

Section 5. THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST—attempts to address scientific and ethical misconduct with Deans, Vice Chancellors, Provost, Departmental Chairs, etc.

Contents

Section 5. THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST—attempts to address scientific and ethical misconduct with Deans, Vice Chancellors, Provost, Departmental Chairs, etc.....	1
January 2015	2
Kroodsma to CNS Dean Steven Goodwin	2
June 2015	3
Kroodsma to Dean Goodwin at UMass.....	3
July 2015	8
Dean Goodwin to Kroodsma	8
Kroodsma to Biology Letters, Dean Goodwin at UMass.....	8
September 2015.....	9
Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, Biology Letters.....	9
Dean McCarthy to Kroodsma and Biology Letters—I did not write a letter to Biology Letters	9
Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, UMass Graduate School; and Biology Letters	10
Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, Biology Letters, Dean Goodwin—who wrote to Biology Letters?.....	10
October 2015	11
Kroodsma to Biology Letters, Dean Steve Goodwin, Dean John McCarthy, Rolf Karlstrom (Chair of Biology Department), Elizabeth Jakob (ABS, OEB)	11
Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy.....	17
Kroodsma to Dean Goodwin	18
November 2015	18
Kroodsma to Michael Malone , Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement	18
December 2015.....	30
Vice Chancellor Malone to Kroodsma.....	30
January 2016	33
Addressing scientific and ethical misconduct on the UMass campus: Kroodsma challenge to VCRE Malone, CNS Associate Dean Powers, CNS Dean Goodwin, Biology Chair Connor, Ex-Biology Chair Karlstrom.....	33
Kroodsma to Provost Newman	57
Kroodsma to Provost Newman	59

March 2016	59
Kroodsma to Organismal and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Program	59
Kroodsma to Provost Newman	60
Provost Newman to Kroodsma, Elizabeth Connor, Steven Goodwin, John Bryan, Jeffrey Podos	60
Kroodsma to Michael Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement	61
Kroodsma to UMass Administration (Newman, Bryan, Malone, Donais, McCarthy, Goodwin, Powers, Connor, Meehan, Subbaswamy, Feldman, Dumont)	61
April 2016	65
Dead silence from UMass! All 12 super-administrators are totally silent.	65

January 2015

1/26/2015 **Kroodsma to CNS Dean Steven Goodwin**
26 January 2015

sgoodwin@cns.umass.edu

Hello Steve:

It's been some time since we crossed paths at UMass, given that I retired some 11 years ago already. I'm still kicking, have enjoyed nonacademic life immensely, but recently have reluctantly been drawn back into academic matters.

Those matters involve Jeff Podos and his students in the biology department, and some friends with whom I lunched recently advised me to simply alert you as to what has been going on, because you would want to know.

In short, I attended an ornithological conference during May 2014 during which I heard an oral paper presented by Sarah Goodwin (no relation, I presume!), one of Jeff's students. As I listened, I realized that it just couldn't be true, as I know their subject animals (chipping sparrows), because one of my former students did the landmark studies on this species, in the same population that Goodwin and Podos were working. My student's work, published out of the very same biology department, is never mentioned in the Goodwin/Podos paper, presumably because it would have fatally undermined the fundamental premise of their paper. Further study of their paper revealed other serious problems, and that there can be no truth whatsoever to the paper; I am not saying that it was intentionally fiction, but in fact it is fiction.

I find this all very disturbing, given what is, by my standards, rather serious scientific and ethical misconduct, but it gets worse. I have tried to communicate with Goodwin and Podos, at first in a gentle inquiry about why they discarded 2/3 of their data, but received no answer. In a total of about 8

emails, I described the problems with their particular study, and the problems with other papers on this topic of the past decade (many by Podos). Podos has refused to communicate about these issues, in spite of my repeated attempts to engage them in some dialogue about the science that they had published.

The first I heard anything from them was indirect, by way of the UMass Police (Officer Liptak), who threatened me with criminal harassment charges if I sent one more email to Podos or his students. (That sentence is worth reading a second time.)

The whole scenario is beyond bizarre, and I don't take these issues lightly. I have written a review of the Podos-style "research" over the past decade, and it will be published somewhere. It involves over a million dollars of taxpayer money being spent on, in my opinion, indefensible nonsense, and could be very embarrassing to Podos and the University when this all comes to light in some undesirable fashion. That's not a threat, just a statement that when something like this is exposed it sometimes takes on a life of its own that goes beyond what was imagined at the outset.

If you want, you can ask Podos what is going on. Why won't he communicate with others (not just me) about his science? Why has he muffled his students so they won't communicate either? Why has he gone to the police instead of communicating directly with me? I can only assume that he is trying to intimidate me so that I'll go away (that won't happen). I can also imagine what his answers to the above questions will be, that I have a personal vendetta against him, but this is in fact all about science.

Thought you'd want to know. And should you want more information, I have two mega-documents in which I have detailed all of the problems that I address above. For starters, I'll attach a document that is circulating among some like-minded friends.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

June 2015

6/17/2015

Kroodsma to Dean Goodwin at UMass

Hello Steve:

A letter for you, attached.

Regards . . . Don Kroodsma

17 June 2015

To: Steve Goodwin, Dean, College of Natural Sciences (sgoodwin@cns.umass.edu)

From: Don Kroodsma

Re: Jeff Podos and science

Repeat sentence from the end: I would appreciate your acknowledging that you have received this letter. With no response from you, I will proceed to address these issues in the manner I can best devise (a line that I repeatedly told Podos).

Back on 26 January, I sent you an email message on this topic, but did not hear back. A few days ago I copied you on a message that I sent to Biology Letters. Not hearing back from you could mean a variety of things (e.g., you never got those emails), but the situation is intensifying, and I thought I'd offer you a few thoughts directly.

It was a little over a year ago that I attended the ornithological meetings in Rhode Island, where Sarah Goodwin and Jeff Podos delivered an oral paper on their "Team of Rivals." I immediately recognized it is pure fiction, as given what was already known (but never acknowledged to the audience) about their chipping sparrow subjects, not a word of their paper could possibly be true. Yet, deceived by a polished presentation and impressive-sounding, confident results, the committee on student awards honored Sarah with a best-student paper award (which the Society is now considering retracting—an unprecedented action in itself).

A lot has happened since then. From the University of Washington, a major rebuttal of their published paper appeared in Biology Letters. As damning as that rebuttal was, there are even worse problems with the Goodwin and Podos paper that are not addressed, and Biology Letters has assured me that I will be allowed a follow-up in which I expose these additional ethical and scientific matters.

Despite repeated attempts to engage Podos or his students about their science, I have received no response from them, and instead Podos has enlisted the UMass police to threaten me with criminal harassment charges if I make any further attempt to communicate with them. Perhaps you were even consulted by Podos when that happened—I don't know, as that entire episode remains shrouded in mystery (and absurdity).

In my emails to Jeff, I have given him repeated opportunities to address these matters directly, in a style that he chooses. His refusal to communicate in any way whatsoever about his research data (itself a damning ethical issue in science) means that these matters will be taken to a public forum. In addition to the rebuttals that will appear in Biology Letters, I have prepared an extensive review all of the papers by Podos and his colleagues that have appeared on his topic of "performance" in the last 15 years.

The results are not pretty. They reveal Jeff's relentless marketing of a sexy, appealing idea that, upon close scrutiny, has no merit. Permeating these publications are an "utter dishonesty" and lack of

“scientific integrity” (sensu Feynman, “cargo cult science”; see http://neurotheory.columbia.edu/~ken/cargo_cult.html), and all manner of pseudo-scientific methods are used to promote these ideas of performance (and Jeff’s career). Once these issues are aired, I do not believe that any research Jeff Podos has ever done will have any credibility. He has, in my opinion, made a mockery of the scientific process, duping wide audiences into believing that his work has great significance.

These are among the most serious issues that we as scientists face, so I make one last offer to have Jeff address these matters on his own terms. I choose not to risk the (ridiculous) charges of criminal harassment and legal proceedings, so I send this letter to you (with my blessing to forward everything on to Podos himself—you do so at your own risk, however, as your own police have told me that *anyone* who tries to engage Podos about his science is subject to criminal harassment charges). If you wish to engage Jeff, and try to control the fallout on these issues, I leave it up to you.

This entire process has been no fun over the past year, but I have been unable to sit idly by as a field of science that I cherish is so abused. Science is “self-correcting,” I’ve been told, and I am compelled to be part of the correction process. It’s possible that you feel the same—I’d like to think so, even though Podos is one of “yours.” For me, the correction process would exact swift and severe penalties against anyone who engages in this kind of false science (see Appendix).

One final thought. I am sure that the motivation for my efforts will be challenged. As scientists, let’s list the possible explanations/motivations:

1. I loathe what is called “junk science,” especially in my cherished field of birdsong. **True.** There’s abundant evidence for this explanation. See previous papers I have published that challenge scientists in my field to do better work, such as the following:

Kroodsma, D. E. 1989. Suggested experimental designs for song playbacks. *Animal Behaviour*. 37:600-609.

Kroodsma, D. E. 1990. Using appropriate experimental designs for intended hypotheses in song playbacks, with examples for testing effects of song repertoire sizes. *Animal Behaviour*. 40:1138-1150.

Kroodsma, D. E. 1990. How the mismatch between the experimental design and the intended hypothesis limits confidence in knowledge, as illustrated by an example from bird-song dialects, p. 226-245. *In: Interpretation and explanation in the study of animal behavior*. M. Bekoff and D. Jamieson (eds.). Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

Byers, B. E., and D. E. Kroodsma. 2009. Female mate choice and songbird song repertoires. *Animal Behaviour*. 77:13-22.

2. I would like to undermine the career of anyone who publishes pseudo-science and who, with every publication, removes us farther and farther from a true understanding of what birds actually do. **True.** This is not personal. This is science, and a frontal attempt to stop pseudo-science.

3. I'd like to give Jeff Podos the opportunity to deal with these issues on his own terms. **True**, but I've given up (my naïve) hope that he'll come to terms with his ways unless forced to. I've given him every opportunity to do so in the past (I could send you copies of my previous emails to him), only to be threatened with charges of criminal harassment. Meanwhile, Podos continues, defiantly: Goodwin and Podos repeated their same flawed paper at a second scientific meeting last year, even after all of the flaws were pointed out to them; and they have defiantly defended their original publication in Biology Letters. If you want to try to convince Jeff to come to terms with these issues on his own, be my guest. I believe it will be far better for him in the long run if he himself addresses these issues candidly, rather than my (and others) taking him to task in a public forum for his misconduct.

4. This is a heads-up for you, in a leadership position, as to what is just over the horizon, to deal with in whatever way you wish, professionally or personally. **True**. My review has considerable momentum, solid support from leaders in the field of avian bioacoustics, and is nearly finished (awaiting data collected during 2015 spring/summer), but if some way is proposed to avoid a publication of my review, and these matters can be addressed in some satisfactory way without my public thrashing of the style of 'research' published by Jeff Podos, I'd be willing to consider any proposal from you.

5. I want to stop Podos from destroying any more graduate students. **Absolutely true**. I have studied the papers of only Goodwin and Moseley, and both are highly flawed, but excellently marketed. Science will be far better off without someone like Jeff training graduate students to work as he has.

6. I fret over abuse and waste of tax-payer money. **Not so much**. But I think that UMass would fret about this matter considerably, given that Podos has used over a million dollars of federal monies in these pseudoscientific endeavors.

7. This is a long-standing personal vendetta against Jeff Podos. **NONSENSE. FALSE**. I could send you my 2004 intra-departmental letter to Jeff in which I encourage him to do "science" rather than "marketing and advertising." There's nothing personal about that, but our friendly relationship stopped with that review, as he's never communicated with me since. ***This is about science. Period.*** It's about people like Jeff systematically and relentlessly undermining a field of endeavor that I cherish, i.e., learning what birds actually do. It is my opinion that we would know more about what birds actually do if Jeff Podos never published a 'scientific' paper. And, if this were really a personal vendetta against Jeff, I would have followed the demand of the UMass police (and presumably Podos) and told all 50 people with whom I was communicating that all of them were also liable for criminal harassment charges if they attempted to communicate with Podos about his science; it was at that point that I told Officer Liptak of the UMass police that I would not comply with her demand, because following her orders would have made Podos appear as a complete fool to a large international audience.

I would appreciate your acknowledging that you have received this letter. With no response from you, I will proceed to address these issues in the manner I can best devise (a line that I repeatedly told Podos).

And if you want to invite both Jeff and me to your office for a no-holds-barred dialogue, that would

be fine with me. I think that is the only way you are going to come to understand the breadth of the problem here.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

An Accounting

Each of us as scientists has our own standards by which we measure the ethical and scientific behavior of others. My accounting for Goodwin and Podos, and especially for Podos alone based on his other publications as well, would be swift and severe, as they undermine not only science as a way of knowing but also the public trust in scientists of all fields, from scientists who study birdsong to scientists who study climate change. In my accounting, I'd ask for the following:

1. A full retraction of Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015) in Biology Letters.
2. The Association of Field Ornithologists retracts its best student paper award to Goodwin, for her oral presentation of Goodwin and Podos (2014) at their 2014 meetings in Rhode Island.
3. All papers published by Podos are now questionable, not only for their obvious flaws, but also for practices in data manipulation or selection and analysis that cannot be detected; until Podos himself convinces scientists that some of his papers qualify for the test of "utter honesty" and "scientific integrity" that Feynman advocates, there would be a moratorium by all responsible scientists for accepting and citing these papers at face value.
4. The Animal Behavior Society, if it is a serious society that wishes to promote the scientific study of animal behavior, requests (or demands) that president-elect Jeff Podos resign that position.
5. The million or so dollars of tax-payer money that Podos has already spent on this "research" and graduate student training has done enough damage, and the Grants and Contracts Office at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, should restrict all future grant applications from Podos until he has been rehabilitated as a scientist.
6. Graduate students in the Organismal and Evolutionary Biology program at the University of Massachusetts, and especially those under Podos' training, should use these documents (including Kroodsma in prep a, b) as a case study in how not to conduct oneself professionally. And no students would be allowed to train with Podos unless they are co-advised by another faculty member.

July 2015

7/10/2015

Dean Goodwin to Kroodsma

I have received your letter and will look at it today.

steve

--

Steve Goodwin

Dean, College of Natural Sciences

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

7/16/2015

Kroodsma to Biology Letters, Dean Goodwin at UMass

Hello Raminder:

Thank you for acknowledging my email. Please note that Goodwin and Podos have not seen my letter to you because they threaten me with criminal harassment; I would gladly copy to them anything I have written about them, including this email to you.

Perhaps I need to be rather blunt in my assessment of this situation: In my opinion, there is serious ethical and scientific misconduct in Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015), and the paper should simply be retracted. It is not science, and Biology Letters should rise above these kinds of pseudoscientific publications.

1) For starters, the authors knowingly and intentionally omit reference to two key biological facts that would fatally undermine their story. And those facts were published by another graduate student in the same graduate program, in the same university department, on the same study populations, so these are not obscure, unknown facts.

2) Second, the authors discard 2/3 of their data and don't mention that in the publication; they got no statistically significant relationships with those data (data discarded were on 1) "performance" as measured by "vocal deviation" and 2) frequency bandwidth), so the authors reported only on the 1/3 of the data where they got a statistically significant result. To quote a recent paper on this topic: ""The omission of nonsignificant results from publications is undesirable for both scientific and ethical reasons."

3) Third, the binomial statistical test that was reported on the retained data was done wrong, and was not at all significant. Even when tutored by Ackey and Beecher about how to do the test properly, Goodwin and Podos did the test wrong again in their 2015 rebuttal, again squeezing out another seemingly statistically significant result. One can perhaps attribute this inability to do a test properly to incompetence, but an explanation of intention seems just as likely, given items 1 and 2 above.

4) and a multitude of other problems plague this study as well, some addressed in the critique by

Ackay and Beecher, but I'll stop (for now) at the above 3 issues.

I look forward to resolving these issues with Biology Letters.

Kind regards . . . Donald Kroodsma

September 2015

9/23/2
015

Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, Biology Letters

Dear Dean McCarthy:

As you perhaps know, I am an emeritus professor in your Organismal and Evolutionary Biology graduate program.

Biology Letters has informed me that you supplied them with information that led them to dismiss my concerns about the research of Jeff Podos. I asked them for a copy of your report, but they have referred me to you (see copy of email below).

Could you please forward to me a copy of what you sent to Biology Letters?

Thank you.

Kind regards . . . Don Kroodsma

9/24/2
015

Dean McCarthy to Kroodsma and Biology Letters—I did not write a letter to Biology Letters

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

I did not send anything to any journals, nor could I have done so legally. My communications with students, when I act in my capacity as Dean of the Graduate School, are student records covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

John McCarthy

Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School

Distinguished University Professor

http://works.bepress.com/john_j_mccarthy/

413-545-5271

9/24/2015

Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, UMass Graduate School; and Biology Letters

To John McCarthy, Dean of the Graduate School at UMass:

Thank you for your reply. I am clearly confused about a communication that Biology Letters received from a "Dean McCarthy" at UMass. I think there's only one Dean McCarthy at UMass, but perhaps not. I'm sorry to have taken your time on this. I hope Biology Letters can help clarify the confusion.

Kind regards. . . Don Kroodsma

To Surayya, at Biology Letters:

I am confused, and a little embarrassed that I bothered Dean McCarthy. I somehow misunderstood your email to me, about your statement that "Dean McCarthy should be able to provide these findings accordingly." He apparently knows nothing about this situation, and did not communicate with Biology Letters.

Please clarify how I can get a copy of the correspondence that you received.

Thank you.

Kind regards . . . Don Kroodsma

9/30/2015

Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy, Biology Letters, Dean Goodwin—who wrote to Biology Letters?

Dear Dean McCarthy (copy to Biology Letters, and Dean Goodwin):

I am confronted with a most confusing, not to mention frustrating, set of circumstances.

Here is a small bit of the history:

With Biology Letters, I have exchanged emails over the past half year or so, pointing out that one of their published papers, that by Goodwin and Podos (2014), simply cannot be true, for a variety of reasons.

I told Biology Letters that they could forward any of my correspondence directly to Jeff Podos, with the understanding that Biology Letters would then share with me any response that they received. (I could not send anything directly to Podos because he has threatened me with criminal harassment charges if I try to communicate with him—a most bizarre circumstance in itself.)

Podos in turn supplied Biology Letters with the results of an “*institutional investigation*,” which Biology Letters summarized as follows: “*the authors’ institution have conducted a thorough independent investigation into this matter and deemed this to be a difference of scientific opinion, of the kind that is very common in this field and across all scientific research. We are satisfied with the rigour and findings of this institutional investigation . . .*”

When I asked Biology Letters for a copy of this letter, they referred me to a “Dean McCarthy”: “*Dean McCarthy should be able to provide these findings accordingly.*”

When I asked you for a copy of the findings, you wrote the following: “*I did not send anything to any journals, nor could I have done so legally . . .*”

So I returned to Biology Letters and asked them to help me understand what is going on. Their response: “*The report findings were sent to me by the authors and this was signed off by the university review panel who investigated the case . . . Following on from the email below and reading over the Dean’s reasons for not sending on this information, I cannot send a copy of the findings on to you . . . [as] . . . I am conscious of the rules as laid out by the university.*”

There are a host of comments I could and should make about the above, but I’m going to simply ask if you can get to the bottom of this and send to me a copy of this secret investigation, or authorize Biology Letters to do so.

Thank you.

Kind regards . . . Don Kroodsma

October 2015

10/17/
2015

Kroodsma to Biology Letters, Dean Steve Goodwin, Dean John McCarthy, Rolf Karlstrom (Chair of Biology Department), Elizabeth Jakob (ABS, OEB)

Dear Surayya, for Biology Letters (copies to University of Massachusetts, Amherst: Dean Steve Goodwin, Dean John McCarthy, Rolf Karlstrom as Chair of Biology Department, and Elizabeth Jakob as officer of Animal Behavior Society and faculty member in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Program):

When I describe to my friends, both scientists and nonscientists, the circumstances surrounding Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015), they are dumbfounded. For everyone, it is inconceivable that 1) the authors refuse to communicate with me or others about their work; that 2) instead they use the university police to threaten me with criminal harassment charges for trying to talk to them about their research; and that 3) they had a special university review panel submit a secret report to Biology Letters in their support. Secret! I am not allowed to see it, according to “university rules.” Everyone is

incredulous, because everyone knows that's not the way science is supposed to be done.

As for the University of Massachusetts special review panel that exonerated Goodwin and Podos, it does remain top secret. Dean Goodwin and Dean McCarthy at the University are unresponsive, and there's no way for me to know what has transpired. Let me briefly address that review and the panel here:

In addressing Goodwin and Podos (2014), my claims are quite simple:

Goodwin and Podos 1) knowingly 2) omitted reference to two, known biological facts about chipping sparrows 3) that would have fatally undermined 4) their story. (There are many other problems with that publication, but I will keep this simple.)

To exonerate Goodwin and Podos, the review panel would have to address the following issues:

1) *knowingly*: The university panel would have to claim that Goodwin and Podos did not know about the Ph. D. thesis and the research published in mainstream journals by another graduate student in their own Biology Department who worked on the same population of chipping sparrows that they did.

2) *omitted reference to two, known biological facts about chipping sparrows*: It is a fact, not easily refuted by any review panel, that there is no reference in Goodwin and Podos to the two known facts, on a) how chipping sparrows actually learn their songs from an adult tutor (trill rate cannot reflect male quality as assumed in Goodwin and Podos), and on b) how the birds use those songs competitively (not cooperatively as assumed by Goodwin and Podos) outside their daytime territories. References to these known facts are supplied in my attached document ("No team of rivals or coalitions in territorial sparrows").

3) *would have fatally undermined*: All claims of Goodwin and Podos are false, because they are entirely at odds with what chipping sparrows actually do. For one of the known facts (on song learning), I explain fully in the attached document ("No team of rivals or coalitions in territorial sparrows").

4) *their story*: Goodwin and Podos (2014) is truly a story, with no truth in it. By definition, it is "fiction" (definition from Merriam-Webster: "written stories . . . that are not real: literature that tells stories which are imagined by the writer"). How the story was generated is another matter, best left to another venue (addressed in part by Akcay and Beecher 2015). Goodwin and Podos (2014) was for me a "last-straw" story, as I had read many others over the years (excerpts from a longer review are in the attached document, "Podos and Performance Studies"), and I finally decided to commit the effort to debunk it; little did I know the resistance I would face in doing so.

5) Furthermore, the review panel would need to dismiss as irrelevant the extreme efforts the authors have taken to avoid discussing their research (see attached file entitled "Podos and Criminal Harassment"). Using police to threaten criminal charges does not promote the kind of open dialogue that most scientists expect when searching for truths about how the world works. In fact, many

scientific societies, such as the Animal Behavior Society (where Podos is, ironically, president-elect), explicitly address these matters in their “Ethics in Publishing” statement to authors:

Animal Behaviour publishes papers by scientists conducting research at locations around the globe . . . 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>.

I challenge Dean John McCarthy, Dean Steve Goodwin, or anyone on the secret review panel to address these matters directly and openly, and tell us all that this is the way science is done at the University of Massachusetts. I realize that my message is rather inconvenient, as I address the scientific credibility of the head of one of their graduate programs at the university, one of their stars, and the president-elect of the Animal Behavior Society. But science isn't about convenience; it is about seeking truths about the natural world. The credibility of the review panel, and the University itself, is at stake here, and the word “cover-up” comes to mind; anyone who objects to that characterization is welcome to communicate with me and have a brief conversation about what is at stake here (I'm at 413-247-3367). I have always been open about my concerns, allowing Biology Letters to send any of my communications directly to Podos himself (he is protected by police from my direct communication), with the understanding that Biology Letters would facilitate a dialogue; instead, however, “university rules” demand a one-way communication, that anything coming back from Podos is secret. The continuing effort to stifle all scientific discourse is extreme. The obvious question one must ask, of course, is “Why?”

Rather than try to answer that simple question, may I please ask you, Surayya, for Biology Letters, and in the interest of science alone, to rise above all that and reconsider your offer of 2 March this year? You wrote the following:

. . . you may wish to submit an online eletter. These are published alongside the online article and are more informal than comments. They are moderated in-house, sometimes with advice from the journal editorial board.

Using a single figure, and minimal text, I can show that the published articles by Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015) are not true. I ask that you please consider publishing the attached as an online eletter

("No team of rivals or coalitions in territorial sparrows").

Thank you for your consideration.

And, as I have in the past been completely open about my concerns, you are welcome to send this document directly to Podos and the University of Massachusetts. I will in fact copy the two Deans on this letter, and two other university personnel whom I suspect may have been part of the review panel (chair of the Biology Department, and a fellow officer of the Animal Behavior Society and member of the Organismic and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Program of which Podos is head).

Kind regards . . . Donald Kroodsma

10/27/
2015

27 October 2015

To: Dean John McCarthy, Vice-Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School

To: Dean Steve Goodwin, College of Natural Sciences

To: Rolf Karlstrom, Chair, Department of Biology

To: Beth Jakob, OEB graduate faculty, officer of Animal Behavior Society

RE: Goodwin and Podos (2014), and other matters

Call me persistent, or any number of other things you wish, but I will not go away on this matter. The secrecy and stonewalling by UMass personnel only digs the hole deeper. In this document, so that anyone reading it for the first time will appreciate the situation, I am going to summarize what has transpired to date. And as I repeatedly told Podos until he turned the police on me for charges of criminal harassment and I could no longer urge a solution from him, I give anyone the opportunity to address these matters in a controlled, professional manner, or else I will decide on my own how I think it can best be handled in the next step.

Here is a summary of what has transpired so far:

1) Goodwin and Podos delivered an oral presentation at the May 2014 ornithology meetings in Rhode Island. I knew immediately that their paper was false, as it was impossible given the known biology of their subject animals, as published by another graduate student in their same department, working on the same sparrow population. Yet Goodwin and Podos (2014), publishing their paper in *Biology Letters*, omitted all reference to these known facts about the sparrows that would have fatally undermined their story, and instead invented traits for their animals that don't exist. Using a single figure and minimal text, I can unequivocally refute their story (attached: **No Teams of Rivals or Coalitions in Territorial Sparrows**; more thorough refutation in **Honest Signaling and**

Birdsong.pdf).

2) Goodwin and Podos refuse to communicate about their work. In eight emails, from July to December 2014, I attempted to understand what they had done in their research, always asking for a dialogue with them, but I received no response. Ironically, Podos is president-elect of the Animal Behavior Society, which strongly frowns on this kind of unethical behavior (see Ethics in Publishing, at <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001/>).

3) Goodwin and Podos have the university police call me and threaten me with criminal harassment charges if I attempt to ask any more questions of them. Furthermore, the police inform me that I must tell the ~50 international correspondents on this topic that none of them are allowed to contact Goodwin and Podos either (see attached file: **Podos and Criminal Harassment**). I challenge anyone to find a precedent for this kind of police action to stifle scientific discourse, especially threatening an emeritus professor in the same department if he talks to a colleague.

4) A review of the literature shows that Goodwin and Podos (2014) is not an isolated incident, that all of the literature that Podos has promoted on his performance ideas (Podos 1997) is simply false. I can demonstrate that with just a few graphs, as I have in the attached document (**Honest Signaling and Birdsong.pdf**).

5) In frequent exchanges with Biology Letters, in an attempt to have Goodwin and Podos (2014) simply retracted, matters have taken another strange twist. Biology Letters writes to me the following (18, 22 September 2015):

. . . the authors' institution have conducted a thorough independent investigation into this matter [Goodwin and Podos 2014] and deemed this to be a difference of scientific opinion, of the kind that is very common in this field and across all scientific research. We are satisfied with the rigour and findings of this institutional investigation and therefore will not be taking any further action on this occasion . . . Dean McCarthy should be able to provide these findings accordingly

Interestingly, Dean McCarthy seems to know nothing about this investigation (24 September 2015):

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

I did not send anything to any journals, nor could I have done so legally. My communications with students, when I act in my capacity as Dean of the Graduate School, are student records covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

John McCarthy

Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School

Inquiring further about this mystery, Surayya at Biology Letters tells me (30 September, 23 October

2015) that

The report findings were sent . . . by the authors and this was signed off by the university review panel who investigated the case . . . I cannot send a copy of the findings on to you . . . [because of] . . . the rules as laid out by the university . . . I'm afraid that I don't have another name [besides Dean McCarthy] from the university that could assist you with [getting a copy of the report].

So, as I understand the facts, 1) there exists a UMass Amherst investigative report with only Dean McCarthy's name on it, 2) but Dean McCarthy knows nothing of this report; 3) the report is signed off by some review panel, 4) but the review panel has no names and is not communicating with Dean McCarthy; 5) the report is secret because of university rules laid out by the review panel with no names, and 6) the secret report exonerates Goodwin and Podos on all fronts; and 7) the secret report (deemed by Biology Letters to be independent, thorough, and rigorous) was submitted by Goodwin and Podos. The continuing efforts to stifle all scientific discourse are extreme. Taking the facts at face value (e.g., Dean McCarthy has good memory and honestly tells me he knows nothing of the report, there is only one Dean McCarthy, no one is playing games with words, etc.), I can come up with only one explanation that fits all the facts: Podos himself wrote the institutional review and signed Dean McCarthy's name to it. Someone, please, tell me it ain't so, and give me a simple, happy explanation for what is going on here.

6) As I wrote to Biology Letters on 23 October 2015:

My claims are about as serious as they come in science: Goodwin and Podos (2014) have fabricated a story by inventing (two) biological traits for their subjects that are well known not to exist. Then, without telling readers, they discard data that don't tell the story, selectively reporting only a few statistically significant tests gleaned from all possible tests. Furthermore, they do the statistics wrong, both initially (2014) and repeatedly after their errors have been pointed out (2015), and then do their utmost to hide from public inquiry. The consequences for the scientific literature are the same as if the authors had fabricated data from the outset, i.e., a literature of mistruths.

Here are a few supplementary facts that I will point out, because I think they are not irrelevant. Podos trained with Steve Nowicki (now at Duke University), and the techniques used by Podos are also used by Nowicki (see first reviewed paper, by Podos, Peters, and Nowicki, in the attached document **Podos and Performance Studies**). Nowicki was a postdoc in the same program as Marc Hauser, who is disgraced in academic exile for scientific misconduct (<http://www.thenation.com/article/disgrace-marc-hauser/>). The literature that Podos produces is as false, if not even more so, than that produced by Hauser.

I welcome a response of any kind to the above. Mostly, I think you'd all like me to just go away, but that won't happen, I assure you (pretty strong evidence of my persistence is the attached document

Honest Signaling and Birdsong.pdf). These issues will be addressed, and if you want a hand in controlling how they're addressed, I'd welcome that. I ask to hear from you by Monday noon, November 2, or I will take the next step on my own. I have a hunch, for example, that OEB students and faculty do not know any of the above about their "leader" and the implications for their graduate program; I am sure that OEB students and faculty would not sit idly by, condoning the kinds of behavior that I have described here.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma
413-247-3367
donaldkroodsma@gmail.com

10/29/
2015

Kroodsma to Dean McCarthy

Dear Dean McCarthy:

For nearly a year and a half, I have been trying to achieve some resolution on a scientific matter with Jeff Podos in the Department of Biology. I have met many forms of resistance, from stonewalling, intimidating threats of criminal harassment from UMass police, and multiple charges against me behind my back (e.g., personal vendetta, attacking graduate students).

I have been open and honest in all of my communications, allowing everything I write to be forwarded directly to Podos (I can't send anything to him directly because of his threats of criminal harassment) and repeatedly asking for a dialogue to settle these matters.

In contrast, every response from Podos is kept secret, with nothing ever coming back to me. The latest top secret communication is an "institutional review" document that Podos has submitted to the journal *Biology Letters* with apparently only your name on it, but because of "university rules" I am not allowed to see this document.

May I please have your help in understanding what is going on here? Your earlier email to me suggested that you knew nothing of this secret review (24 Sept: "I did not send anything to any journals"), even though your name is on the review. Who, then, did write this review? And why the great secrecy? What kind of university rules would these be that must keep such a document secret and prohibit open scientific discourse?

It would be very helpful if I could have some kind of a response from you by Monday noon (November 2) before I meet with the Vice Chancellor for Research.

Thank you.

Kind regards . . . Donald Kroodsma

(donaldkroodsma@gmail.com; 413-247-3367)

10/29/
2015

Kroodsma to Dean Goodwin

Dear Dean Goodwin:

Other than acknowledging you received a letter from me (“I have received your letter and will look at it today”—July 10, 2015), you have been silent on the issues I am trying to address.

Below I copy a letter that I just sent to Dean McCarthy. If you would like to offer any thoughts on this matter before I meet with the Vice Chancellor for Research, I would welcome them as well.

Thank you.

Kind regards . . . Don Kroodsma

Response from Dean Goodwin

Don,

I am not in a position to do any more on this issue.

Respectfully,

Steve

Response from Kroodsma

Hi Steve:

Thank you for your response.

The "any more" suggests that you've done something, but I suspect that you can't tell me what that is either.

I will continue to pursue this matter without your help.

kind regards . . . Don

November 2015

11/2/2
015

Kroodsma to Michael Malone , Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement

To: Dr. Michael F. Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement

From: Donald Kroodsma, Professor Emeritus, Biology

Re: Scientific and Ethical Misconduct; Professor Jeff Podos, Biology

For almost a year and a half, since May 2014, I have been trying to address what I feel is scientific and ethical misconduct by Dr. Jeff Podos, Biology Department and Organismal and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Program. My efforts have been thwarted by stonewalling, by intimidation (UMass police threatening me with criminal harassment charges), by an "institutional review" that I am not allowed to see (secret because of "university rules"), and whatever means Podos has had at his disposal to avoid dealing with me and his work directly.

I come to the Vice Chancellor for Research as a last resort, after all other avenues to settle this matter have been exhausted (details below). Most recently, the following attempts have failed:

2 November 2015. From Biology Letters: "We consider the matter now closed."

2 November 2015. Dean McCarthy. No response by the date I had asked for a response, if one was forthcoming.

29 October 2015. Dean Goodwin. "I am not in a position to do any more on this issue."

I do not take this matter lightly, as will be abundantly evident below, because I feel the methods used by Podos are an affront to scientists and science everywhere, undermining our collective integrity. And I care first hand because Podos makes a mockery of a field of science that I value enormously, the study of birdsong. To make matters worse, Podos trains another generation of graduate students in the same techniques of what can best be called "pseudoscience." I realize that these are strong words, but I believe entirely warranted. I elaborate in this document and the attachments.

In studying the "Procedures for Dealing with Charges of Misconduct in Research and Scholarly Activities at the University of Massachusetts Amherst," I was struck by the following quotes, which are particularly relevant for the case I address (emphases mine):

Misconduct in research and scholarly activities is injurious to the University's teaching, research, and public service missions and cannot be tolerated.

Research and scholarly misconduct involves *misrepresentation of the procedures and outcomes of research to gain some advantage*. Misconduct may often be difficult to separate from error or poor judgment, from which it is *distinguished by the intentions* of the person(s) involved.

1. Falsification or fabrication: This includes falsification, modification, or fabrication of data or facts, or *selective inclusion or exclusion designed to mislead or to support false conclusions*.

5. Misrepresentations in publication: This form of misconduct involves the publishing or public circulation of material *intended to mislead the reader*.

I here provide a history of what has transpired since May 2014, when I first began trying to address this situation.

May 2014. At an ornithological conference in Rhode Island, Goodwin and Podos deliver an oral paper that I immediately realize is false. In a highly polished presentation, they tell a clever, exciting, and novel story about “Teams of Rivals” in chipping sparrows, how territorial males form alliances and coalitions based on precisely assessing the trill rates in each other’s songs. Goodwin won a Best Student Paper Award (as did, not coincidentally, the other Podos student in the competition—the only two awards at the scientific meeting went to Podos’ only two students, a “clean sweep,” boasted Podos on his website).

Goodwin and Podos create their story in large part by omitting reference to two key biological facts about their study animals. These are not obscure facts (about how the sparrows learn their songs, and where they routinely use them), but were published in mainstream journals by another graduate student in the same UMass Amherst Biology Department a few years before, working on the same sparrow populations that Goodwin and Podos worked on. Those two biological facts fatally undermine the Goodwin and Podos story (see attached; for short version, see **No Teams of Rivals or Coalitions in Territorial Sparrows**; for longer version, see **No Support for Honest Signaling in Birdsong and the Motor Constraints Hypothesis**). I would learn later that most of the data and statistical tests for the study were never mentioned in the publication (i.e., discarded), because they were not statistically significant. Instead, only a few tests that reached statistical significance were reported, those consistent with the story of song performance as promoted by Podos since 1997 (and those statistics were done wrong—Akçay and Beecher 2015).

I now read back to the VCRE document on misconduct: “*selective . . . exclusion designed to mislead or to support false conclusions.*” Yes, precisely. Or “*misrepresentation . . . to gain some advantage.*” Yes again, at the immediate expense of every graduate-student scientist attending the meetings, and the general expense of science everywhere, and scientists in all fields of endeavor; Goodwin won a Best Student Paper Award for a story fabricated by omitting reference to the basic biology of the subject animal, inventing two traits known not to exist, and selectively excluding inconvenient data and statistical tests. I have not studied the best-student paper presented by Dana Moseley at those meetings (she also won a major award at another scientific meeting the year before), but based on other evaluation of her work with Podos (see attached, **Podos and Performance studies**) I suspect it is equally contrived and false.

I also read in the VCRE document the following:

Misconduct may often be difficult to separate from error or poor judgment, from which it is distinguished by the intentions of the person(s) involved.

If the Goodwin and Podos oral paper and publication of that paper in *Biology Letters* were an isolated event and dealt with professionally by the authors, one might give the authors’ the benefit of the doubt and attribute the matter to “error or poor judgement,” even though they knew all about the biology of the chipping sparrow that refuted their paper before it was published. But I think that the intentions of the authors become clear when one considers what has transpired since May 2014, as well as before May 2014.

Failure to communicate—“Ethics in Publishing”

Repeatedly, from July 2014 to December 2014, I tried to establish a dialogue with Goodwin and Podos (see attached document, **Podos and Criminal Harassment**). Never did I receive a reply. At one point, in case emails weren't working, I sent a U. S. mail letter. Here are excerpts from those eight emails (full content of emails in attached document):

- 1) 9 July 2014 "I wondered if you could help me understand why in the paper you focused only on trill rate."
- 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"
- 3) 8 October 2014 "I have no idea what is in your head ... I'm still available to talk"
- 4) 15 October 2014 "JEFF, HERE'S ONE LAST ATTEMPT TO ENGAGE YOU"
- 5) 16 October 2014 "something well worth reading, from half a century ago" (Feynman 1985, Cargo Cult Science; on the "utter honesty and scientific integrity" needed to do science)
- 6) 9 November 2014 "I'd welcome any dialogue with you"
- 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"
- 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" [At this point, exasperated at failing to evoke any response from Goodwin and Podos, I sent my larger review out to all those whom I critiqued, an ethical requirement from the Animal Behavior Society.]

This failure to communicate is troubling. Podos is president-elect of the Animal Behavior Society, which has a strong Ethics in Publishing statement on its website (see <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001/>):

Animal Behaviour publishes papers by scientists conducting research at locations around the globe ... 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>.

The president-elect of the Society is in clear and extreme violation of its own Ethics in Publishing statement.

Intimidation by Threatening Criminal Harassment Charges

As if not responding weren't sufficient, Podos engaged the UMass police force to silence me (see transcript of 18 December 2014 phone call from Officer Liptak, in the attached **Podos and Criminal Harassment**): If I attempted any more communication with Podos and his students ("UMass Biology"), I would be charged with criminal harassment. In a further email with the police, I was told to inform the ~50 international correspondents on this topic that none of them were allowed to contact Goodwin and Podos either. At that point I told the officer that I was embarrassed for her, and for Podos, and I would not inflict this kind of international disgrace on anyone.

Continuing Defense of Goodwin and Podos (2014)

Even though both I and a University of Washington group told Goodwin and Podos that we knew of the serious flaws in their study, which clearly rendered it false, Goodwin and Podos presented the same paper later at another meeting during August 2014 (Animal Behavior Society). And, in spite of knowing all of the flaws, they vigorously defended the paper again in their 2015 rebuttal to Akcay and Beecher (2015), arguing cleverly enough that anyone not reading carefully will assume this is just another case of minor disagreements of opinion about whether, for example, birds could be "fingerprinted" based on their songs alone, without having the birds marked. I will state here in the strongest possible terms that this is not a matter of opinion. It is science vs. non-science, or pseudoscience, or junk science (choose your terms).

The Continuing Secrecy

In frequent exchanges with Biology Letters, in an attempt to have Goodwin and Podos (2014) simply retracted, matters have taken another strange twist. Biology Letters writes to me the following (18, 22 September 2015):

... the authors' institution have conducted a thorough independent investigation into this matter [Goodwin and Podos 2014] and deemed this to be a difference of scientific opinion, of the kind that is very common in this field and across all scientific research. We are satisfied with the rigour and findings of this institutional investigation and therefore will not be taking any further action on this occasion ... Dean McCarthy should be able to provide these findings accordingly

Interestingly, Dean McCarthy seems to know nothing about this investigation (24 September 2015):

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

I did not send anything to any journals, nor could I have done so legally. My communications with students, when I act in my capacity as Dean of the Graduate School, are student records covered by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

(FERPA).

John McCarthy

Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Graduate School

Inquiring further about this mystery, Surayya at Biology Letters tells me (30 September, 23 October, 2 November 2015) that

The report findings were sent . . . by the authors and this was signed off by the university review panel who investigated the case . . . I cannot send a copy of the findings on to you . . . [because of] . . . the rules as laid out by the university . . . I'm afraid that I don't have another name [besides Dean McCarthy] from the university that could assist you with this [getting a copy of the report] . . . the report was provided to us in confidence . . .

This “institutional investigation” remains a mystery to me. As I understand the facts, 1) there exists a UMass Amherst investigative report with Dean McCarthy's name on it, 2) but Dean McCarthy knows nothing of this report (in follow-up emails to attempt to verify this, Dean McCarthy has not responded); 3) the report is signed off by some review panel, 4) but the review panel seemingly has no names and is not communicating with Dean McCarthy; 5) the report is secret because of university rules laid out by the review panel with no names, and 6) the secret report exonerates Goodwin and Podos on all fronts; and 7) the secret report (deemed by Biology Letters to be independent, thorough, and rigorous) was submitted by Goodwin and Podos.

The continuing efforts to stifle all scientific discourse are extreme. Taking the facts at face value (e.g., Dean McCarthy has good memory and honestly tells me he knows nothing of the report, there is only one Dean McCarthy, no one is playing games with words, etc.), the possible explanations for what has transpired in this institutional review are limited, and not so good.

I think that the office of Vice Chancellor for Research will have a better chance of getting to the bottom of the above mystery than I will, so I am going to stop trying to obtain a copy of this secret report, or figure out who wrote it. But, I doubt very much that anyone, review panel or not, will publicly defend Goodwin and Podos (2014), because anyone who condones their work as science or their behavior as ethical will no doubt have their own work scrutinized.

A History

If all of the above were an isolated incident involving a single paper, even given the most bizarre series of events surrounding it, one might still cut the authors some slack, but . . . eleven years ago, on an in-house review, I pointed out to Podos the difference between science and what he was doing:

“Science is the search for truth, regardless of how good the story is; marketing and advertising is the search for a good story, regardless of the truth” (October 2004).

To me, Podos was clearly and cleverly marketing sexy ideas with no substance; that was not science, I pointed out. Since 2004, there has been no communication between me and Podos or any of his students, until 2014 (even though I'm an emeritus professor in the same Biology Department, UMass Amherst). By definition, we have a long-standing disagreement about what

constitutes science (but that is not the same as a long-standing vendetta, as I have been accused of). Frankly, I do not believe Podos does science, but instead throughout his career has marketed himself and his ideas by “*misrepresentation of the procedures and outcomes of research to gain some advantage*”(VCRE document on scientific misconduct).

After studying Goodwin and Podos (2014), I reviewed some of the other papers Podos had published on his idea of song performance (see attached, **Podos and Performance Studies**). In spite of Podos’ attempt to prove otherwise, there is not a single credible bit of scientific evidence to support the hypothesis that he continues to market.

The first paper among my reviews, that by Podos, Peters, and Nowicki, is highly informative. It shows how selective the authors are in finding support for their story, claiming a dozen times how certain selected data are *consistent with* their performance hypothesis, but never once do the authors help the reader fully appreciate the contribution (or lack of it) that they are making to science. No alternative explanations are considered, and data inconsistent with their favored explanation are ignored. With the admission (inadvertent, in an email by Goodwin to Univ of Washington group before all communications were silenced) by Goodwin and Podos (2014) that most of their data and statistical tests were discarded, one sees how the stories develop from the outset.

Or consider my review of Lahti, Mosely, and Podos—it is, frankly, highly deceptive in how it manipulates readers to a point of view in the Introduction, and then does its best to conceal the real story in the data and instead promote Podos’ false performance hypothesis (see review in **Podos and Performance Studies**).

Accusations against Me; My Motivations

I am not a welcome messenger, I realize, and all manner of accusations have been leveled against me by Podos (and probably his graduate advisor Nowicki), but never to my face, never where I can address them directly (e.g., in confidential statements to the editor of the journal *Animal Behavior*, where I was hoping to publish my findings). I have been accused of attacking graduate students (Goodwin, Moseley), for example, but I would simply ask about all of the graduate students who were denied a fair competition for a Best Student Paper Award at the ornithological meetings in May 2014. I do not believe cheaters should be rewarded, especially not in science (not in the Olympics either, where medals are retracted when cheating is discovered).

Why am I committing so much energy over the last year and a half to addressing this issue? I will copy here what I wrote to Dean Steve Goodwin on 17 June 2015:

One final thought. I am sure that the motivation for my efforts will be challenged. As scientists, let’s list the possible explanations/motivations:

1. I loathe what is called “junk science,” especially in my cherished field of birdsong. **True.** There’s abundant evidence for this explanation. See previous papers I have

published that challenge scientists in my field to do better work, such as the following:

Kroodsma, D. E. 1989. Suggested experimental designs for song playbacks. *Animal Behaviour*. 37:600-609.

Kroodsma, D. E. 1990. Using appropriate experimental designs for intended hypotheses in song playbacks, with examples for testing effects of song repertoire sizes. *Animal Behaviour*. 40:1138-1150.

Kroodsma, D. E. 1990. How the mismatch between the experimental design and the intended hypothesis limits confidence in knowledge, as illustrated by an example from bird-song dialects, p. 226-245. *In: Interpretation and explanation in the study of animal behavior*. M. Bekoff and D. Jamieson (eds.). Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado.

Byers, B. E., and D. E. Kroodsma. 2009. Female mate choice and songbird song repertoires. *Animal Behaviour*. 77:13-22.

2. I would like to undermine the career of anyone who publishes pseudo-science and who, with every publication, removes us farther and farther from a true understanding of what birds actually do. **True**. This is not personal. This is science, and a frontal attempt to stop pseudo-science.

3. I'd like to give Jeff Podos the opportunity to deal with these issues on his own terms. **True**, but I've given up (my naïve) hope that he'll come to terms with his ways unless forced to. I've given him every opportunity to do so in the past (I could send you copies of my previous emails to him), only to be threatened with charges of criminal harassment. Meanwhile, Podos continues, defiantly: Goodwin and Podos repeated their same flawed paper at a second scientific meeting last year, even after all of the flaws were pointed out to them; and they have defiantly defended their original publication in *Biology Letters*. If you want to try to convince Jeff to come to terms with these issues on his own, be my guest. I believe it will be far better for him in the long run if he himself addresses these issues candidly, rather than my (and others) taking him to task in a public forum for his misconduct.

4. This is a heads-up for you, in a leadership position, as to what is just over the horizon, to deal with in whatever way you wish, professionally or personally. **True**. My review has considerable momentum, solid support from leaders in the field of avian bioacoustics, and is nearly finished (awaiting data collected during 2015 spring/summer), but if some way is proposed to avoid a publication of my review, and these matters can be addressed in some satisfactory way without my public thrashing of the style of 'research' published by Jeff Podos, I'd be willing to consider any proposal from you.

5. I want to stop Podos from destroying any more graduate students. **Absolutely true**. I have studied the papers of only Goodwin and Moseley, and both are highly flawed, but

excellently marketed. Science will be far better off without someone like Jeff training graduate students to work as he has.

6. I fret over abuse and waste of tax-payer money. **Not so much.** But I think that UMass would fret about this matter considerably, given that Podos has used over a million dollars of federal monies in these pseudoscientific endeavors.

7. This is a long-standing personal vendetta against Jeff Podos. **NONSENSE. FALSE.** I could send you my 2004 intra-departmental letter to Jeff in which I encourage him to do “science” rather than “marketing and advertising.” There’s nothing personal about that, but our friendly relationship stopped with that review, as he’s never communicated with me since. ***This is about science. Period.*** It’s about people like Jeff systematically and relentlessly undermining a field of endeavor that I cherish, i.e., learning what birds actually do. It is my opinion that we would know more about what birds actually do if Jeff Podos never published a ‘scientific’ paper. And, if this were really a personal vendetta against Jeff, I would have followed the demand of the UMass police (and presumably Podos) and told all 50 people with whom I was communicating that all of them were also liable for criminal harassment charges if they attempted to communicate with Podos about his science; it was at that point that I told Officer Liptak of the UMass police that I would not comply with her demand, because following her orders would have made Podos appear as a complete fool to a large international audience.

A Solution, an Accounting

Here is what I wrote to Dean Goodwin on 17 June 2015. It may sound harsh, but I still believe now what I wrote then.

Each of us as scientists has our own standards by which we measure the ethical and scientific behavior of others. My accounting for Goodwin and Podos, and especially for Podos alone based on his other publications as well, would be swift and severe, as they undermine not only science as a way of knowing but also the public trust in scientists of all fields, from scientists who study birdsong to scientists who study climate change. In my accounting, I’d ask for the following:

1. A full retraction of Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015) in Biology Letters.
2. The Association of Field Ornithologists retracts its best student paper award to Goodwin, for her oral presentation of Goodwin and Podos (2014) at their 2014 meetings in Rhode Island.
3. All papers published by Podos are now questionable, not only for their obvious flaws, but also for practices in data manipulation or selection and analysis that cannot be detected; until Podos himself convinces scientists that some of his papers qualify for the test of “utter honesty” and “scientific integrity” that Feynman advocates (see http://neurotheory.columbia.edu/~ken/cargo_cult.html), there would be a moratorium

by all responsible scientists for accepting and citing these papers at face value.

4. The Animal Behavior Society, if it is a serious society that wishes to promote the scientific study of animal behavior, requests (or demands) that president-elect Jeff Podos resign that position.
5. The million or so dollars of tax-payer money that Podos has already spent on this “research” and graduate student training has done enough damage, and the Grants and Contracts Office at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, should restrict all future grant applications from Podos until he has been rehabilitated as a scientist.
6. Graduate students in the Organismal and Evolutionary Biology program at the University of Massachusetts, and especially those under Podos’ training, should use these documents . . . as a case study in how not to conduct oneself professionally. And no students would be allowed to train with Podos unless they are co-advised by another faculty member.

How to do science

In a wide-ranging critique of another scientist who claimed to have found a weakness in Podos’ performance hypothesis, Zollinger, Podos et al. (2014; pdf attached) lecture that scientist on a number of issues:

- 1) faulty measurements and errors in methodology,
- 2) how data are interpreted,
- 3) validity of results,
- 4) experimental rigour,
- 5) alternative explanations and hypotheses for data,
- 6) the ability to reject hypotheses,
- 7) appropriate use of skepticism, and
- 8) problems in published papers that “undermine the validity of the results reported and the conclusions reached.
- 9) More generally, Podos and his coauthors fret that those who fail on the “basic principles” of science
- 10) will “have a profound adverse effect on the way the research field is viewed by the rest of the scientific community.”

That critique by itself is well-taken, and any scientist would agree with all of the generalities dictated there, but in the context of all that I have written here about the quality of Podos’ own research, that critique is an extraordinary document . . . about which I need say no more.

Summary

As I wrote to Biology Letters on 23 October 2015:

My claims are about as serious as they come in science: Goodwin and Podos (2014) have fabricated a story by inventing (two) biological traits for their subjects that are well known not to exist. Then, also without telling readers, they discard data that don't tell the story, selectively reporting only a few statistically significant tests gleaned from all possible tests. Furthermore, they do the statistics wrong, both initially (2014) and repeatedly after their errors have been pointed out (2015), and then do their utmost to hide from public inquiry. The consequences for the scientific literature are the same as if the authors had fabricated data from the outset, i.e., a literature of mistruths.

And here are some unwelcomed supplementary facts, because I think they are not irrelevant. Podos trained with Steve Nowicki (now at Duke University), and the techniques used by Podos are also used by Nowicki (see first reviewed paper, by Podos, Peters, and Nowicki, in the attached document **Podos and Performance Studies**). Nowicki was a postdoc in the same program as Marc Hauser, a former professor at Harvard University, who is now disgraced in academic exile for scientific misconduct (<http://www.thenation.com/article/disgrace-marc-hauser/>). The literature that Podos produces is as false, if not even more so, than that produced by Hauser.

This entire process has been no fun since last May, but I have been unable to sit idly by as a field of science that I cherish is so abused. Science is “self-correcting,” I’ve been told, and I am compelled to be part of the correction process. I know there are others who share my passion, and I am confident that, in the end, science will win. Science must win.

What next?

That is largely up to you, I understand, Dr. Malone. I look forward to hearing from you and settling these issues. And, as I have written numerous times before, anything I write may be shared directly with Jeff Podos (because of his legal threats, I cannot do that directly, or I would), but I would ask for the courtesy of a dialogue with Podos rather than a repeatedly one-way communication, with every response from Podos being kept secret.

Also, I can supply you with more documents, such as all of my emails with Biology Letters, with the Association of Field Ornithologists, with Deans Goodwin and McCarthy, the journal *Animal Behavior*—whatever you want. Ever since being threatened with criminal harassment, I have kept very thorough records of everything that has transpired.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma, emeritus, Biology Department, UMass Amherst

52 School St., Hatfield MA 01038; 413-247-3367; donaldkroodsma@gmail.com

List of attached documents:

1. VCRE--Scientific and ethical misconduct--Podos, Biology.docx (this letter)

2. No Teams of Rivals or Coalitions in Territorial Sparrows
3. Podos and Criminal Harassment
4. Zollinger, Podos et al. On doing science (2012)
5. Podos and Performance Studies
6. Honest Signaling and the Motor Constraints Hypothesis

Relevant references

- Akçay, C., and M. D. Beecher. 2015. Team of rivals in chipping sparrows? A comment on Goodwin & Podos. *Biology Letters*. 11:20141043.
- Feynman, R. P. 1985. *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!* W. W. Norton & Company, New York City.
- Gitzen, R. A. 2007. The dangers of advocacy in science. *Science* 317:748-748.
- Goodwin, S. E., and J. Podos. 2014. Team of rivals: alliance formation in territorial songbirds is predicted by vocal signal structure. *Biology Letters* 10:Article Number: 20131083.
- Goodwin, S. E., and J. Podos. 2015. Reply to Akçay & Beecher: yes, team of rivals in chipping sparrows. *Biology Letters*. 11:20150319.
- Simmons, J. P., L. D. Nelson, and U. Simonsohn. 2011. False-positive psychology: undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant. *Psychological Science*. 22:1359-1366.
- Zollinger, S. A., J. Podos, E. Nemeth, F. Goller, and H. Brumm. 2012. On the relationship between, and measurement of, amplitude and frequency in birdsong. *Animal Behaviour* 84:E1-E9.

VCRE to Kroodsma, 3 November

Dear Professor Kroodsma,

I acknowledge I have received the attachments and our office will review and get back to you.

Regards,

Mike

December 2015

12/15/
2015

Vice Chancellor Malone to Kroodsma

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

Please find the attached letter to the findings of the misconduct allegation presented on November 2, 2015.

Regards,

Mike



UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST

Office of Research & Engagement
362 Whitmore
181 Presidents Drive
Amherst MA 01003-9313

Michael F. Malone, Vice Chancellor
Ronnie and Eugene Isenberg
Distinguished Professor
(413) 545-5270
(413) 577-0007 fax
mmalone@umass.edu

December 15, 2015

Dr. Donald Kroodsma
VIA EMAIL to donaldkroodsma@gmail.com

RE: Misconduct Allegation Dated November 2, 2015

Dear Dr. Kroodsma:

Consistent with applicable University of Massachusetts Amherst policy, I am writing to convey my determination relative to your complaint dated November 2, 2015, submitted to me for handling under the University's Misconduct in Scholarly and Research Activities (see [Policy](#)).

Having considered the facts of the situation and all available input, and consistent with the findings of the Preliminary Review conducted by Associate Dean for Faculty & Research Sally Powers, as communicated in her December 1, 2015, correspondence (copy attached), it is my determination that there is insufficient substance to the allegation of misconduct to warrant the convening of a Committee of Inquiry.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M. F. Malone".

Michael F. Malone, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement

cc: Professor Jeffrey Podos (Respondent)
Associate Dean for Faculty & Research Sally Powers, College of Natural Sciences (Preliminary Reviewer)




UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST

College of Natural Sciences
107 Stockbridge Hall
University of Massachusetts
80 Campus Center Way
Amherst, MA 01003-9246

Associate Dean for Faculty & Research

voice: 413-577-6425
fax: 413-545-1242

To: Michael Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement

From: Sally Powers, CNS Associate Dean for Faculty & Research 

CC: Jennifer Donais, AVC Research and Engagement, Research Compliance

Date: December 1, 2015

Re: Preliminary Review of Allegation of Misconduct by Professor Jeffrey Podos

Vice Chancellor Mike Malone requested on November 12, 2015 that I provide a Preliminary Review of Dr. Donald Kroodsmas's November 2, 2015 allegation of misconduct by Professor Jeffrey Podos. Dr. Kroodsmas's allegation included a memo to VC Malone detailing his rationale for the allegation and five additional documents listed below:

1. "No teams of rivals or coalitions in territorial sparrows": A summary of objections to Goodwin and Podos' (2014) scientific conclusions.
2. "The evidence for criminal harassment: My emails to 'UMass Biology' (Podos or Goodwin): Nine emails sent from Kroodsmas to Podos or Goodwin with commentary from Kroodsmas, and a transcript between UMass police and Kroodsmas.
3. Zollinger, Podos et al., 2012. Publication
4. "Podos and Performance Studies": a summary of objections to Podos, Peter, & Nowicki's (2004) conclusions.
5. "Honest Signaling and the Motor Constraints Hypothesis": a manuscript by Kroodsmas detailing his objections to Podos' research.

I reviewed all of Dr. Kroodsmas's materials, interviewed Dr. Podos, Dr. Elizabeth Connor, current Chair of Biology, and Dr. Rolf Karlstrom, past Chair of Biology.

Dr. Kroodsmas alleges that Dr. Podos has intentionally deceived the scientific community by a) not including facts and references in his publications that Dr. Kroodsmas believes are relevant, b) incorrect use of a statistical test, and c) not including non-significant results in publications. Additionally, Dr. Kroodsmas alleges that Dr. Podos has acted unethically by not responding to his emails. Upon full review of the materials, I believe that allegations a, b, and c are simply disputes about the interpretation of results and the appropriateness of methodologies, and do not rise to the level of misconduct. Dr. Podos has not responded to emails of Dr. Kroodsmas since 2003-2004 because Dr. Podos believes the emails constitute harassment. Dr. Podos has responded professionally to earlier critiques through normal academic channels by replying to a letter to the editor in the scientific journal where his work was published.

It is important to note that Dr. Kroodsmas's affiliation with UMass Amherst has not given him any special access to or knowledge of Dr. Podos' research or lab. Dr. Kroodsmas has not been directly involved with the UMass Biology department or Dr. Podos' research group since Dr. Kroodsmas's retirement over a decade ago.

I find that there is insufficient substance to these allegations of misconduct to proceed with any additional investigation.

12/26/
2015

Dear Dr. Kroodsmas,

In response to your email messages and telephone message on this topic I must respectfully decline to meet, since I have a potential role in the remaining University process. This process is described in the Policy referenced in my letter to you dated December 15, 2015 and also available at the link below.

http://www.umass.edu/research/sites/default/files/documents/umass_amherst_research_misconduct_policy_and_procedures.pdf

Sincerely,

Mike Malone

Michael F. Malone

Vice Chancellor for Research & Engagement

Ronnie & Eugene Isenberg Distinguished Professor of Engineering

University of Massachusetts Amherst

(413) 545-5270; Assistant: Christine A. Burnett, caburnett@research.umass.edu

January 2016

1/4/20
16

Addressing scientific and ethical misconduct on the UMass campus: Kroodsmas challenge to VCRE Malone, CNS Associate Dean Powers, CNS Dean Goodwin, Biology Chair Connor, Ex-Biology Chair Karlstrom

Hello to those who contributed to or wrote the Powers report on Jeffrey Podos:

My response is attached (see below).

That document as well as other relevant documents are available at

http://donaldkroodsmas.com/?page_id=1596, with a password = 'science' (all lower case).

Tomorrow morning, after a scheduled phone conversation, these documents will be transmitted to Dr. James Kroll, Director of Research Integrity and Administrative Investigations at the National Science Foundation.

Regards . . . Donald Kroodsmas

Attached: Kroodsmas challenge to Powers and Malone et al.pdf (below).

4 January 2016

PROLOGUE

I had imagined that there could be some reasonable dialogue between responsible parties at UMass and me, that we could work towards some kind of understanding, if not some kind of solution to the issues that I raise. In the following document, for example, I was offering a chance for UMass to reconsider the substance of the Powers report (explained in the document), and offering a chance for those who contributed to the report to reevaluate some facts that might have escaped them before.

I was wrong on all counts. In an email this morning, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement Michael Malone closed those doors. As a result, parts of the following document are no longer relevant (I provide relevant “updates” here and there), as this document (and others) will now be made available to Dr. James Kroll, Director of Research Integrity and Administrative Investigations at the National Science Foundation.

Here, for the record, is the email exchange from this morning. Left out is a phone message for Malone about noon, in which I offered an opportunity for him to reconsider the Powers report, and in which I expressed some outrage at what had transpired in that report.

4 January, 8:39a.m.

Hello Mike:

If you are available this afternoon sometime, could I stop in and say hello in person? I am available anytime except ~1:30 to ~2:30, when I have an appointment downtown.

regards . . . Don

4 January, 8:47a.m.

Hello again . . .

On second thought, maybe there's a possibility of meeting with you and Sally Powers together. I'd prefer that.

I would like to meet the two of you in person, to see you each as a human being, not an object to write to, as I think (based on the Powers report) we best have a face-to-face conversation before whatever comes next.

If this afternoon does not work, please give me a time frame when it might be possible.

Kind regards . . . Don

4 January, 12:20 p.m.

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

In response to your email messages and telephone message on this topic I must respectfully decline to meet, since I have a potential role in the remaining University process. This process is described in the Policy referenced in my letter to you dated December 15, 2015 and also available at the link below.

http://www.umass.edu/research/sites/default/files/documents/umass_amherst_research_misconduct_policy_and_procedures.pdf

Sincerely,

Mike Malone

KROODSMA CHALLENGE TO POWERS AND MALONE ET AL.

To: Michael Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, UMass Amherst
Sally Powers, College of Natural Sciences, Associate Dean for Faculty & Research
Steve Goodwin, Dean, College of Natural Sciences
Jennifer Donais, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Compliance and Support Services
Elizabeth Connor, Chair, Biology Department
Rolf Karlstrom, past Chair, Biology Department
Author Jeff Podos, Leader, Organismal and Evolutionary Biology Program¹
(National Science Foundation: IOS; Office of Inspector General, Director of Research Integrity and Administrative Investigations, Dr. James Kroll, at 703-292-5012)—a likely future step, as detailed below

From: Donald Kroodsma, Emeritus, OEB and Biology Department, UMass Amherst

Re: Standards for Professional Conduct at UMass, Amherst

Note: All relevant documents for my Allegations are available at

http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596, with password = science (all lower case)

I thank Vice Chancellor Malone and Associate Dean Powers for your assessment of the “Allegations of Misconduct by Professor Jeffrey Podos.” I had expected from you the defense of a colleague and the finding of no misconduct, as it’s all too easy to gloss over specifics and come in general terms to that kind of conclusion, especially with the help of Author Podos (see details below that challenge the independent nature of your assessment). Everyone would rather be done with this matter, me included, but I want to give each of you the opportunity to clarify your position on these matters before I proceed to any next step.

¹ Note that I cannot send this document to Podos, because he has engaged the UMass police to threaten me with charges of criminal harassment if I send him an email; everyone else has my permission to send this document directly to Podos and his coauthor Sarah Goodwin. But I am under orders to warn you, as you also face threats of criminal harassment, because the UMass police have told me that no one is allowed to communicate with Podos about his research; it was my responsibility, I was told by Officer Liptak, to relay that order to an international audience of about 50 people (I told her that it would be a total embarrassment to Podos and UMass for me to do so, and I violated her order, even though I personally felt Podos deserved the public embarrassment).

I have several items that I would like to address, in very specific terms, to help sharpen your focus. I will ask a question or make a statement, and you can respond yes/no or true/false. It may seem an insultingly slow and deliberate process (ok, it is), but it allows no general “arm-waving” and dismissal of my allegations, and is proven necessary given the nature of the Powers report. Assuming you will all support the conclusions of Associate Dean Powers, I have offered a default vote for you, which you can change by communicating with me; if I hear nothing from you², I will accept your default vote.

I think the appropriate next step would be to compare your votes, my vote, and the opinion of NSF representatives, as we are talking about NSF-sponsored research (IOS1028964). I think it is clear that these matters have implications not only for this specific case regarding Jeff Podos, but also for standards of acceptable ethical and scientific conduct across the entire UMass campus, and for your roles in maintaining these standards.

ETHICAL CONDUCT and CHARGES OF HARASSMENT

First, let’s consider the charge of harassment, which Podos uses as justification for refusing to correspond about his research: As stated in the Powers report, “*Dr. Podos has not responded to emails of Dr. Kroodsma since 2003-2004 because he believes the emails constitute harassment.*” I have read this sentence a dozen times, and, frankly, I find it highly disturbing, and incriminating, though this time not for Author Podos. One would think that Associate Dean Powers would come to her own independent assessment of misconduct, not merely report what Podos believes. This single sentence casts doubt on the independence of the entire report by Powers, suggesting it is simply a poorly disguised report of what Dr. Podos believes, or would have everyone believe.

Given Powers’ failure to independently assess my allegations of misconduct, either through inability or unwillingness, and given that her report seems to be (in part or in its entirety) a reporting of what “Dr. Podos believes,” I am going to lead each of you who contributed to this report through the facts myself, and ask each of you to come to your own independent conclusion. I will give Powers the chance to revote, if she wishes, after focusing on the facts that I offer.

I proceed, with some facts, questions, and statements:

During October 2004 (yes, over a decade ago), Jeff Podos asked me for an in-house review of an article that he had written. I read it, wrote an honest review, and then didn’t send it to Jeff, because I was rather disturbed at what I read, and I thought that, in the interest of maintaining a friendship with another birdsong enthusiast in my very own Biology Department, I should just remain quiet. In this case, honesty was not the best policy; I was a coward, perhaps, placing friendship over an honest scientific assessment. But Podos persisted, requesting again that I offer my thoughts, so I did. I would never hear back from him; during the following decade, he and his students would remain totally

² I don’t expect to receive votes from any of you, because each of you faces a dilemma: Honest votes will inevitably incriminate your friend and colleague Jeff Podos, and supportive votes for Podos will incriminate each of you and the entire UMass community. Given your respective roles in producing the Powers report, I will accept any silence as agreement with it.

isolated from me, even though I live nearby.³ (Given our shared interest in birdsong, that alone seems rather odd, I would suggest.) My 2004 email to Podos is provided, in its entirety, in Appendix 1.

Please read that 2004 email in the Appendix now

In brief, in that email I stated my considered opinion that Jeff was marketing sexy ideas and good stories that had little truth (a decade later, that conclusion has been reinforced many times over). After you read that email in the appendix, I have a specific question for you:

Question: Does that email constitute harassment, as Podos maintains? (Short answers of clarification are welcomed for all questions or statements.)

UMass (Powers report)	YES⁴	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES⁴	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)⁵	
Associate CNS Dean Powers (revote)	(yes)⁶	
AVC Donais	(yes)⁵	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)⁵	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)⁵	
Author Podos	(yes)⁵	
Kroodsma		NO⁷
NSF⁸	?	?

Explanation here if you vote “yes”:

³ That isolation was broken only with a chance encounter at the ornithological meetings in Rhode Island during June 2014, when two of Podos’ students gave scientific talks and each won best-student paper awards. It was the talk by Goodwin that I heard; I immediately recognized it as entirely false and impossible, an award-winning paper that had no basis in reality, and that chance encounter, coupled with a failure of Podos and his student to communicate about their work, set in motion all that has followed.

⁴ As stated explicitly by Powers, or inferred through failure to address allegations that I raise, all based on the 1 December 2015 “Preliminary Review of Allegation of Misconduct by Professor Jeffrey Podos,” written by Powers, sent to Malone (who “considered the facts of the situation and all available input . . . [and determined] . . . that there is insufficient substance to the allegation of misconduct . . .”), forwarded to Kroodsma 15 December 2015.

⁵ A “(yes)” vote is the default vote, given the roles of Goodwin, Donais, Connor, Karlstrom, and Podos in producing the “preliminary review.”

⁶ I give Associate CNS Dean Powers the opportunity to revote, if she so chooses.

⁷ I am confident that an objective reader will readily distinguish between a) harassment and b) a candid, honest, though reluctant assessment of scientific merit requested from a senior colleague by a non-tenured faculty member who has his career ahead of him. Anyone who votes “YES” on this question should provide reasons for such a vote.

⁸ NSF will be queried after UMass representatives have had their say.

Question: Is that email sufficient justification for Podos (and his coauthor Goodwin) to refuse to communicate with Kroodsma about their research?

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	
Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

To the best of my memory, no attempt was made to communicate with Podos until Goodwin and Podos published their paper on alliances. Here is the email I wrote to Goodwin on 9 July 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

Question: Does that email constitute harassment, or does it constitute a reason for Podos (and his coauthor Goodwin) to refuse to communicate with Kroodsma about their research?

(Rather than repeat this sentence, I'll write only once again here: If anyone votes "YES" or "TRUE" to any of these questions or statements, you might offer a useful explanation.)

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	

Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	
Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

Nearly three months later, on 1 October 2014, continuing to ponder the mistruths in the Goodwin and Podos (2014) paper, and after studying more research papers on the performance hypothesis that Podos has championed, I sent Jeff the first email I had sent him since October 2004.

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 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

Question: Does that email constitute harassment, or does it constitute a reason for Podos (and his coauthor Goodwin) to refuse to communicate with Kroodsma about their research?

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	

Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

In follow-up emails, I continued to give Jeff the opportunity to address this matter privately, with me, in a manner that he could choose. He declined. You have access to all of those emails (see http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596, with password = science. all lower case).

Furthermore, Jeff also squelched communication with scientists at the University of Washington; after an initial email from (a perhaps naïve graduate student) Goodwin explaining how most of their data and analyses were not mentioned in the published study, nothing more would be heard, despite requests for clarification of what they had done in their research.

My conclusion is that Jeff refuses to communicate with anyone who might disagree with his research record, and that with me he is hiding behind false charges of harassment so that he does not have to address the issues of scientific misconduct that are being raised.

Question (I want everyone to be very clear on this): Is there any evidence of harassment in my above emails, and do they justify total silence from Podos and his coauthors about the nature of their NSF-funded research?

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	
Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

Besides using the UMass police to threaten me with charges of criminal harassment, Jeff has used other creative ways to avoid addressing his published science in a direct manner. Using his influence with the editorial office of Animal Behavior, for example, he was instrumental in having the editor send a public, angry rejection of my proposed Forum article before it was even submitted.⁹

⁹ A little more detail, if you wish: With the refusal of Goodwin or Podos to communicate about their research, and with my intentions fully shared with Podos, I proposed a Forum article for Animal Behavior. One of the (ethical) requirements of such an article is that I first share my document with all those whom I flog in the manuscript (and there were many, not only those who wrote the research papers, but those who unquestionably accepted those results).

With Biology Letters, rather than address the scientific issues directly with a communication that could be shared with me, Podos apparently convened a university committee to vouch for him, though Dean McCarthy, whose name was on the committee's investigative report (according to Biology Letters), seemed to know nothing about this committee's report, which was submitted by Podos himself to the journal¹⁰. The journal used this top-secret "thorough, independent, rigorous" report to squelch any further communication about the science in Goodwin and Podos (2014).¹¹ With everything shrouded in secrecy, I'm not allowed to see the committee's report, per "university rules." (How bizarre is all this? How many of us can't speak for ourselves and instead need a secret committee to defend our research?)

Statement: All of this behavior by Podos is normal professional conduct condoned and encouraged by University of Massachusetts administrative offices, and by those charged with maintaining high standards for ethical and scientific conduct of research, and specifically for NSF-sponsored research.

UMass (Powers)	TRUE	
Vice Chancellor Malone	TRUE	
Dean Goodwin	(true)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(true)	
AVC Donais	(true)	
Biology Chair Connor	(true)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(true)	
Author Podos	(true)	
Kroodsma		FALSE

After I followed Animal Behavior protocol, Podos contacted the editor of Animal Behavior, claiming that I was attacking graduate students, that I was against women in science, that I had a crusade against him. The editor, a friend who "greatly admired" Podos, responded with an angry, public rejection letter, sent to all those authors whom I was required to get feedback from before I officially submitted my Forum article.

¹⁰ So who wrote this report? If Dean McCarthy's name was on the report and he didn't know anything about it, who wrote this report? I have to assume it was as "independent" as the Powers report, which, at least in part, merely reported what Podos believed, or wanted to believe, or would have others believe. For all I know, given all the secrecy, Podos himself wrote the report. Why all the secrecy? In the name of science, send me that report so that we can address scientific matters out in the open, so that the authors of that report take responsibility for their positions, and not make secret allegations behind closed doors.

¹¹ After receiving the secret investigative review from UMass, here's how the journal responded: "Dear Donald, Thank you for your detailed correspondence on this matter. We take all complaints seriously and have investigated your concerns. We note that the authors' institution have conducted a thorough independent investigation into this matter and deemed this to be a difference of scientific opinion, of the kind that is very common in this field and across all scientific research. We are satisfied with the rigour and findings of this institutional investigation and therefore will not be taking any further action on this occasion. . . . Many thanks and best wishes, Surayya" (for Biology Letters) . . . (A later email from Biology Letters would explain that it was "university rules" that required the investigative report be kept secret.)

NSF	?	?
-----	---	---

Ethical conduct in science is pretty straightforward. Even the scientific society to which Jeff Podos is president-elect has specific guidelines on its website (<https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001/>):

Animal Behaviour publishes papers by scientists conducting research at locations around the globe . . . 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, . . . 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.

Question: Do my emails to Podos warrant his failing to comply with the ethical requirements of the Animal Behavior Society, of which he is president-elect?

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	
Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

And, not least, the National Science Foundation, which supported Goodwin and Podos (2014) with IOS1028964, has strict guidelines about ethical conduct by scientists. I am sure you're familiar with them. NSF is concerned with excellence in research, with uncovering truths about the natural world, with not wasting tax-payers' money, and the like. Cooperation and collaboration among scientists is expected, facilitating the search for truths. "Data Management Plans" are the norm, so that data can be shared among scientists, all the while assuming, of course, that the PI is willing at the very least to communicate with others about the NSF-sponsored research he has done, and not hide behind closed doors or, in this case, behind trumped up charges of harassment.

I have communicated with IOS (Daniel Gerszewski, to be specific), and IOS has referred me to the Office of Inspector General for NSF. You can do this yourself: Call 703-292-7100, and press "1" (i.e., "1" is the most important issue on the agenda) for "waste, fraud, and abuse" to speak with a Hotline Operator. I got operator #3, who was most helpful. I described some of what was going on at UMass Amherst (e.g., police involvement and threats of criminal harassment charges by an IOS PI,

against another faculty member in the same department, no less; secret defense of the PI at a journal; dismissal of all allegations by university representatives), and she was appalled. She wanted me to speak immediately with the Director of Research Integrity and Administrative Investigations, Dr. James Kroll, at 703-292-5012, because she detected a number of levels at which the IOS PI (Podos, as yet unnamed at NSF) and UMass Amherst (named) would probably be investigated. She was eager to receive this document and all the documentation on my website, and I was about to proceed, giving her the password “science” so that we could move forward . . . and then a few minutes later, I received this email from Dr. Kroll:

Email from Jim Kroll, 4 January 2016:

Hello, my name is Jim Kroll and your email to the NSF BIO IOS cluster was forwarded to me for review for possible ethical violations by the PI you make reference to. I was wondering if there was a time that I could chat with you to discuss the particulars. Please let me know a good time and number to contact you at.

Jim

*James T. Kroll, Ph D
Director, Research Integrity and Administrative Investigations
Office of the Inspector General
National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Blvd, S-II, Room 705
Arlington, VA 22230
[703-292-5012](tel:703-292-5012)
jkroll@nsf.gov*

At which point (I can’t explain why, given all that has transpired and how long this has been going on), I said I’d like to give UMass one last chance to deal with this issue. UMass, as represented by all of you, has a choice. I suggest that you take a hard look at your next vote. And I suggest you take a look at the bare-minimum “specific proposal” I offer at the end of this document. This really is a last chance, not only for Podos but for the UMass campus, to deal with these issues in a semi-private environment. Inaction on your part, or more secrecy, or more stonewalling, and I will be forced to go directly to NSF . . . And note that we’re still only on ethical matters; we haven’t even gotten to the issues of scientific misconduct yet.

[Update: Vice Chancellor Malone has now waived this last chance opportunity.—see Prologue]

Statement: Because we believe Kroodsma’s emails constitute harassment, or for other good reasons, NSF would find no cause for concern in Podos’ behavior (as detailed in all of the above), and NSF has no reason to question whether there is any “waste, fraud, or abuse” involving tax-payers money.

UMass (Powers)	TRUE	
Vice Chancellor Malone	TRUE	

Dean Goodwin	(true)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(true)	
AVC Donais	(true)	
Biology Chair Connor	(true)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(true)	
Author Podos	(true)	
Kroodsma		FALSE
NSF	?	?

SCIENTIFIC CONDUCT

The Powers report states that the scientific issues I raise are “simply disputes about the interpretation of results and the appropriateness of methodologies.” Given that the conclusion for ethical misconduct is admittedly a report of what “Dr. Podos believes,” how could anyone now view the report on scientific misconduct as an independent assessment by Powers? I certainly don’t (understatement).

Question: Is it normal scientific practice, typical of professional conduct accepted for the University of Massachusetts campus, with no cause for concern about scientific misconduct, when a) a scientist knows of a biological fact that fatally undermines his research conclusions, and then b) knowingly omits reference to that fact and publishes his conclusions anyway, then c) gives repeated talks to unknowing audiences at scientific meetings without referencing the fatal flaw (receiving an award in the process), d) allows the graduate student to defend the thesis without mentioning the fatal flaw, and e) continues to defend the research knowing it cannot be true?

UMass (Powers)	YES	
Vice Chancellor Malone	YES	
Dean Goodwin	(yes)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(yes)	
AVC Donais	(yes)	
Biology Chair Connor	(yes)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(yes)	
Author Podos	(yes)	
Kroodsma		NO
NSF	?	?

It is irrefutable that a) Podos knew of the research by graduate student Liu, in his own Biology

department, working on the same sparrow population, that falsified the Goodwin and Podos (2014) conclusions (details below), that b) all reference to Liu's research conclusions was omitted in Goodwin and Podos (2014), that c) repeated talks to unknowing audiences were given at scientific meetings (Association of Field Ornithologists and Wilson Ornithological Society, June 2014, and Animal Behavior Society, August 2014), that d) Goodwin defended her thesis without mentioning the fatal flaws, and that e) Goodwin and Podos vigorously continue to defend their work (title of their 2015 rebuttal to a University of Washington critique, "Yes, Team of Rivals").

The only issue, then, is whether the previously published research by graduate student Liu (Biology Department, UMass Amherst) fatally undermines the story that Goodwin and Podos tell.

The fiction in Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015) is revealed in a single figure that shows what Goodwin and Podos knew when they published their paper in *Biology Letters* (based on research done by graduate student Liu and published in mainstream journals)¹²:

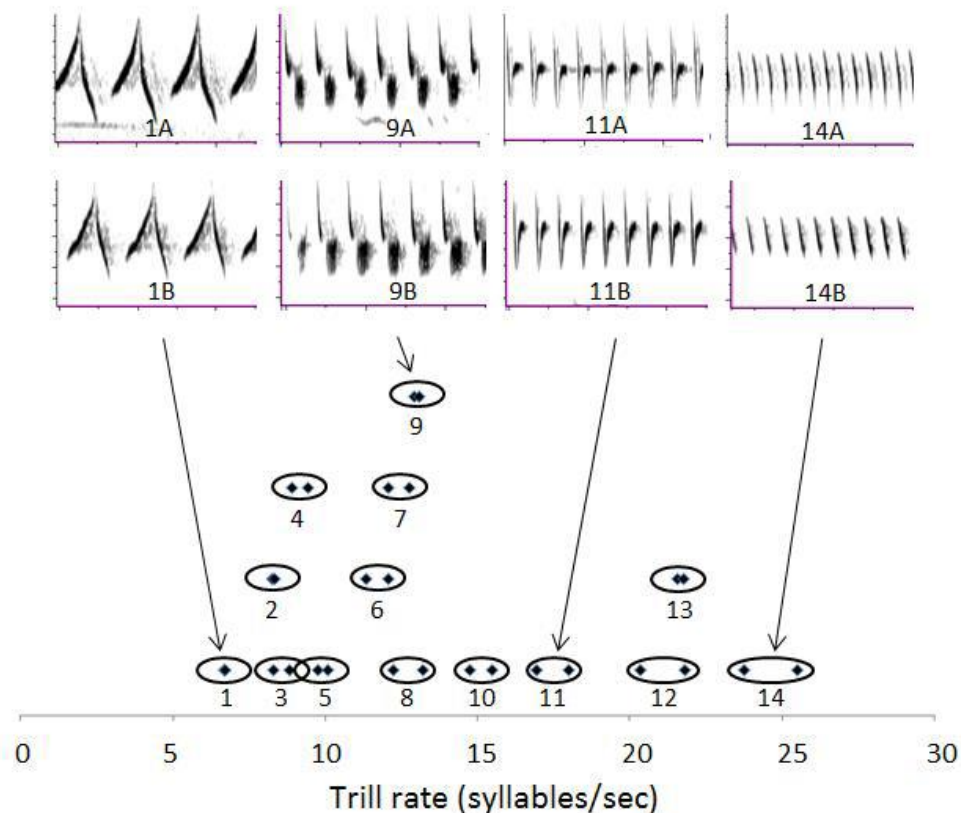


Figure caption. A few dozen different songs can occur within a chipping sparrow population (only four illustrated here: 1, 9, 11, 14), but neighboring males (A and B) often have nearly identical songs, the result of a young male on his first territory copying the song of a nearby adult singer (Liu and Kroodsma 2006). All features of a

¹² Note that the conclusions illustrated by this figure were entirely known by Goodwin and Podos, and they cannot claim otherwise simply because this particular figure was not available to them. I drew this figure during 2015, based on recordings that I collected during May 2015, so that I could illustrate unequivocally Liu's results in a figure that would make his conclusions crystal clear. I could just as well have used Liu's recordings, but for the pure joy of recording chipping sparrows, and for ease of access to the needed recordings, I chose to collect my own recordings (took about 10 hours, at the most, over three mornings). I am happy to share them with anyone who would like them.

male's song, *including his trill rate as illustrated here* (14 examples), are determined by that adult tutor. In the lower graph, each oval encircles the two data points (pairs 1 and 2 are identical) for trill rates from two neighboring males with the same song (data are distributed vertically for easier visibility; each data point is the median of three measurements for a given male).

The simple and inescapable point of this figure is that the trill rate of a young male's song is determined by the male who holds a territory adjacent to the youngster, and trill rate has nothing to do with a male's quality. A male with trill rate of 25 is no better than a male with trill rate of 7. (Furthermore, there is no evidence for song learning in any songbird species or especially in chipping sparrows (Liu and Kroodsma 1999, 2006) that a male is in any way limited in what *naturally occurring*¹³ trill rate he can learn. I add this qualification, because I can well imagine Podos coming up with a scheme whereby a young bird must innately know his prowess when he needs to learn a song, and he then finds just the right male who has just the right trill rate so that when the youngster learns that song, his song can then precisely convey his overall quality. No, that story doesn't work either.)

Goodwin and Podos (2014), concealing these basic facts for the origin of a male's trill rate, claim that trill rate is instead a measure of a male's performance, with fast-trilling birds superior to slow-trilling birds, and that birds precisely assess one another based on trill rate. On the contrary, trill rate conveys no information about a male's quality or prowess, only information about the source of his song. I am going to repeat that: *Trill rate simply conveys no information about a male's prowess, only information about the source of his song.*

Given the above, it is instructive to now read from the Goodwin and Podos (2014) paper, substituting "*trill rate*" for synonyms used in their publication. Couple this rewrite with the fact that Goodwin and Podos *assume* the male gatherings are cooperative (i.e., teams, alliances) and not competitive as described in the literature (appropriate reference omitted; more on this below), and one begins to see their paper for the fiction that it is:

TITLE: Team of rivals: alliance formation in territorial songbirds is predicted by *trill rate*

ABSTRACT: Our results provide the first evidence that animals like chipping sparrows rely on precise assessments of *trill rates*, as well as relative comparisons of *trill rates* among multiple animals in communication networks, when deciding when and with whom to form temporary alliances against a backdrop of competition and rivalry.

Statement: Even though trill rate is not an index of male quality, and everyone (including Podos) knows that trill rate is not an index of male quality, it's still entirely appropriate to use trill rate as an index of male quality, and not "just an index," but a *precise* index.

¹³ I emphasize "naturally occurring," because a series of publications by Podos et al. have used highly abnormal trill rates of swamp sparrows and offered conclusions for those studies that are as false as those proclaimed by Goodwin and Podos (2014).

UMass (Powers)	TRUE	
Vice Chancellor Malone	TRUE	
Dean Goodwin	(true)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(true)	
AVC Donais	(true)	
Biology Chair Connor	(true)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(true)	
Author Podos	(true)	
Kroodsma		<u>FALSE</u>
NSF	?	?

If your answer to that question is “true,” I am eager to read your explanation here:

Here is another inconvenient fact (referenced above) that Goodwin and Podos (2014) chose not to mention. As reported in the literature, males routinely engage in group singing activities, well off their territories, in what can only be interpreted as *competitive* display arenas. No one would label these *cooperative* activities, yet Goodwin and Podos *assume* that these are cooperative activities, again without mentioning anything about what is already known about their subject animals. Goodwin and Podos would have no story if they acknowledged the basic facts of chipping sparrow biology.

There are many other issues with Goodwin and Podos (2014), and with other publications by Podos, but I do not address them here, as I wish to maintain a sharp focus on the above issues, lest I give anyone an opportunity to digress. If there were to be a “Committee of Inquiry,” these other publications would become fodder for analysis, but for now the above analysis of the paper by Goodwin and Podos (2014) will serve as an index of the quality of other papers by Podos.

Oh, hell, I can’t resist tackling one more remarkable statement in the Powers report. From my lengthy allegations, Powers chose to address two other topics, which she calls “b) incorrect use of a statistical test, and c) not including non-significant results in publications.” Let’s think about those two items, as they are critical for how the stories by Podos are generated.

Goodwin and Podos collected three sets of data (on frequency bandwidth of songs, on trill rate of songs, and on a combination of the two characters).¹⁴ They found some statistically significant tests (at $\alpha = 0.05$) for trill rates, but in their publication did not mention all of the other statistical tests that were not significant, as if they were never done and no data from the other two data sets had even been collected. Goodwin and Podos will defend their paper by saying “But we got a statistically significant result,” but I contend here that their response is no scientifically credible defense (required reading here is Simmons et al. 2011, who entitle their paper “. . . Undisclosed flexibility in data collection and analysis allows presenting anything as significant”).

Here is a primer on statistical testing lifted directly from Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bonferroni_correction).

Statistical inference logic is based on rejecting the [null hypotheses](#) if the likelihood of the observed data under the null hypotheses is low. The problem of multiplicity arises from the fact that as we increase the number of hypotheses being tested, we also increase the likelihood of a rare event, and therefore, the likelihood of incorrectly rejecting a null hypothesis (i.e., make a [Type I error](#)).

The Bonferroni correction is based on the idea that if an experimenter is testing m [hypotheses](#), then one way of maintaining the [familywise error rate](#) (FWER) is to test each individual hypothesis at a [statistical significance](#) level of $1/m$ times the desired maximum overall level.

So, if the desired significance level for the whole family of tests is α , then the Bonferroni correction would test each individual hypothesis at a significance level of α/m . For example, if a trial is testing $m = 8$ hypotheses with a desired $\alpha = 0.05$, then the Bonferroni correction would test each individual hypothesis at $\alpha = 0.05/8 = 0.00625$.

I’d like to lift one more quote from the internet, involving scientific misconduct as defined by the National Science Foundation, item 689.1 from <https://www.nsf.gov/oig/pdf/cfr/45-CFR-689.pdf> (bold face my emphasis)

(a) **Research misconduct means** fabrication, **falsification**, or plagiarism in proposing or performing research funded by NSF, reviewing research proposals submitted to NSF, or **in reporting research results funded by NSF**.

(2) **Falsification . . . [includes] . . . omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record.**

Here’s the major issue that Powers dismisses: Among all of the data that were discarded and not mentioned in their study, how many statistical tests did Goodwin and Podos do that they didn’t

¹⁴ Here is an excerpt from a June 2014 email from Sarah Goodwin to the University of Washington group who was questioning the methods used in the Goodwin and Podos (2014) study. This email reveals that three sets of data were collected, but only one was mentioned in the publication: “A reasonable starting point is that trill rate, frequency bandwidth, and/or some combination of the two (e.g., vocal deviation) could accurately convey singers’ performance abilities . . . I was initially surprised when I looked at the coalition data and found a pattern with trill rate, but not vocal deviation or frequency bandwidth.”

mention? Five? Ten? More? Using $p = 0.05$ for their significance levels instead of $0.05/m$, and then building their story on statistical tests that just barely reach this $\alpha = 0.05$ level¹⁵ is severely problematical. Divide 0.05 by the unknown number of statistical tests Goodwin and Podos did and you have the proper alpha. The proper alpha is not even close to 0.05, rendering all of their statistical tests insignificant, leaving no data on which to build their story.¹⁶

These issues escape Powers. She dismisses these problems by saying they are “simply disputes about the interpretation of results and the appropriateness of methodologies,” as if they’re not problems at all, but just minor differences of opinion. *I strongly disagree.*

Statement: Unmentioned data and unmentioned statistical tests have no relevance to proper levels of α in statistical testing, and if statistical tests are not reported in a publication, no Bonferroni correction need be made for them. Using $\alpha = 0.05$, regardless of how many statistical tests have been done, whether in secret or not, provides a perfectly acceptable means to honestly convey the likelihood of making a Type I error. NSF is simply wrong on this issue of falsification: “. . . omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record” is perfectly acceptable if it gives a better story.

UMass (Powers)	TRUE	
Vice Chancellor Malone	TRUE	
Dean Goodwin	(true)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(true)	
AVC Donais	(true)	
Biology Chair Connor	(true)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(true)	
Author Podos	(true)	
Kroodsma		FALSE
NSF	?	?

Statement: All matters of science considered, there is no cause for concern about scientific misconduct in the work by Jeff Podos, as revealed in Goodwin and Podos (2014). The allegations I raise “are simply disputes about the interpretation of results and the appropriateness of methodologies . . . there is insufficient substance to these allegations of misconduct” (Powers), and there is “insufficient evidence to the allegation of misconduct” (Malone). NSF should be entirely happy with the way its tax-payer money is being spent by Podos to publish his work and to train graduate students in like manner.

¹⁵ We assume that each test was done properly, with no pseudoreplication, for example, but there’s disagreement there as well that I’ll let slide for now.

¹⁶ Maybe Podos will argue that the Bonferroni is too conservative, and would suggest another control for multiple comparisons, but my point is that any control for the multiple comparisons is going to make his statistical tests insignificant.

UMass (Powers)	TRUE	
Vice Chancellor Malone	TRUE	
Dean Goodwin	(true)	
Associate CNS Dean Powers	(true)	
AVC Donais	(true)	
Biology Chair Connor	(true)	
Past Biology Chair Karlstrom	(true)	
Author Podos	(true)	
Kroodsma		<u>FALSE</u>
NSF	?	?

Here's another item: I initially found the penultimate paragraph in the Powers report baffling. Here it is:

It is important to note that Dr. Kroodsma's affiliation with UMass Amherst has not given him any special access to or knowledge of Dr. Podos' research or lab. Dr. Kroodsma has not been directly involved with the UMass Biology department or Dr. Podos' research group since Dr. Kroodsma's retirement over a decade ago.

Why is that important? The more I read it, the more I think that the implied message is the following:

We at UMass are friends and colleagues with Podos, and we therefore know none of what Kroodsma writes could be true, because we have special insight and access and knowledge about the Biology department and Dr. Podos' research that Kroodsma could not have.¹⁷

My take on this paragraph is different, because I think *only* someone outside the special sphere of Podos' influence and friendship could take an objective look at his research. I base my evaluation only on the paper publication trail that Podos has left, and on the oral presentation I heard of Goodwin and Podos (2014). I'd like to think that a more objective Powers might have added this sentence:

Given 1) Dr. Kroodsma's "distance," as well as 2) his widely recognized expertise on birdsong (see DonaldKroodsma.com, for example), and 3) his repeated commitments to research of the highest caliber (e.g., Kroodsma 1989, 1990ab, Byers and Kroodsma 2009), I believe his opinion on these matters is especially valuable . . . but let's dismiss them anyway and see what happens.

It may seem that I am now nitpicking at the Powers report, but I will be thorough in pointing out how the Powers report fails in so many dimensions to inspire confidence in its conclusions:

Item 2 states that I sent "nine emails" to Podos or Goodwin. You can count them; there are

¹⁷ Here is supplemental reading: <http://www.bio.umass.edu/biology/podos/tenure.html>

eight.

Item 4 says that my document “Podos and Performance Studies” is a “summary of objections to Podos, Peter [sic], & Nowicki’s (2004) conclusions.” Powers says “I reviewed all of Dr. Kroodsma’s materials,” but reading beyond the first line of this document would have revealed my objections to the following four articles:

Podos, J., S. Peters, and S. Nowicki. 2004. Calibration of song learning targets during vocal ontogeny in swamp sparrows, *Melospiza georgiana*.

Podos, J., D. C. Lahti, and D. L. Moseley. 2009. Vocal performance and sensorimotor learning in songbirds.

Lahti, D. C., D. L. Moseley, and J. Podos. 2011. A tradeoff between performance and accuracy in bird song learning.

Moseley, D. L., D. C. Lahti, and J. Podos. 2013. Responses to song playback vary with the vocal performance of both signal senders and receivers.

A HISTORY OF MARKETING

At the risk of diluting the above, but to be complete, I continue: The Goodwin and Podos (2014) paper is not an exception. I have reviewed all of the Podos papers on his topic of performance, and they contain little, if any, truth about what birds actually do. Instead, no matter what the results, the conclusions are spun to support his performance hypothesis, for which I can find no credible scientific support. I have provided evaluations for each of these articles in the longer document that I submitted to Vice Chancellor Malone. There I list the numerous ways in which the performance hypothesis is marketed, with none of the “scientific integrity” and “utter honesty” that I refer to there (Feynman quotes). You may revisit those critiques if you wish, and they would become the subject of any “Committee of Inquiry,” as referred to by VCE Malone.

One more issue on marketing. Go ahead and actually read the publication by Zollinger, Podos et al. (2012) on how to do research. It is a stellar public performance on how to do good science, lecturing authors who have come dangerously close to dismantling Podos’ performance hypothesis. Podos and his coauthors address not only the one narrow and relevant issue about how to measure frequency bandwidths, but range widely over all manner of issues: 1) proper measurements and methodology, 2) interpretation of data, 3) validity of results, 4) experimental rigor, 5) alternative explanations and hypotheses for data, 6) the ability to reject hypotheses, 7) appropriate use of skepticism, 8) problems in published papers that “undermine the validity of the results reported and the conclusions reached,” and 9) “basic principles” of science. Ironically, Podos and his coauthors are concerned, more broadly, with 10) how papers failing on these measures will “have a profound adverse effect on the way the research field is viewed by the rest of the scientific community.”

Now consider what goes on in private. Actually read my document entitled “Podos and Performance Studies.” Reconsider how he crafted the paper with Goodwin (read Ackay and Beecher 2015 for more information about the crafting). Then contrast what goes on in Podos’ own publications with his public stance. *In private, Podos violates in the extreme every item on which he publicly*

lectures. There is a word that describes this kind of behavior, the definition of which, according to Merriam Webster, is “a feigning to be what one is not or to believe what one does not; *especially* the false assumption of an appearance of virtue or religion.”

(No vote needed, but if you want to express an opinion about this matter, be my guest.)

SUMMARY

In a nutshell: It is my opinion that the Powers report establishes embarrassingly low standards for scientific and ethical conduct, and in the glib defense of one faculty member throws all self-respecting scientists on the entire campus under the bus. Among hard-working scientists, those eager to learn how the world works, those who champion the ideals of scientists everywhere in the search for truth, those the NSF is proud to fund, I would expect widespread outrage at the standards promoted in the Powers report and supported by VCE Malone. Quite simply, if all ‘scientists’ adhered to these standards, we would still be in the Dark Ages and the world would still be flat.¹⁸

WHAT’S NEXT?

I challenge anyone to a face-to-face discussion of these matters. I have requested such an interaction with Podos, but he has, of course, declined to even respond to my offer, all in the name of harassment. I make the same offer to any others of you. I will come over to the UMass campus at our mutual convenience for a conference. I am available much of January, February, and March of 2016.

[Update: Vice Chancellor Malone now declares that university rules prevent us from talking.—see Prologue]

In this document, I have asked for simple answers to simple, straightforward questions. If you are going to respond, I would ask for your response by noon on 11 January. If you want to have a say in how to proceed from here, I welcome that (as I repeatedly offered to Podos). If everyone declines to respond, stonewalling me as Podos repeatedly has, I will decide on the next step for these matters myself.¹⁹

[Update: I sense that no one at UMass is allowed to communicate with me, per Vice Chancellor Malone’s emails of 4 January. That doesn’t prevent me from sending this document to those who helped prepare the Powers report, however, so I will do just that. If anyone wants to

¹⁸ I stand behind that extreme statement. The methodologies that Podos uses to promote his performance hypothesis (and therefore himself) generate highly deceptive explanations of how the world works. There is simply no truth in Goodwin and Podos (2014), i.e., it is fiction. I have elaborated upon other mistruths generated in Podos’ promotion of his performance hypothesis in my longer document.

¹⁹ NSF will certainly be consulted, as it is the reputation of NSF and their wise use of the tax-payers’ money that is at stake; I predict that no good for UMass will come of this, especially if everyone stands behind the Powers’ report. I think it would also be interesting to poll faculty in OEB, as well as scientists across campus, to get their response to the kind of ethical and scientific conduct that is expected of them, and how they will be defended when they’re caught in what would seem to be high misconduct. Heck, why not just make all of these documents entirely public, sharing them with the press and with anti-science right-wing conservatives, so that people could form their own opinions about what goes on at UMass, and with NSF funding in general; that would play right into the hands of those who accuse scientists of all manner of secrecy and conspiracies, so as to get money and prestige for themselves, and for all the reasons that the climate-deniers like to attack scientists. The Republican majority in Congress would also love this stuff. But I ramble . . .

contact me and express an opinion about his or her vote on these issues, I will register that and forward it to NSF.—see Prologue]

I have, I might point out in concluding, tried to present these issues in as matter-of-fact tone as I can, but let there be no misunderstanding. There is room for enormous outrage at what has transpired since June 2014 when I began my attempts to address the matters of scientific and ethical misconduct that I continue to address here. The Powers report is, to put it mildly, an insult to scientists everywhere, in all disciplines, but I will continue to do my best to maintain some level of cool discipline as I continue to work through these matters with whoever is willing to address them.

[Update: Apparently, these issues will not be addressed at UMass, unless NSF forces the issue.—see Prologue.]

A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL FOR YOU²⁰

This all has the potential to become very public and very messy. I suggest that whoever is in charge here deal with these issues of misconduct in as straightforward and swift and open a manner as possible. In my original letter to VCE Malone, I had six requests. I will whittle that down to four:

1. Podos writes to Biology Letters and retracts Goodwin and Podos (2014, 2015).
2. Podos writes to The Association of Field Ornithologists and asks that they retract their 2014 best student paper award to Goodwin. He might consider doing the same for his student Moseley.
4. Podos notifies The Animal Behavior Society that he is resigning as president-elect.
5. The million or so dollars of tax-payer money that Podos has already spent on his “research” and graduate student training has done enough damage, and the Grants and Contracts Office at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, should restrict all future grant applications from Podos until he has been rehabilitated as a scientist.

If whoever is in charge here accepts these requests, or wants to negotiate another mutually satisfactory ending to this matter, I will go quietly, satisfied that justice has (finally) been served. If, however, I receive another report the likes of Powers²¹, or UMass convenes yet another secret committee to address these matters, . . .

[Update: The “however” has now happened, with Vice Chancellor Malone closing doors to further communication.—see Prologue]

Respectfully submitted . . . Donald Kroodsma²²

²⁰ I would call this a last-chance proposal. [Update: That last chance has been waived by Vice Chancellor Malone.—see Prologue]

²¹ The word “cover-up” comes to mind.

²² **A footnoted digression.** I am aware that, behind my back, I have been accused of many things. I am attacking graduate students. I am against women in science. I have a crusade against Podos. And much more. To my face, by way of the UMass police, I am threatened with charges of criminal harassment. Who knows what all I’ve been

Appendix 1. The complete in-house review that Jeff Podos (repeatedly) requested of me, and that he now uses as proof of my harassment.

(This appendix also provided separately as item #4d on the website.)

Introductory notes:

I offer some introductory thoughts here, giving some context. First, with full disclosure, I want to point out the long-standing difference of opinion with Podos (and his advisor Nowicki, and Nowicki's frequent collaborator William Searcy) about what constitutes science; it is absolutely true that we have these long-standing differences. What is not true is that there is any personal vendetta against these authors. I ask anyone who reads this material to keep in mind only issues of science. Someone might claim that I am disqualified as an objective analyst of these matters because I have been thinking about these things for far too long (published critiques of research begin in 1989, countered immediately by William Searcy, in the journal *Animal Behavior*); I think a more cogent argument is that, given how long I have fought for integrity in science, I am eminently qualified to address these matters.

I confess to having a large folder in my file cabinet with articles written by Steve Nowicki, together with my critical notes on each. When asked by Duke University to write a 'letter of promotion' for Nowicki, I said I would be willing to write a letter, but it would be a letter recommending demotion rather than promotion; Duke then decided they didn't need my letter, as they were constructing their promotion case only with supporting evidence (not mentioning negative evidence), much like Nowicki was doing in his research (not mentioning, e.g, alternative explanations or nonsupporting evidence), much as his student Podos now does, just as he now trains his graduate students. For Podos, and now his students, there's a book title here, something like "All I Really Need to Know I learned in Graduate School." I find this culture of advocacy distressing, as it produces reams of publications with mistruths about how the world actually works.

For an illustration of this cultural transmission of publication strategy from graduate mentor to graduate student, I suggest two publications for consideration. In the first, mentor Nowicki anchors the paper by his student Podos (see my critical review of this paper in item #4g on the website.). In the second, mentor Podos anchors the paper by his student Goodwin (the second paper, of course, is the main focus of my allegations of misconduct).

1. Podos, J., S. Peters, and S. Nowicki. 2004. Calibration of song learning targets during vocal ontogeny in swamp sparrows, *Melospiza georgiana*.

accused of in the highly secret report by the "UMass investigative committee" to Biology Letters? All of these accusations are very effective distractions from the real issues that I raise, but in the end I will return the focus to the issues of misconduct. Those issues will not go away until they are dealt with head on. I am quite sure that the involvement of NSF will quickly sharpen the focus on the real issues at hand, if that does not happen before NSF weighs in.

2. Goodwin, S. E., and J. Podos. 2014. Team of rivals: alliance formation in territorial songbirds is predicted by vocal signal structure.

Podos' manuscript that he asked me to review was submitted to some journal (I forget which), and the journal asked me for a review. With full disclosure, I sent the same review to the journal that I sent to Jeff (all copied below). I don't know what happened to that manuscript, but I would never see another manuscript (or grant proposal) from Jeff. I have always wondered what he told journal editors and granting agencies about me so as to avoid my evaluation of his work. I would assume it is something along the lines of what his graduate mentor Nowicki says, as I have never, to the best of my recollection, ever seen a manuscript or grant of his either.

OK, enough. Here's the 2004 in-house review of the Podos paper:

8 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 . . .

1/12/2016

Kroodsma to Provost Newman

Dear Provost Newman:

Please see the attached letter.

Thank you.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

DonaldKroodsma.com

Emeritus, Biology, OEB, and NSB

12 January 2016

To: Office of the Provost, Katherine S. Newman, provost@provost.umass.edu

From: Donald Kroodsma, Emeritus, Biology & OEB (DonaldKroodsma.com)

Re: Scientific and ethical conduct at UMass

Dear Provost Newman:

With considerable reluctance, but with a responsibility shared by scientists everywhere who seek truths about our natural world, I bring to your attention a matter that I have been struggling with for a year and a half now.

Specifically, these are allegations of scientific and ethical misconduct by Professor Jeffrey Podos, Department of Biology. I do not make these allegations lightly, and do so only after exhaustive attempts to address these matters with Podos himself, with the journal where he most recently published, and with Vice Chancellor Malone. All efforts have failed, the most recent being the dismissal of the allegations by Associate CNS Dean Powers and Vice Chancellor Malone (NSF is still deliberating).

In reviewing procedural matters at UMass, I now resort to the following (*italics mine*):

If the decision [that by Vice Chancellor Malone] is consistent with the PRELIMINARY REVIEW recommendation and is not to proceed, the matter will be closed, *unless any complainant wishes to appeal the decision to the Provost*. Upon appeal, the Provost shall review the record and make the final decision on whether to proceed. If the decision is to proceed, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement shall bring the matter before the University Research and Scholarly Misconduct Board.

Given that Vice Chancellor Malone's response is consistent with that of the preliminary review (but see my response), and given that I feel they are doing UMass and science in general a grave disservice, I appeal their conclusion to you. You, apparently, are the head gatekeeper for academic conduct on the UMass Amherst campus.

All relevant materials for your review can be found on the following website:
http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596, with password = science (all lower case).

Thank you.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

1/19/2016

Dear Provost Newman:

A week ago, I sent this email with the attached letter.

May I please ask that you confirm receiving it?

Thank you.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsmas

1/29/2016

Kroodsmas to Provost Newman

Dear Provost Newman:

Just in case you are prepared to dismiss the scientific and ethical misconduct charges against Professor Podos in the same glib manner that Vice Chancellor Malone did, I want to add a small note here before you do that.

Here is a quote from a recent paper:

Science and its advancement are based on trust . . . Scientific misconduct represents a severe breach of the trust science is built upon and can have a serious impact in scientific advancement, functioning and credibility (Lewis et al. 2011). This has led the scientific community to increasingly advocate for more accountable and transparent science practices, in what has been known as the “Open science” movement. This movement encourages scientists to improve the way scientific findings are reported and published to ensure that science is accessible to all levels of enquiry both from other scientists and the public. Yet, the trends in scientific misconduct are not encouraging.

I want to emphasize that I do not bring a trivial matter to you. The degree of secrecy used by Professor Podos to protect the fiction he publishes is astounding:

1. Refusing to communicate with others who inquire about his work
2. Using University Police to threaten criminal harassment charges to anyone (an international audience, even) who inquires about his work.
3. Using secret communications from a (supposed) university review panel to the journal *Biology Letters* to quash public exposure of his fiction

And if you doubt his paper with graduate student Goodwin in *Biology Letters* is fiction, I ask you to think again. There is absolutely no truth in that publication, as revealed in my analysis of it (all provided for you).

You have the opportunity to uphold high standards for scientific and ethical conduct on the UMass campus, or not. It is your choice, but you should know that the eyes of the campus and the public are on you. This is not a private matter that will just go away.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsmas

March 2016

3/9/2016

Kroodsmas to Organismal and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Program

Subject: Sarah Goodwin thesis defense

Hello OEB:

I will not attend this thesis defense, but I would like to point out in advance, should anyone care, that the likely centerpiece of the thesis (the study of alliances in chipping sparrows) is fiction, as presented in Goodwin and Podos (2014) and defended in Goodwin and Podos (2015). These are not grounds for Goodwin failing the defense, but they are grounds for failing her adviser.

Details available upon request.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

3/23/2016

Kroodsma to Provost Newman

Hello again Provost Newman:

It has been almost two months since I last communicated with you regarding Jeff Podos in Biology.

In the meantime, the graduate student's thesis was defended this morning, no doubt telling the same fiction that has been promoted all along.

I would appreciate hearing from you regarding the status of your investigation. In the very near future, this entire affair could become very public, and I think you will want to have taken a stand on it before that happens.

regards . . . Donald Kroodsma

3/23/2016

Provost Newman to Kroodsma, Elizabeth Connor, Steven Goodwin, John Bryan, Jeffrey Podos

Please see the attached memo. Thank you for your patience.



UNIVERSITY of MASSACHUSETTS
AMHERST

373 Whitmore Administration Building
181 Presidents Drive
Amherst, MA 01003

Office of the Provost

Voice: 413.545.5065
Fax: 413.577.3980

March 23, 2016

To: Dr. Donald Kroodsma, Professor Emeritus
Department of Biology

From: Katherine Newman, Provost &
Sr. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Re: Your concerns re Professor Podos

Cc: Elizabeth Connor, Chair of the Biology Department
Dean Steven Goodwin
Professor Podos

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katherine Newman".

Having thoroughly considered your concerns, read the files from cover to cover, and examined in detail the findings coming out of the University's review process, I have sustained those findings.

From the University's perspective, this matter is closed.

3/26/2016

Kroodsma to Michael Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement

Hello Mike:

Given that you now have no role in the "remaining University process," would you be willing to meet now?

regards . . . Don

(NO RESPONSE)

3/28/2016

Kroodsma to UMass Administration (Newman, Bryan, Malone, Donais, McCarthy, Goodwin, Powers, Connor, Meehan, Subbaswamy, Feldman, Dumont)

28 March 2016

28 March 2016

Scientific and Ethical Misconduct, and its Cover-up, UMass Amherst

A Recap

To: Katherine Newman, Provost & Sr. Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UMass Amherst
(ksnewman@umass.edu)

John Bryan, Vice Provost for Academic Personnel, UMass Amherst,
(johnbryan@provost.umass.edu)

Michael Malone, Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, UMass Amherst
(vcre@umass.edu)

Jennifer Donais, AVC Research and Engagement, Research Compliance, UMass Amherst (jadonais@research.umass.edu)

John McCarthy, Distinguished University Professor & Vice-Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School (jmccarthy@linguist.umass.edu)

Steven Goodwin, Dean, College of Natural Sciences, UMass Amherst
(sgoodwin@cns.umass.edu)

Sally Powers, Associate Dean for Faculty & Research, College of Natural Sciences, UMass Amherst (powers@psych.umass.edu)

Elizabeth Connor, Chair of the Biology Department, UMass Amherst
(econnor@bio.umass.edu)

Cc: President Marty Meehan, University of Massachusetts (umasspresident@umassp.edu)

Kumble R. Subbaswamy, Chancellor, UMass Amherst (chancellor@umass.edu)

Robert Feldman, Deputy Chancellor, UMass Amherst (feldman@chancellor.umass.edu)

Betsy Dumont, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs & Director of the Interdisciplinary Graduate Programs in the Life Sciences (edumont@umass.edu)

The review of my claims of scientific and ethical misconduct by Jeffrey Podos (Biology Department, UMass Amherst) have now reached Provost Newman, who declares the following:

Having thoroughly considered your concerns, read the files from cover to cover, and examined in detail the findings coming out of the University's review process, I have sustained those findings.

From the University's perspective, this matter is closed.

Provost Newman's conclusion is as expected, but no less remarkable in that it sustains the findings of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, the Associate Dean for the College of Natural Sciences, and others in charge of conduct on the UMass Amherst campus. Everyone has rallied to the support of colleague Jeff Podos; not a single dissenting voice has been heard, not a single voice addressing one single item that might be any cause for concern. In the entire process, not one item of science has been addressed with me. In unanimity, it's "Move along, nothing to see here."

In the words of President Marty Meehan, on <https://www.umassp.edu/>:

UMass will help determine the kind of future Massachusetts will have and the kind of people we will be. The University is central to making the Commonwealth a place where everyone works for the common good and everyone has a chance to move forward in life and succeed."



Nice words, in theory. They feel good. But what I see in the chain of command on the UMass Amherst campus doesn't feel so good about the "people we will be." When the president's thoughts are applied to this current situation, it is, frankly, appalling to see what kind of people "we" are and who is moving forward and succeeding (see summary of events at end of this letter.)

By your inaction, you effectively promote the following:

1. Publishing good but false stories disguised as science, with advocacy and marketing skills trumping science.
2. Condoning and encouraging a UMass Amherst faculty member to continue this practice and to train his graduate students to do the same, all in secrecy, refusing to communicate with anyone who is even mildly critical of the work they produce.
3. Destroying more *science* careers of young, naïve graduate students who come to UMass to do science, only to be trained in marketing good stories with little, if any, truth.
4. Fostering a University of mediocrity, or worse, certainly not excellence, in the sciences.
5. Wasting tax-payer money, fully justifying budget cuts to NSF and other granting agencies by anti-science advocates.
6. Undermining the integrity and work of scientists everywhere, from those who work on bird song to those who address climate change, in the process belittling each of us who values science as a way of knowing, and devaluing science itself, providing a scathing indictment of all that is UMass Amherst.
7. Fueling an anti-science sentiment by the public and a logical distrust of all scientists, who are suspected of being in it to promote themselves, to get more grant money for themselves and their institutions (and other arguments that are heard publicly most often against climate scientists).

For those who value science as the way of learning about the natural world, your stand on all of the above is *indefensible*. And on behalf of scientists everywhere who strive to understand how the world actually works, I'll express here *genuine outrage*. One would think that, with the combined annual salaries of over \$3,000,000 among you (*yes, three million dollars of tax-payer money*), someone would have the integrity and conscience to step forward and say, "*Well, you know, this just isn't right.*"

Sincerely,

Donald Kroodsma (emeritus, UMass Biology).

DonaldKroodsma.com

DonaldKroodsma@gmail.com

Summary of Events for Goodwin and Podos (2014), etc.

In brief, Jeff Podos and his student Sarah Goodwin (Goodwin and Podos 2014) produced an entirely false account of territorial alliances in sparrows, with no truth in it. The paper was published in Biology Letters, given orally at a conference during May 2014 (winning best student paper award for its novel findings), and again during August 2014 after the shortcomings of the paper had been repeatedly pointed out (by me and a University of Washington group). During March 2016, the Ph. D. thesis was defended, the mistruths defiantly intact.

In the meantime, Podos and students refused to communicate about their work. After he was given several opportunities to explain his work, Podos engaged the UMass Amherst police to silence me, threatening me with criminal harassment charges if I tried to communicate with him or his student(s) about their work. To this day, not a single scientific issue that I have raised has been addressed with me, not by Podos, not by his student(s), not by Biology Letters, not by UMass review personnel.

Attempts to address these issues publicly at Biology Letters were halted when Podos sent a confidential letter to the journal (supposedly prepared by a secret review panel at UMass Amherst). Dean John McCarthy was the only name on the report, according to Biology Letters, but Dean McCarthy wrote that he knew nothing about this secret report to Biology Letters. Dean McCarthy has refused to clarify this issue with me. To this day, who wrote that letter to Biology Letters, and its contents, remain a mystery. How can one not suspect that it was written by Podos himself?

At some point one logically asks, "What is there in the published works of Podos and his students that require such extraordinary measures to suppress a dialogue, in violation of NSF ethical guidelines for openness (see <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>) and in violation of the ethical guidelines of the very Animal Behavior Society where Podos is president-elect (<https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001>)? Upon

further review, in fact, all of the work by Podos and his students on "performance" has been shown to be rife with "science that isn't science." As I pointed out to Podos back in 2004 (yes, 12 years ago), he is marketing sexy stories, not doing science.

How much tax-payer money has been spent on these endeavors, marketing junk science and training graduate students to do the same? Over a million dollars in grant money to Podos at UMass Amherst, I believe. I would call that a waste of tax-payer money; actually, I would call it a lot worse than that.

And there's so much more, all of it documented on my website (http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596, password 'science'), where one can find all correspondence with 1) Podos and his students (and UMass Police threats), 2) Biology Letters, 3) the Animal Behavior Society, 4) the Association of Field Ornithologists, and 5) administrative personnel at UMass Amherst. In addition, my review of Podos' research is provided there in the document "Birdsong Performance Studies—A Contrary View," the first nine pages of which are devoted solely to refuting Goodwin and Podos (2014).

Reference

Goodwin, S. E., and J. Podos. 2014. Team of rivals: alliance formation in territorial songbirds is predicted by vocal signal structure. *Biology Letters*. 10:20131083.

April 2016

4/6/16

Dead silence from UMass! All 12 super-administrators are totally silent.

No one has the integrity or conscience to address these issues, let alone the simple courtesy of acknowledging a communication from an emeritus faculty member from their own university.

Continuing silence into September 2016, when I write again to Dean McCarthy to have him help clarify his role in the Biology Letters fiasco. I receive a reply from Dean McCarthy!! See Section 2 communications.