more. Then I read other related papers, ten in all, having difficulty finding credible evidence for this idea that the birds pay any attention to how difficult it might be to sing a song with fast trill rate and broad band frequency. Yet the idea seems to have taken the literature by storm (much as did the idea about evolution of large songbird repertoires by female choice, for which Byers and I could also find no credible evidence).

I have a hunch you don’t want to talk to me about any of these matters, as you seem to have squelched communication with those who are concerned about your Biology Letters paper. But if you’d like to talk some of these things through, let me know, and I’ll come over to UMass—I’m free most days. If I don’t hear back from you within a week, I’ll assume you’d rather not talk.

Regards . . . Don

KROODSMA: A simple invitation to talk about his research, face to face, to resolve whatever could be resolved in a professional manner.

I received no response.

10/8/2014 **3) 8 October 2014 “I have no idea what is in your head . . . I’m still available to talk”**

Subject: Combating Advocacy

Hello Jeff:

I have no idea what is in your head. Only two possibilities come to mind:

1) You truly believe you are doing fine research and learning about bird song. Given your graduate training, I suppose this possibility wouldn’t surprise me too much, but I find it difficult to believe.

2) Research and publishing are a game not to be taken too seriously, and it’s no big deal if what you write has no semblance of truth, no big deal that you dupe the vast majority of readers into believing things you know not to be true. I find this possibility difficult to believe as well, more difficult to believe than option #1.

So I’m left in total disbelief when I read your publications. I have no idea what you are thinking. To me and the way I approach science, you live in a land of make-believe, where the research you write about and the conclusions you come to just can’t be true.

I’m still available to talk, but you will no doubt conclude that we have nothing to talk about. I will wait to hear from you, but if I don’t hear from you within a week, I’ll decide on my own what to do next.

Regards . . . Don

KROODSMA: A candid expression of my disbelief, still offering to talk things over.

I received no response.

10/15/2014 **4) 15 October 2014 “JEFF, HERE’S ONE LAST ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE YOU”**

Subject: Combating a Culture of Advocacy

To: Michelle Scott, Editor of Animal Behavior

CC: Jeff Podos and coauthors Goodwin, Moseley, and Lahti

BCC: Six Advisers

From: Don Kroodsma

Hello Michelle:

Thank you for your reply. I realized when I sent my “Combating Advocacy” essay to you, of course, that you could not consider anything in that form for publication, but I chose (at least initially) to express my outrage bluntly and candidly anyway. Among my advisers, some have expressed shock (“you’re right, but you can’t write that; someone will be hurt!”), but the one I most trust (the best scientist among them) encouraged me to convey the outrage so that it was abundantly clear. So that’s what you saw.

Thank you also for offering to consider a review article, addressing matters of science in a matter-of-fact tone. I would like to do that. I have your instructions on how to proceed:

“The process for a Review is for you to submit a 1-2 page proposal to the Elsevier system. I ask the UK office if there is anything like it in their pipeline and I give you the go-ahead. (This only takes a day or two.) Then you submit your manuscript as a US review and it is assigned to me.”

I will find no pleasure in writing this review; I’d far rather be doing other things. But I’ll write it for two primary reasons: 1) to try to return the study of birdsong squarely to the realm of science, and 2) to try to spare more graduate students from falling into this culture of advocacy.

I might find collaborators, but I might just go it alone, too. I appreciate the “uphill battle” you predict that I might face in getting my review published, but I will take my chances. I do believe that, when science and advocacy go head to head, science will win.

Jeff Podos (together with students Goodwin and Moseley) have chosen not to communicate with me; nor, as I understand it, will Podos or Goodwin communicate with mild-mannered, good-natured Mike Beecher, who together with his student actually suggested that Goodwin and Podos (2014) be retracted. As I wrote to Jeff, I have no idea what is in his head, whether 1) he honestly feels he is doing good science or 2) he knows he is deceptively marketing nonscience. Frankly, I can’t believe either possibility, but it seems to me that one of them has to be true.

(David Lahti readily communicates, but acknowledges that there are some issues that he can’t talk about freely.)

**JEFF, HERE’S ONE LAST ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE YOU**

Jeff, I take no pleasure in what I have been reviewing in papers by you and others over the past few months; in fact, it all leaves me in a really distracted, irritable mood. I especially dislike critiquing papers by young scientists (Goodwin and Moseley), because

their careers are at stake, when it is you who are orchestrating it all, when you bear the ultimate responsibility for what your students are publishing, yet they will take the blame.

If you remain convinced that your science is solid (explanation #1 above), then you probably have no options; I will write the review on the “motor constraints” hypothesis, and whether you defend yourself or not, the careers of Podos, Goodwin, and Moseley (and perhaps others) will inevitably suffer. But if you accept that you are “deceptively marketing nonsense” (explanation 2 above), then I believe you have the (honorable) option of saving your students by publicly taking the blame yourself. In essence, I think it boils down to this: Defend yourself to the end and everyone will suffer, or fess up and give your students a fighting chance for a career in science.

As I wrote to Dana Moseley, but who said she’d delete without reading any emails from me, I have nothing personal against you. You’re a likeable guy. But I disagree strongly with what you do in matters of science, especially because you directly undermine something I truly cherish, and that is understanding birds and their songs.

As before, I’d like to hear back something from you within a week (November 22, by noon), or I’ll again take the next steps on my own. [error: meant Oct 22, of course, within a week]

Michelle: Sorry to send all of this dialogue to you as well, but somehow I feel you ought to be kept informed as to what is or is not transpiring on a possible review paper.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

PS—The essay “Combating a Culture of Advocacy in Birdsong Research” is attached (once again), for it contains the continuing email dialogue in the COMMENTS AND RESPONSES section, including this letter. It is also my hope that correspondence with the editor of Animal Behavior would be deposited in an archive so that future historians and birdsong biologists would be able to look back on this period and get some answers to the question “What were they thinking?”

KROODSMA: Frustration with Podos et al. continues, with refusal to discuss matters, leading to this letter primarily to Michelle Scott, editor of Animal Behavior, outlining an approach for possible publication of my critique of the literature. Letter contains a LAST ATTEMPT to engage Podos on these research matters.

I received no response from Podos.

10/16/2014

**5) 16 October 2014 “something well worth reading, from half a century ago”**

Subject: An extraordinary article on Science, by Richard Feynman

Hello Jeff et al.:

I have tried to limit my emails to the Wednesday weekly, but here is something well worth reading, from half a century ago. Perhaps you want to consider these 1974 thoughts on Science as you think about the future, both near and distant.

I've taken the liberty to hi-lite the sections that I thought most appropriate to the situation we are involved in.

best . . .Don

attached: Richard Feynman's 1974 commencement at Cal Tech, entitled "Cargo Cult Science"

[http://neurotheory.columbia.edu/~ken/cargo\\_cult.html](http://neurotheory.columbia.edu/~ken/cargo_cult.html)

KROODSMA: In my search for common ground with other scientists, I stumbled upon a most remarkable piece, one that I think every scientist should read multiple times, especially as a paper is about to be submitted for publication; I thought it would be especially appropriate reading for Podos at this time, so I shared it with him.

I received no response.

11/9/2014

**6) 9 November 2014 "I'd welcome any dialogue with you"**

Subject: Honest Signaling in Birdsong and the Motor Constraints Hypothesis of Podos (1997): A Contrary View

Hello Jeff Podos, Steve Nowicki, Bill Searcy, and Sandy Vehrencamp:

Jeff has known for some time that this is coming, though he's never acknowledged receiving any messages from me (neither email nor US mail). This review was precipitated by listening to the oral presentation of Goodwin and Podos (2014) at the ornithological meetings during late May, as told in the Prologue of the attached document. And then everything else just seemed to follow.

If you choose to read any of what I have written, you will see that I am not sold on the motor constraints hypothesis of Podos (1997) and all of the work that seemingly attempts to confirm its significance. I believe there's nothing about male quality and honest signaling in the trill rate-bandwidth graph.

I am sending this document first to the four of you, as you have all been prominent in promoting this hypothesis and are therefore prominent in the critique. I'd welcome any dialogue with you, and if you choose to reply, I'd appreciate hearing from you by December 1. Any reaction you wish to register will be available for others to read in the last section of the document.

I'll be away until late November, out of contact. I'll check in late November.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

KROODSMA: Frustration continues in all attempts to engage "UMass Biology," so I share the accumulating document with Podos, with his mentor Nowicki and his frequent coauthor Searcy, and with Vehrencamp.

I receive brief acknowledgment letters from Searcy and Vehrencamp, but nothing from Podos or Nowicki.

12/1/2014

**7) 1 December 2014 (early in day) "If you want to talk about any of this . . . , I can be reached at 413-247-3367, just across the river from you. Or email me"**

Subject: 6 months have passed since the May meetings . . .

Hello Sarah (copy to Jeff and Dana and David):

It's 1 December, colder than it was back in May, literally too. I'm sorry where all of "this" has headed, especially for a young graduate student just starting out in science. But, sadly, what you published with Jeff is not "science," and therein lies the problem. It's even more of a problem when authors refuse to communicate about their published work (see "Ethics in Publishing," copied below from the Animal Behaviour Society website). How a graduate advisor would allow his student to publish what you did, and then stonewall communication about it, is beyond anything I can imagine. Perhaps others might have dropped the matter, but your and Jeff's (and Dana's; but not David's) refusing to communicate led me to read further and further, uncovering a culture of advocacy and non-science in which you (and Dana) represent the third generation.

In an attempt to curb this advocacy and return birdsong to the realm of science, and to try to prevent other young graduate students from being recruited into this culture, I've pressed on. Later today, barring any last-minute stays, I'll send my accumulated reviews out to a larger audience (Podos, Nowicki, Searcy, and Vehrencamp have already had it for a month), and eventually seek publication for the document.

I wish you the best in science, learning about the behavior of nature, but the key word is "science." If instead you plan to publish more of the same, pursue a career much as Jeff has, and then recruit graduate students of your own into this culture, I respectfully suggest that another career might be more appropriate for you.

(This all seems so harsh, and I've sat staring at these words for what seems an eternity. There's such a non-human element to it all, and I struggle with it. But, in the end, I reconsider your paper with Jeff that pushed me over the edge, and I have to say "enough," and I have to follow through. And then I try to click on the "send" button, and falter yet



again . . .)

If you want to talk about any of this before I continue with the above plan, I can be reached at 413-247-3367, just across the river from you. Or email me. I'm very sorry for the pain this must be causing.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

<http://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001>

### **Ethics in publishing**

Animal Behaviour publishes papers by scientists conducting research at locations around the globe. Publication is, therefore, based upon mutual trust between publisher and authors. Professional integrity in the conduct and reporting of research is an absolute requirement of publication in the journal, as is a willingness to share information with other members of the scientific community. Consequently, as a condition of publication in Animal Behaviour, authors must agree both to honour any reasonable request for materials or methods needed to verify or replicate experiments reported in the journal and to make available, upon request, any data sets upon which published studies are based. Anyone who encounters a persistent refusal to comply with these guidelines, or has reason to suspect some other departure from acceptable standards of scientific conduct, should contact the appropriate Executive Editor (European or American) of the journal. The Executive Editors will act in accordance with the guidelines of the Committee for Publication Ethics (<http://www.publicationethics.org>) and may inform an author's institution of a purported infraction. Statements on scientific integrity by the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour and Animal Behavior Society can be found at, respectively, <http://www.asab.org> and <http://animalbehaviorsociety.org>.

KROODSMA: A summary of how we got to this “sorry state of affairs,” as Michelle Scott would characterize it all. A summary of the situation for first author Goodwin of Goodwin and Podos (2014), the paper which sent me into this entire endeavor, with regrets for “the pain this must be causing,” and with a last minute invitation to say something, anything, that would stop the following email to all cited authors in the document.

I received no response.

12/1/2014

**8) 1 December 2014 (late night) “I thought it appropriate to seek any feedback that cited authors or others might like to provide. A dialogue would be welcomed”**

Subject: Honest Signaling in Birdsong and the Motor Constraints Hypothesis of Podos

(1997): A Contrary View

Hello birdsong enthusiasts (cited authors and a few “interested parties”—about 50 correspondents):

Attached is a document that I began working on shortly after hearing the oral presentation of Goodwin and Podos (2014) at the ornithological meetings in Rhode Island during May of this year. Over the following weeks and months, I attempted to communicate with the authors about their paper (by both email and U.S. mail), but received no replies, and as week after week went by, I found myself studying more and more of the literature on this topic. By the time I finally said “enough,” the attached document had evolved into something far larger than I had ever considered at the outset.

In the end, I realized that I was reading for the most part what Richard Feynman (1985:340) calls, to put it bluntly, “science that isn’t science.” Such publications lack his measure of “scientific integrity,” and are instead largely “advocacy” for favored ideas (Gitzen 1987). I was learning practically nothing about the behavior of nature but instead almost solely about the behavior of those who publish these papers.

I don’t know the eventual outlet of my document, but I am aiming for a Forum article in *Animal Behavior*. Before it finds some public expression, however, I thought it appropriate to seek any feedback that cited authors or others might like to provide. A dialogue would be welcomed, and any response you care to provide will be added to the document for others to read.

Feel free to forward this document to anyone you wish, especially any coauthors, with the same invitation for contributed commentary.

If you plan to reply, I would appreciate hearing from you before 5 January 2015, at which time I’ll decide the next step for this document.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

KROODSMA: An attempt to collect feedback and initiate a constructive dialogue with the roughly 50 people cited in my document. Again, this approach seemed the only logical and ethical approach: Give those with whom I disagree a chance to rebut my arguments before, if I am wrong, I waste a public expression of the thoughts. And it just seems common courtesy. I was especially eager to establish a dialogue about birdsong and “scientific integrity,” as defined by Feynman.

I received no response from Podos (other than that from the University Police), but a good dialogue from a number of other researchers in the field.

12/18/2014

**9) 18 December 2014: Transcript of threatening phone conversation with University of Massachusetts Police Officer Liptak**

**Kroodsma:** Hello, Don Kroodsma here. This line is being recorded.

**UMass police:** Hi, Mr. Kroodsma, this is Officer Liptak, also on a recorded line. How are you?

**Kroodsma:** Good, thank you, I'm fine.

**UMass police:** Thank you for calling me back. I just wanted to give you a call and touch base because I had some members from the Biology Department here on campus get in touch with the department because there has been some issues I guess between you and them and some publications that you want to publish or some manuscripts that you want to publish . . . ?

**Kroodsma:** Yeah

**UMass police:** So, basically, I can't stop you from attempting to do that. That's your freedom of speech. However, the reason I am calling is that the emails that are being sent to them, I believe there's been at least 8 that I can count, that I have copies of. Those need to stop. OK. Right now, as far as I'm concerned, there is no charges being pressed against you, as far as criminal charges, but if the emails continue it's bordering on criminal harassment, and we don't want to have to go that route. So, right now, you know, as long as the emails stop and there's no contact between you and the other members of the Biology Department, then I have no issues. But what I am asking is that you do stop those emails.

**Kroodsma:** Very interesting.

**UMass police.** OK . . . There's no reason for you to have contact with them as far as I can see, so the easiest way is for contact to just cease and desist, and then there will be no issues.

**Kroodsma:** I would like to tell you why there is every ethical reason in the world why I should be contacting them and why they should be responding. These are matters of professional ethics . . .

**UMass police.** OK. Professional ethics have nothing to do with me. I have everything to do with criminal law and upholding the criminal law, so if they continue, and if the emails continue to be harassing them, then you're bordering on criminal harassment and I don't think that's a route that you want to go.

**Kroodsma:** May I ask you who contacted you?

**UMass police:** That doesn't matter right now . . . OK

**Kroodsma:** OK.

**UMass police:** So, I think you know who you've been sending emails to. They've been advised that if they get any more emails beyond this point to inform me and then we'll take it from there if need be.

**Kroodsma:** OK

**UMass police:** ok.

**Kroodsma:** Thank you . . .

**UMass police:** Alright. Thank you very much. Have a very good night . . .

**Kroodsma:** bye . . .

**UMass police:** goodbye . . .

12/19/2014

## **10) The absurdity of UMass Police—a follow-up**

19 December: Kroodsma to UMass Police

Hello Officer Liptak:

Thank you for the conversation a few days ago about my criminally harassing members of the Biology Department at UMass. I will not in the future intentionally send any emails or attempt to communicate in any way with either Podos or Goodwin in the UMass Biology Department; I'll extend that to former student Moseley, who is on a postdoc elsewhere.

I should tell you that I had initiated a dialogue with about 50 other people involved in research on this topic, and UMass Biology will undoubtedly receive emails from them. Would you like me to request that they stop sending emails to UMass Biology?  
regards . . . Don Kroodsma

### **1 January: UMass Police to Kroodsma; Tell all ~50 people they should stop communicating with UMass Biology (Podos) on this matter**

Mr. Kroodsma,

Thank you for the clarification. Yes please advise them to stop.

Ofc. Liptak

### **3 January: Kroodsma to UMass Police. This is beyond absurd.**

Hello Officer Liptak:

I don't think you realize how absurd this all seems to those of us who try to fathom what is going on here. I don't believe you care about any of what I am going to write here, as I

don't think you can see beyond the criminal harassment charge, but I'm going to elaborate just a little anyway before telling you why I am not going to comply with your latest request:

Are you aware that never once has Podos (or anyone in "UMass Biology") communicated with me and asked me to stop sending emails to them? They have my email address and my US mailing address. I've sent them my phone number. I've repeatedly invited a dialogue. And, to top it all off, I'm a member of the same department at UMass (though emeritus).

How could my emails possibly have been honestly interpreted as harassment? Here is a summary of my unambiguous intent in the 8 emails I can find:

I repeatedly attempt to engage the authors [Podos and his students] on the substance of the science (emails 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8)

I offer to come to UMass to talk face-to-face (2) or talk on the phone (3; giving my phone number, 7), or communicate in any way possible (4, 6)

I offer a last minute appeal to talk these things over before my review document is sent out to a larger audience (7)

Those are the professionally courteous and ethical ways to proceed when there is a disagreement about science, and it is professionally courteous and ethical to respond to such inquiries.

So, after all this, Podos goes to the UMass police to threaten me with criminal harassment, because Podos can't communicate with me directly? Doesn't it puzzle you just a little that they need you to communicate with me? Sure, they may be distressed, as their careers are on the line with what they have done, but it seems to me that they are simply using you to try to intimidate and silence me. I can tell you that won't be successful (though I certainly will comply with the request not to communicate with them anymore).

You might say I "baited" you in asking whether you wanted me to write to all 50 people to tell them not to write to Podos et al. I needed to know if you took Podos seriously and at face value (you did, based on your request to email everyone), or whether you were merely part of an in-house, local coordinated plan to intimidate me, in which case you'd never ask me to take this situation to the larger audience (based on your email request, I'm confident you were not involved in so unprofessional an approach to this situation).

You may view me as villainous, and that's fine with me, but I will not stoop to intentionally doing (unnecessary) emotional and professional harm to Podos et al. Sending out an email to all 50 people, explaining this situation that is beyond bizarre and telling them not to write to Podos, would be embarrassing beyond measure for Podos. It's even possible that true harassment would then begin.

I admit that I am far from understanding what is in the head of Podos; he won't reveal anything to me. If, however, you write back to me and tell me that you have consulted with Podos, and my instructions are still to explain this to all 50 people, I will do so. I suppose not even that request would surprise me, given all that has (or has not) already

transpired in this ridiculous sequence of events (most of which you know nothing about).  
Respectfully . . . Donald Kroodsma, emeritus Biology

10/8/2004

## 11) Marketing and advertising VS. Science

8 October 2004

(an in-house review written at Podos' request during October 2004)

Hi Jeff:

“Intraspecific *divergence* in many animal taxa is facilitated by geographic *variation* in mating signal structure, and by the *tendency* for individuals to discriminate among local and distant signal variants.”

There's the first sentence of your abstract. I read that sentence at least 5 times before I thought I knew what you were saying (ok, perhaps I'm both senile and grumpy). Here's what I think it says:

“Mating signals that *vary* geographically cause many animal taxa to *diverge* because individuals *tend* to discriminate between local and distant signals.”

What I've done is take your nouns and convert them to verbs (italicized; see lessons for clear writing by Joseph Williams in his book *Style* . . .).

It seems to me that there are three (true) statements in your sentence:

1. Mating signals vary geographically
2. Animal taxa diverge
3. Individuals discriminate between local and distant signals

But I object (rather strongly) to the way that you've put these three statements together. Isn't it just as likely that (especially learned) signals vary because of lack of dispersal between even local sites? In the first sentence of the abstract, where the author has what I would call the responsibility and expectation to place his/her work in a broader context so that the readers know the general subject area in which the author is writing, you have chosen a very narrow and, I think, misleading statement. I feel that you are exploiting reader expectation by stating an untested idea as fact in a place where the average reader expects a general, true statement.

Sorry, but you've pushed one of my big red buttons. It is this kind of statement that I think misleads and manipulates rather than informs readers. It is the kind of opening

statement that provides the story around which the article will be written, but the hidden assumptions in the opening statement mislead the reader into thinking that you've provided the general, accepted framework for the paper but instead have provided a narrow story line that tells only a tiny bit of what might be a cool story, presumably the story that you want to tell.

It reminds me all too much of the last Nowicki paper I read that started this way (to get this information I go to my extensive commentary on Nowicki in my file here at home): "Females of many songbird species show a preference for mating with males that have larger song repertoires . . ." And I would ask that we name one species in which it is shown that females make a mating decision based on repertoire size.\* With your statement I would ask you to name one bird species in which it is shown that local populations diverge because individuals discriminate between local and distant signals.

***In my view, science is the search for truth regardless of how good the story is, whereas "marketing or advertising" is the search for a good story regardless of the truth, or regardless of how good the data are.*** [emphasis added in 2014] Given what Nowicki [graduate advisor to Jeff Podos] does in his papers, and given his seminar here at UMass and the climax when he blatantly lied his way through the answer to a question in the Q&A period (presumably to protect his story and self-image), I'll never read another paper of his; I simply don't trust him, and I find his approach to science reprehensible. To me, his work is advertisement and self-promotion masquerading as science. Steve markets his ideas and himself, and he does it very well, but I wouldn't call what he does science. You and I had a brief conversation in which you were eager to defend him, but we didn't go into details, and we probably never will, especially as I am moving on. Perhaps all this is why your first sentence distresses me so, because I like you, and I expected otherwise from you.

Having spent this much time on the first sentence, it is perhaps no surprise that I'm not in the mood to read the details of the rest of the manuscript. I read it rather quickly, trying to get the main ideas, and had just a couple of more quick thoughts:

I'm concerned that you've measured 5 aspects of the songs and, finding no consistent differences between two populations, feel that you have adequately characterized the signals and can conclude that there's an "absence of site-specific diagnostic song features." A sonagram is such a crude rendition of a song, and taking only 5 rather simple measurements of each song from such a crude representation seems inadequate to me. And so much of your paper and ensuing discussion seem to hinge on this result. From my skeptical (cynical?) point of view, you have made a weak attempt

with little power for finding population differences, so you now have (weak) negative evidence for population differences that you then seem to turn into strong support for the story that you have chosen to tell.

Although I believe your playback results, I think a better design would have been for the observers not to know what songs they were playing to the birds. If you know the hypothesis you are testing and the story that would be most interesting when you are estimating distances and such (and especially given what I detect as a strong bias toward wanting to support your story in your first sentence in the abstract), it's all too easy to bias the numbers that are collected in the field. That's why all good experimental designs call for the observers to be "blind." Perhaps you were "blind" and I just read the ms too quickly to read that. If so, sorry I overlooked it.

Sorry I'm in such a grumpy mood tonight. I read the paper rather quickly as Anaheim scored a bunch of runs, capped by a grand slam, in the third game of the series, tying the game at 6-6. Perhaps if the Sox had won easily my commentary above would have been entirely rosy.

Best regards . . . Don

PS—If you value your career and the high esteem of your peers, perhaps I should encourage you to disregard all of my above comments. My approach to science might be all too old-fashioned.

\*Yes, I know that Nowicki didn't actually say that females choose on the basis of repertoire size, but the entire paper is about female choice, so the reader is misled into concluding what Nowicki wants them to conclude even though he didn't say it himself. Clever, but . . .