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**21 July 2017. Kroodsmas to ABS OFFICERS. SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICAL MISCONDUCT BY PRESIDENT PODOS. I RESIGN AS ABS FELLOW**

21 July 2017

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President<sup>1i</sup>)

From: Donald Kroodsma, Fellow, ABS

Re: My Resignation as a Fellow of ABS

It is deeply troubling when a scientific society elects to its highest office someone who cannot abide by that society's own ethical guidelines (see "Ethics in Publishing," <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001>), which states the following:

*Professional integrity in the conduct and reporting of research is an absolute requirement of publication . . . , as is a willingness to share information with other members of the scientific community.*

Equally troubling is the current ABS president's dismissal of NSF's policy on *Dissemination and Sharing of Research Results* (see <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>):

*Investigators are expected to share with other researchers, at no more than incremental cost and within a reasonable time, the primary data, samples, physical collections and other supporting materials created or gathered in the course of work under NSF grants. Grantees are expected to encourage and facilitate such sharing.*

Rather than comply with these basic principles, Jeff Podos has threatened me with criminal harassment charges, delivered by the University of Massachusetts Police, if I inquire about how he conducts his research. Such behavior is unacceptable by anyone in the ABS (or in any scientific discipline, of course), but especially unacceptable by its elected leader (someone wondering how these threats arose can read all the evidence in the attached file "Criminal Harassment").<sup>2ii</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Per order of the University of Massachusetts Police, I am not allowed to communicate with Podos, a faculty member in my own Department of Biology at UMass

<sup>2</sup> And there's so much more: 1) *My attempt at a public dialogue in Biology Letters about Goodwin and Podos (2014), for example, was quashed by a confidential letter from the University to the journal. All I have been able to glean from Biology Letters is that this secret letter was submitted by Podos, from the dean of the graduate school. "Per university rules," wrote the dean, I was not allowed to know the contents of this letter (in contrast to how I encouraged Biology Letters to forward any of my correspondence with them on to Podos, because I could not do so directly). Although Biology Letters believed that the dean wrote the letter, the dean had "no idea" (quotes from his email to me) who wrote the document, had "no idea" who submitted the document, and had no role ("none") in preparing or writing the document. (Nor was he interested in finding out.)* 2) Or consider how lobbying by Podos et

As I write in my commentary for Animal Behavior (attached), these kinds of behaviors can persist only as long as the benefits outweigh the costs. I realize that it is no great cost to the ABS to erase me as a Fellow, but resigning as a Fellow is what I as an individual can do, however small the cost imposed. For me, “Business as Usual” is not an option, nor should it be for the Animal Behavior Society, especially given the parallels that are transpiring on the national scene.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

### **31 July 2017. ABS to Kroodsma. WE ACCEPT YOUR RESIGNATION**

July 31, 2017

To: Dr. Donald Kroodsma

Re: Resignation as ABS Fellow

Dear Dr. Kroodsma,

We received your letter of July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017 requesting that your name be removed as a fellow of the Animal Behavior Society. We have granted your request, and have removed your name from the list of Society fellows.

Best wishes,



Patricia Brennan, PhD.  
ABS Secretary  
secretary@animalbehaviorsociety.org

### **15 August 2017. Kroodsma to ABS. POST-RESIGNATION THOUGHTS. THREATS TO ABS AS A SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.**

15 August 2017

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al. (including two former ABS presidents) led a former editor of the Journal to reject my proposed Forum article before it was even submitted. . . . All this effort has been an attempt to suppress an open discussion of the research that I have now addressed in my published Forum (Kroodsma, 2017—see commentary).

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President)

From: Donald Kroodsma, ex-Fellow, ABS

Re: A few post-resignation thoughts

Erasing my name from the Fellows list was easy. Ignoring the consequences of all that has led to my resignation will not be so easy.

Since being threatened with criminal harassment charges, I have kept detailed notes on everything involving this sorry saga since June 2014, partly to protect myself, but mostly in disbelief (all information is accumulating at [http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page\\_id=1596](http://donaldkroodsma.com/?page_id=1596)). These three years are the story of everything that can go bad in science, and I mean *everything* (the least of which is incompetence), and is destined to become a very public documentary (e.g., just for starters, see <http://andrewgelman.com/2017/08/13/bird-fight/>).

That's inconvenient, to say the least, for those of us who take some pride in calling ourselves scientists, though it may be healthy in the long run for science in general, especially given increasing efforts to identify self-promoting bullshit and root it out. In the short (and, depending on your response, possibly the long) term, it is certainly not good for the Animal Behavior Society, because the primary perpetrator of all this mischief is now your President (not mine!), supported by two past presidents who have been his mentors. How's all this going to play out, especially for the ABS?

I thought I'd ask a senior scientist in another discipline for an opinion. I asked two questions: 1) What's your reaction to all of the documents I have accumulated? 2) If you were an officer of the Animal Behavior Society, what would you do? Here's her response:

*Holy shit! Unbelievable. Criminal harassment? You've got to be kidding, but I know you're not clever enough to make this stuff up. I've never seen a field of study so demolished in the way you took on the performance ideas. This kind of thing is unthinkable in my field. Bird song must be so small a field and so ingrown that no one challenges each other, or thinks twice about accepting whatever is published as true. Everyone can't be that stupid, can they? Reminds me of Trump's alternate realities and Fantasyland, given how many groups (though with big conflicts of interest) have dismissed your claims as "just another disagreement of the kind that commonly occurs among scientists," or something like that. It's a pity that your words on marketing and science to Podos weren't heeded over a decade ago; would have saved a lot of people a lot of grief.*

*That Marc Houser [sic] case intrigues me. Apparently he was exiled from academia for fabricating data, but some defend him because they feel he still got*

*some right conclusions. Podos has obviously cooked everything in lots of other ways, and come up with lots of sexy stories that are probably all wrong. He duped in the process a whole generation of others into believing him. Using federal money for it all, you'd think that would get him into lots of trouble, if not for the research publications themselves then the extreme measures of coverup afterward (think obstruction of justice; maybe the presidents can pardon themselves). What's worse for science, the Howser or the Podos method? Both are really bad, but if I had to choose one, I'd choose Podos. A Howser in sheep's clothing maybe.*

*What would I do as an officer of that group? If I thought that nobody would find out, I'd be tempted to keep it quiet, and hope it all passed unnoticed. That's easiest. If it's not kept under wraps, and that seems to be the case, I'd take whatever measures I'd need to protect the members of the society. I'd ask that the president resign. Maybe he'd realize that it would be in the best interest of the society if he resigned. I'd be the "zero tolerance" officer when it comes to the kinds of things you've described that have gone on. That's the message that every graduate student entering this field should hear. Otherwise they should just go into creative writing.*

*You owe me. Took me a whole morning to read your stuff, though I have to admit that it was captivating. Like a good thriller, I couldn't put it down. Couldn't believe all the ways they tried to shut you down. Hope you've retained movie rights. It's certainly a great teaching device for graduate students entering any field of science (and their advisers).*

I quit. I've devoted all too much time over the last three years to this effort of trying to "right the ship." Maybe all the effort was worth it. Maybe not. In a sense, you officers of the Animal Behavior Society get to write the ending to the documentary. If I were an officer, I know what I'd have to do in order to maintain the integrity of research on animal behavior and the reputation of my "scientific society." The ending would have to be one I'd be proud of.

I'm headed out to pasture.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

**Post 15 August 2017. ABS to Kroodsma. SILENCE. NO REPOSE.**

**28 January 2018. Kroodsma to ABS officers. SILENCE IS COMPLICITY.  
TAKE A STAND ON SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICAL MISCONDUCT.**

28 January 2018

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society (except the President—per UMass police)

First president-elect: John P. Swaddle, College of William & Mary

Second president-elect: Jennifer Fewell, Arizona State University

Past-president: William Searcy, University of Miami

Secretary: Patricia Brennan, Mount Holyoke College

Treasurer: Gil Rosenthal, Texas A & M University

Program Officer: Jonathan Pruitt, UC Santa Barbara

Program Officer-elect: Alison Bell, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Parliamentarian: Tamra Mendelson, University of Maryland

Historian: Zuleyma Tang-Martinez, University of Missouri-St. Louis

Member-at-large: Emily DuVal, Florida State University

Member-at-large: Melissa Hughes, College of Charleston

Member-at-large: Christopher Templeton, Pacific University

From: Donald Kroodsma, Ex-Fellow, ABS

Re: The Future of the ABS

Inevitably, it will at some time be asked, “What did they know?” and “When did they know it?”

The answers are easy: *Everything* (as detailed on <http://donaldkroodsma.com/performance>), and *if not 21 July 2017 or 15 August 2017* (see below), *then definitely today, 28 January 2018.*

Silence is complicity. Inaction is complicity. Complicity is collusion and collaboration. Complicity by the elected leadership undermines the credibility of the ABS as a scientific society and undermines the credibility of every ABS member. More broadly, complicity in the matters I raise erodes the public trust in all science and all scientists, *and rightfully so.*

From where in the ABS does leadership come? One would think from its elected leaders, from the top down. On the issues that I raise, perhaps graduate students will be better leaders, demanding change from the bottom up, because the very top is in trouble.

Try exposing your graduate students to the mess that I have uncovered and you will probably receive one of three responses:

- 1) If that is the ABS, and that is how one rises to the top, I want nothing to do with it.
- 2) If that is the ABS, I can do that, and do it even better. Looks like fun to me. I'm all in.
- 3) [Abundant expletives] I'm going to help fix that!

The third choice, of course, is the only healthy response for the ABS.

What is the fix? It's not silence and inaction and complicity. With the integrity of the ABS at stake, what fix is there other than the immediate resignation of Jeff Podos as president, requested unanimously by its (other) elected leaders. Aspiring students will quickly learn that science reigns at the ABS. The longer Podos remains at the top of the Animal Behavior Society, without any apparent concern by its officers, the more extensive and long-lasting will be the damage to the Society (unless you can keep it all covered up, of course).

More explicitly, for flouting the ethical guidelines of the ABS over which he presides, for flagrantly violating NSF demands that NSF-funded research be open and not secretive, for general scientific fraud, and for training students in this culture, President Jeffrey Podos must be asked to resign.

I ask for a professional response from the collective, elected leadership of the ABS by Monday, February 5. If that time frame cannot be managed, please send me your schedule.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

P.S. Having set this letter aside for a few days, I've thought some more about it. The elected leadership of the ABS has been spectacularly silent on this topic after two messages from me in the last half year. Why should I expect anything different on a third attempt? Perhaps including a few graduate students in this communication could lead to some productive discussions on what constitutes science, scientific fraud, ethical misconduct, as well as leadership. In fact, that just might be a worthwhile discussion at this point for every ABS member.

31 January 2018



**31 January 2018. Kroodisma to ABS officers. ABS OFFICER TUTORIAL: SCIENTIFIC FRAUD, COVER-UPS, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAKE SCIENCE**

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society

From: Don Kroodisma

Re: Given that Jonathan Pruitt seemed to have some difficulty identifying the main issues, I'm going to spell a few of them out here. I want it to be abundantly clear both what the issues are and what is at stake.

**SCIENTIFIC FRAUD**

1. **A history of deception by Podos**, identifiable in every paper that I have studied, generating appealing stories that have no scientific substance. The deceptions are spelled out in detail in item #3 on my relevant web page (<http://donaldkroodisma.com/performance>), in the manuscript entitled "BULLSHIT<sup>3</sup> is SCIENTIFIC FRAUD" (<http://donaldkroodisma.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Bullshit-is-Scientific-Fraud-A-Response-to-Podos-1.pdf>). For discussions of these deceptions, scan the table of contents for that manuscript. The resulting literature is simply false. One can only conclude that this pattern of deception is done intentionally for personal and professional gain, at the expense of all else.

If you want to explain these issues away, here are three reasons that have been used before, all, I might point out, by those with a serious conflict of interest, given their close personal and professional ties to Podos (more on conflict of interest below):

Here's Biology Letters' interpretation (after consulting Podos, perhaps even written by Podos—see below): "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."

Association of Field Ornithologists, after consulting graduate school office mate of Podos: "normal disagreement among scientists in methodological approaches and the interpretation of results"

A similar interpretation, published by another graduate student of Nowicki, and her student (see more on cultural transmission of publication strategies below): "there are

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<sup>3</sup> By definition, BULLSHIT is "... speech [or literature] intended to persuade ... without regard for truth ... ." On Bullshit (2005), by philosopher Harry G. Frankfurt, ... Frankfurt determines that bullshit is speech intended to persuade ... without regard for truth. The liar cares about the truth and attempts to hide it; the bullshitter doesn't care if what they say is true or false, but rather only cares whether or not their listener is persuaded ... (Wikipedia)

differences in the methodological approaches . . . presenting some unanswered questions” (Phillips and Derryberry, 2017).

And if you want to just call this sloppiness in wording by Podos et al., then you need to consider his own statement: “The original wording had been chosen with care” (item #13 in BULLSHIT). The published stories are not carelessly done. And read how the Podos’ method of doing “science” “fails spectacularly not only in science but also in everyday life” (item #32 in BULLSHIT).

**2. Scientific fraud:** “Distortions of the research process,” reporting only results or conclusions that generate good stories, concealing simple alternative explanations for data that distract from or undermine the main story, and more—all this is dishonesty and deception and, simply put, scientific fraud, resulting in fraudulent literature with no truth in it. You can read about that on pages 1-10 in the above-referenced manuscript. See definitions of scientific fraud in the BULLSHIT manuscript, copied here in the APPENDIX to this document.

Here’s a sample definition of scientific fraud, from Encyclopedia.com:

*reporting only part of their findings, while omitting to report data or experimental results that do not support their conclusions. By today’s standards, omission of data that inexplicably conflicts with other data or with a scientist’s proposed interpretation is considered scientific fraud*

## THE COVER-UP

**3. Flagrantly violating the “Ethics in publishing” guidelines** of the Animal Behavior Society, by refusing routine inquiries about how research was done: see <https://www.elsevier.com/journals/animal-behaviour/0003-3472/guide-for-authors#5001>. If you want to agree that I was harassing Podos, and he was fully justified in refusing to respond (and instructing his students to do the same), then you need to consult the list of emails that I sent to Podos and his students (section #1 on my web page). My first (gentle, I might say) inquiry was in July 2014. No response. You can read all the emails there, but the ethics violation occurs on the first request, and certainly by the second request in October, after giving plenty of time for a response.

**4. Flouting NSF’s policy on “Dissemination and Sharing of Research Results”** by refusing to communicate about NSF-funded work: <https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>

**5. The preposterous use of a police escort** for Podos through the world of science, threatening me with criminal harassment charges if I ask questions about his research (item #1 on <http://donaldkroodsmas.com/performance>). Then there’s the ridiculous demand by the UMass police that I also tell an international audience that none of them are allowed to talk to Podos either about his research either. I was too embarrassed for the police and Podos to follow through on that demand.

6. **The (almost) laughable secrecy of it all!** OK, this may not rank with the above, but just look at how I was thwarted at Biology Letters; see section #2 on my web page. Biology Letters received a letter from the Dean of the UMass Graduate School, spelling out how everything had to be secret according to University rules, and so I couldn't know the contents of the letter, and that Podos was fully exonerated by a UMass committee, so Biology Letters could not publish a critique by me. But here's one not-so-small problem: The dean admitted that he never wrote any letter, never knew anything about it. So who wrote the letter? This is laughable, almost, but if Podos impersonated a UMass committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, sending this top-secret letter exonerating himself, that is a serious breach of ethics. Go ahead and ask the President of the Animal Behavior Society how all this could have happened. I can't get answers from anyone.

### TRAINING GRADUATE STUDENTS IN THIS CULTURE

7. **The training of graduate students in this culture.** See item #2 in BULLSHIT manuscript, for specific discussion of the following four papers: 1) Podos, Peters, & Nowicki 2004; 2) Goodwin and Podos 2014 (together with the strong defense of that paper by Goodwin and Podos 2015); 3) Moseley, Lahti, and Podos 2013; 4) Lahti, Moseley, and Podos 2011. See three generations listed here, with Nowicki training Podos, who in turn has trained Goodwin, Moseley, and Lahti. Yes, you read that correctly: I do include Steve Nowicki here, a previous past-president of the ABS. For me, that Podos, Peters, & Nowicki 2004 paper, with advisor Nowicki signing off on this paper by his graduate student Podos, offers a raw insight into how good stories have all too often trumped science in this lineage.

8. **Cheating to get ahead.** A dishonest advisor gets ahead by deception. He in turn trains his graduate students in how to tell good stories, i.e., in the art of deception. These well-coached students go to scientific meetings and win best-student paper awards, as did both Goodwin and Moseley at the ornithological meetings I attended during 2014 (the event that set this all off). Podos on his website boasted of a clean sweep of all the graduate student awards. I have not studied the paper by Moseley, but see Moseley, Lahti, and Podos (2013) discussed in BULLSHIT; if that paper is any indication, then the Moseley and Podos paper at the meeting was also just a good story. The paper by Goodwin is entirely false, and I knew it immediately upon hearing it (no one else in the audience knew the literature as I did)—I have spelled out why it is false (i.e., fiction) in my Forum article ([http://donaldkroodsma.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Kroodsma\\_2017\\_forum.pdf](http://donaldkroodsma.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Kroodsma_2017_forum.pdf), pages 1-5).

***Honest graduate students who were doing real science and who competed for the best-student paper were swindled.*** Who gets to post on their CV that they won best-student paper? Who is going to have the edge in getting future employment? The cheaters, that's who. What does that do for the integrity of the scientific process and the future of research in animal behavior? Now consider the consequences when the honest students learn that they had been swindled. What's next? Let the best stories win—substance does not matter, anywhere, because there's no

accountability, especially so if all this misbehavior has been brought to the attention of the ABS officers and they remained completely silent, doing nothing about it.

### **MORE DECEPTION AND DISHONESTY, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

9. **Duping the entire scientific community.** I sat in that conference room listening to Goodwin and my heart sank, even more so when I learned she and Podos had won best paper. Think of all those in the wider scientific community who have been duped by the idea that “deviation” has relevance to birdsong performance, as promoted in all of the Podos papers; the list of citations is considerable. I have a hunch that a thorough study of other Podos papers, such as on Galapagos finches, would reveal that they also contain their share of deception, all for the sake of a good story.

10. **Undermining the public trust in science.** Dishonesty and deception by scientists destroys public trust in scientists, in every endeavor we undertake, and rightfully so. We know all about that. Nothing more need to be said.

### **THE CHARGE TO THE OFFICERS OF THE ABS**

To preserve the integrity of the Society as a *scientific* society, the elected officers of the Animal Behavior Society have only one choice: Zero tolerance for these kinds of behaviors, openly condemning these behaviors, and unanimously demanding the resignation of an officer who would engage in these activities (i.e., your president).

Any other choice on your part is unthinkable, as it would send a message that has the potential to destroy the scientific integrity of the ABS; it certainly would tempt any honest young investigator to cheat as well. That’s not a pretty thing to have on one’s conscience.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

By the way, can I assume that the ABS officers are well aware of the extreme conflict of interest by Podos, Searcy, and Hughes, and especially Nowicki should he get involved, and Beth Jakob of UMass if she should be involved? Any influence by close confidants of Jeff Podos (Secretary Brennan?), which would include anyone in the Nowicki lineage, destroys the legitimacy of your deliberations (see above examples under item #1). If those with a strong conflict of interest have not recused themselves and have already weighed in, then what? Unless you respond with strong condemnation of all that has transpired, and unless you demand the resignation of Podos, your efforts will be judged as partial, unacceptable, and unprofessional. The eloquent silence of the ABS officers to my communications of last July and August probably also reflect the influence of those with strong conflicts of interest.

### **APPENDIX: SCIENTIFIC FRAUD, DEFINED**

**Scientific Fraud, National Institutes of Health:** “an act of deception or misrepresentation of one’s own work . . .” Scientific research typically has been founded on high ethical standards established by researchers in academia and health care research institutions. Scientific fraud, *an*

*act of deception or misrepresentation of one's own work*, violates these ethical standards. It can take the form of plagiarism, falsification of data, and irresponsible authorship. Scientific fraud has been attributed to misdirected attempts to attain high levels of personal and professional success. Researchers so prone commit scientific fraud in a search for promotion, status, tenure, and the obtaining of research grants. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/2061524>

**US National Academies of Sciences:** “*manipulating . . . results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record . . .*” Falsification is manipulating research, materials, equipment, or processes, or changing or *omitting data or results such that the research is not accurately represented in the research record*.

**Encyclopedia.com:** “. . . Intentional misrepresentation of the . . . results of scientific research . . .” The term “scientific fraud” is used to describe *intentional misrepresentation of the methods, procedures, or results of scientific research*. Behavior characterized as scientific fraud includes *fabrication, falsification*, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing scientific research, or *in reporting research results*. Scientific fraud is *unethical* and often illegal. When discovered and proven, fraud can end the scientific careers of researchers who engage in it. Nonetheless, *the substantial financial and reputational rewards that can accrue to scientists who produce novel and important research or who obtain certain desired results have induced some scientists to engage in scientific fraud*. More prevalent and more vexing than outright fabrication is the “fudging” or “massaging” of data . . . A related offense occurs when researchers “cook” or “finagle” data by *reporting only part of their findings, while omitting to report data or experimental results that do not support their conclusions. By today's standards, omission of data that inexplicably conflicts with other data or with a scientist's proposed interpretation is considered scientific fraud.* <http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-andpress-releases/scientific-fraud>

**Wikipedia:** “. . . Intention or gross negligence leading to *fabrication of the scientific message . . . distortion of the research process . . .*” Scientific misconduct is the *violation of the standard codes of scholarly conduct and ethical behavior* in reporting or performing professional scientific research. . . . • Danish definition: “Intention or gross negligence leading to *fabrication of the scientific message or a false credit or emphasis given to a scientist*” • Swedish definition: “*Intention[al] distortion of the research process* by fabrication of data, text, hypothesis, or methods from another researcher's manuscript form or publication; or distortion of the research process in other ways.” *The consequences of scientific misconduct can be damaging for perpetrators and journal audience and for any individual who exposes it.*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> That's me, the individual who exposes it. The only reason I can pursue these matters is that my livelihood no longer depends on the good graces of a scientific community that would review my publications and grant proposals. No one who actively studies birdsong and would be reviewed for publication or grant proposals could afford to take a stand against the fraudulent behaviors that I

**1 February 2018. ABS officers to Kroodsma. WE SEE NO EVIL; besides, NONE OF THIS IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY.**

Dear Dr. Kroodsma:

We received your letter of January 27, 2018. There are established processes for investigating allegations of scientific misconduct at the journals you refer to, with the relevant funding agencies, and with the home institutions of those accused. Anyone involved in allegations of scientific misconduct deserves due process. The Executive Committee of the Animal Behavior Society is not aware of any official adjudication from any process that finds that Dr. Podos or his colleagues have acted inappropriately. If you are aware of official rulings (as described above) that find against Dr. Podos please forward them to us, otherwise we consider the matter currently closed and our involvement appropriately terminated.

Sincerely,

John Swaddle (on behalf of the Executive Committee of the Animal Behavior Society)  
First president-elect, Animal Behavior Society

**1 February 2018. Kroodsma to ABS officers. CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN YOUR DECISION?**

To John Swaddle, president elect:

“Is it fair to say that this is the collective decision of all of the officers?”

[Implied question, without giving my real question away: In other words, did Podos, Searcy, and Hughes really participate and not recuse themselves? As I wrote to the officers just yesterday, “Any influence by close confidants of Jeff Podos . . ., which would include anyone in the Nowicki lineage, destroys the legitimacy of your deliberations . . .”

**1 February. ABS officers to Kroodsma. YES, LOTS OF IT.**

From John Swaddle, president-elect: “Yes, it is. I wrote on behalf of the Executive Committee.”

[Note added later in response: As I wrote to the officers yesterday, if Podos, Searcy, and Hughes at the very least do not recuse themselves, then the efforts of the executive committee “will be judged as partial, unacceptable, and unprofessional” (putting it somewhat mildly).

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expose. In fact, when I engaged in this kind of reckless behavior some years ago, the consequences were significant, contributing to my leaving academics at the tender age of 57.



### 3 February 2018. Kroodisma to ABS officers. **SEVERE CONFLICT OF INTEREST RENDERS ABS OFFICERS IRRELEVANT ON ISSUES OF SCIENTIFIC AND ETHICAL MISCONDUCT**

To: Officers of the Animal Behavior Society

From: Don Kroodisma

Re: Due process derailed

My, that was a quick group decision. I thought you'd need at least the full week I was giving you. Not so!

Your words have a familiar ring to them: "we consider the matter currently closed and our involvement appropriately terminated." I've heard variants of those words at least seven times now (see below). My favorite is from Provost Newman at UMass Amherst<sup>5</sup>:

*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.*

But, I have to tell you, this ain't over until it's over. I am terminating your involvement as a group, as you've had three chances, but I could very well imagine all of this being the primary topic of discussion at the annual meeting this year.

And I'm glad that you like due process. I think of all the processes in the world, it's my favorite process. And over the past few years, I've come to know it especially well, so I think of myself as something of an expert on the topic. I know it when I see it. For example . . .

#### **False due process (seven examples—science loses)**

1) Due process is **NOT** what I experienced when Podos, Nowicki, Searcy, and some of their students successfully lobbied then AB editor Michelle Scott to reject my Forum article before it was even submitted (December 2014; Section #3, <http://donaldkroodisma.com/performance>).

2) I am told by you officers to pursue due process with the journals where fake science has been published. Yes, I did that, once: Due process is **NOT** what happened when I attempted to address scientific misconduct with Biology Letters (Section #2, website above). In capsule form, you officers had the following (quoted below), in the 31 January 2018 letter to you, posted in Section #6 on website. And knowing full well the corrupt process that occurred, you tell me that I must

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<sup>5</sup> For clarification, a few footnotes added after 3 February. Mind you, this final decision by the highest administrative officer at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, came after all matters were thoroughly evaluated and nothing found amiss by two Departmental Chairs, the Dean and Associate Dean of the College of Natural Sciences, the Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement, and the Vice-Provost for Graduate and Education and Dean of the Graduate School. Each of them, in turn, closed the matter, until I said "not quite," eventually taking it to the Provost, who concurred with everyone else.

take this up with Biology Letters, when the journal has been deceived by a communication directly from Podos so that they will no longer communicate with me? Rather disingenuous of you, I would say, and a cop out, putting it gently. (Also, I think each of you knows of the conflict-of-interest that a journal has in retracting papers that it has published; I needn't elaborate.)

*Biology Letters received a letter from the Dean of the UMass Graduate School, spelling out how everything had to be secret according to University rules, and so I couldn't know the contents of the letter, and that Podos was fully exonerated by a UMass committee, so Biology Letters could not publish a critique by me. But here's one not-so-small problem: The dean admitted that he never wrote any letter, never knew anything about it. So who wrote the letter? This is laughable, almost, but if Podos impersonated a UMass committee and the Dean of the Graduate School, sending this top-secret letter exonerating himself, that is a serious breach of ethics. Go ahead and ask the President of the Animal Behavior Society how all this could have happened. I can't get answers from anyone.*

3) Due process is **NOT** what happened when I suggested to the Association of Field Ornithologists that they retract a best student paper, because it was fiction. After consulting a long-time friend and colleague of Podos, a Nowicki graduate student and an office-mate of Podos at Duke, my request was dismissed as “normal disagreement among scientists in methodological approaches and the interpretation of results.” That's almost the same thing that Biology Letters had to say: “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.” Probably both came directly from Podos.<sup>6</sup>

4) Due process is **NOT** what honest graduate students experience when competing for best-student paper awards at Society meetings, when well-coached students present slick, appealing, but false stories, and walk away with top honors. In my last letter to you officers, entitled SCIENTIFIC FRAUD, COVER-UPS, AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF FAKE SCIENCE, see sections #7 and #8, on “The training of graduate students in this culture” and “Cheating to get ahead.” The consequences of this pattern for science and the Animal Behavior Society are dire.

5) Due process is **NOT** what happens when university administrators ask the charged if they're guilty, and they say “no,” and the case is then closed (section #5 on website).<sup>7</sup> As NSF says,

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<sup>6</sup> Here's the response from UMass administrators, all sounding familiar, as if from the same source: “Upon full review of the materials, I believe that allegations . . . are simply disputes about the interpretation of results and the appropriateness of methodologies, and do not rise to the level of misconduct.” –Sally Powers, College of Natural Sciences Associate Dean for Faculty and Research

<sup>7</sup> As written by Associate Dean Powers: “Dr. Podos believes the emails constitute harassment.” Case closed. [You can read the emails for yourself](#) and decide whether they constitute harassment, but at any rate the Associate Dean was not about to offer an independent assessment on her own when she could rely on Podos for a conclusion.



university administrators are the first in line to deny any possible wrongdoing by their faculty; universities are big business, an NSF lawyer said, and big business will protect its own, especially “its stars.”

6) **NOT** some more. You ABS officers continue the pattern. A day after I point out the serious conflict of interest by several of your officers,<sup>8</sup> I receive a statement from your first president-elect dismissing my concerns, seemingly proud that this is the conclusion of all of the officers. It takes a person with supernormal abilities (or simple conflict of interest) to look at this litany of corruption and say “It’s not our responsibility. There’s nothing we can do.” Which, of course, is not true, because you officers can do anything you choose to do. It’s a matter of resolve to do what you think is the right thing to do, and you have chosen. History will judge you.

And just what do the ABS officers do with Podos’ obvious violation of the ABS Ethics in Publishing? ABS is where this item has to be addressed, no place else; you can’t shift the responsibility to anyone else. So, you officers just ignore that? Well-done, I must say. Very effective **NOT** due process. And, in the same breath, I must also say I am embarrassed for you. This is **NOT** what is meant by due process. You cannot shelter behind due process excuses and then fail to offer due process yourselves. That’s called hypocrisy.

7) More **NOT**. How could any of the ABS officers possibly be conflicted? Oh, let me tell you (for an example besides Podos, who apparently, and astonishingly, was fully involved in writing your response). I’ll go back ten years for this example, with Bill Searcy serving as an editor for *Animal Behavior*. In our submitted manuscript, Bruce Byers and I challenged the cherished and widely held belief that song repertoire size in songbirds had evolved largely as a result of female choice, with females preferring large over small repertoires. Let me excerpt from the letter I wrote to Searcy on 25 January 2008. I think it’s self-explanatory how Searcy’s acceptance of our manuscript would devalue much of his own research; with no concern for his conflict of interest, he wrote I “*regretfully must decline to accept [i.e., reject] your paper for publication by Animal Behaviour.*” The entire letter will be included as an appendix to this document.

**The editorial process.** Frankly, Bill, I am surprised that you would find it appropriate to serve as editor for this paper, for two reasons.

**Reason #1. Conflict of interest.** You and your close collaborator(s) have a substantial body of research that we challenge in this manuscript. Should this manuscript be published in the prominent (but appropriate, according to Beecher) journal of *Animal Behavior*, it would be widely read and if its conclusions are accepted, the consequences for you and your close collaborators could be professionally unpleasant.

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<sup>8</sup> Conflict of Interest. Hughes and Podos are both past graduate students of Nowicki. Searcy is a close colleague and collaborator (See Appendix). Input from the three of them compromises any due process that the ABS officers could have achieved.

**Reason #2. Our history. You and I have a 20-year history of disagreement about what constitutes good science.** [We can make that 30 years during 2018.] You submitted your rebuttal (Searcy 1989) to my pseudoreplication paper (Kroodsmas 1989b) before it was even published, and I replied (Kroodsmas 1989a). A subsequent international conference was held in England to sort out these issues (McGregor, Catchpole, Dabelsteen, Falls, Fusani, Gerhardt, Gilbert, Horn, Klump, Kroodsmas, Lambrechts, McComb, Nelson, Pepperberg, Ratcliffe, Searcy and Weary 1992). Had your opinion prevailed, we would know even less about birdsong than we do today. To put it bluntly, I believe you are as wrong on this current issue as you were on the pseudoreplication issue.

Perhaps you feel that you could overcome any potential bias and remain impartial when deciding the fate of our manuscript, but I doubt that any outside observer think that humanly possible.

[In the end, I went over Searcy's head, to chief editor Breed. Searcy was summarily dismissed as editor for our paper.]

8) Want more examples? Write to me.

### **True due process (one example—science wins)**

Just once did judgement on these matters pass outside the sphere of North American influence by Nowicki, Searcy, Podos et al. Kudos to editors Foster and Beecher for testing the merits of my claims by going to Europe for reviews of my proposed Forum. The results were very inconvenient for the North American team, with the eventual publication of my Forum article. You can read all of the laudatory comments by the referees in section #3 on my website. Did you ask what I'm hearing from the research community? Here's just one example: "*I want to say how much I enjoyed reading your Forum article in Animal Behavior. . . . Thank you for speaking out on this subject. Rest assured that there is at least one young ornithologist that hasn't bought the bullshit.*" Or how about this one: "*Hell hath no fury like an insecure scientist defending a career of assumptions!*" Want more? Write me. I need to stop here for now . . .



I find it difficult to believe that a few of you officers aren't squirming with the official response of the executive committee, especially given the extreme conflict of interest involved by all-too-many of the officers. I have (had?) high regard for Emily DuVal, for example. What say, Emily, are you really on board with the group statement? I find that difficult to believe.

I'm going to give each individual officer an opportunity to speak for himself or herself. This is the kind of decision that, some time down the road (probably no later than 2 August in

Milwaukee), each of you with a conscience will look back and say either 1) “I did the right thing, and I’m proud of it,” or 2) “I now regret the opportunity I had to do something and blew it.” (I suggest you review my 31 January “SCIENTIFIC FRAUD, etc” document before deciding; read, then reread the consequences for graduate student training.) Any comments sent to me will be part of a public record, posted here, available to anyone who consults this website, and I would hope be preserved for posterity by the ABS historian, as I believe this is a critical point in the life of the ABS. (Zuleyma, I also encourage you to gather from Swaddle the emails from officers that contributed to his letter to me.) Lack of a response from each of you will inevitably be interpreted that you concur with the group decision sent to me by John Swaddle, president-elect.

I’m going to provide an opportunity for a few graduate students to weigh in too. Their comments will be posted here anonymously, unless they choose otherwise. Oh, hell, I’ll open this up to anyone who wants to comment, though I’ll make them anonymous; I am all too aware of how candid assessments of research quality can lead to vindictive consequences (ask me why I left academics at age 57).

**Updated comments from individual officers (pending) and others**

ABS officer	Comments from the officer
 <p><u>Jeffrey Podos</u> Department of Biology University of Massachusetts-Amherst Amherst, Massachusetts, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>John P. Swaddle</u> Biology Department College of William &amp; Mary Williamsburg, Virginia, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>

 <p><u>Jennifer Fewell</u> School of Life Sciences Arizona State University Tempe, Arizona, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>William A. Searcy</u> Department of Biology University of Miami Coral Gables, Florida, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>Patricia Brennan</u> Department of Biological Sciences Mount Holyoke College South Hadley, Massachusetts, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>Gil Rosenthal</u> Department of Biology Texas A&amp;M University College Station, Texas, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>

 <p><u>Jonathan Pruitt</u> Department of Biological Sciences University of California, Santa Barbara Santa Barbara, California, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>Alison Bell</u> Department of Animal Biology University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign Champaign, Illinois, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>Tamra Mendelson</u> Department of Biological Sciences University of Maryland, Baltimore County Baltimore, Maryland, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>
 <p><u>Zuleyma Tang-Martinez</u> Department of Biology University of Missouri-St. Louis St. Louis, Missouri, US</p>	<p>As of 19 June 2018, no response</p>

 <p><b>Emily DuVal</b> Department of Biological Science Florida State University Tallahassee, Florida, US</p>	As of 19 June 2018, no response
 <p><b>Melissa Hughes</b> Department of Biology College of Charleston Charleston, South Carolina, US</p>	As of 19 June 2018, no response
 <p><b>Christopher Templeton</b> Department of Biology Pacific University Forest Grove, Oregon, US</p>	As of 19 June 2018, no response

**15 July 2018—Officers are totally silent, still!**

## **OTHER CORRESPONDENTS ARE NOT SILENT**

### **1. I haven't bought the bullshit**

*I want to say how much I enjoyed reading your Forum article in Animal Behavior. . . . Thank you for speaking out on this subject. Rest assured that there is at least one young ornithologist that hasn't bought the bullshit.*

### **2. Your message rings true**

*I just read your Animal Behavior paper on 'performance' and birdsong. Well done, sir. Your message rings true across many disciplines. . . . Hell hath no fury like an insecure scientist*

*defending a career of assumptions! Just know that you are right and that time and science will show that. Thank you for not giving up.*

### **3. Selling papers seems nowadays more important than doing good science.**

*it was only yesterday that I stumbled upon the controversy between you and Podos. After having read through the key papers, replies, and having read some of the other papers being criticized in the past, I fully agree with your points of view. . . . Selling papers seems nowadays more important than doing good science. It is boring and infuriating to read so many "best-selling papers" based on poor scholarship. Speed over quality and fame over knowledge could well be a motto of many.*

### **4. I read this through, and kept saying, "oh my Gosh" over and over**

*I read this through, and kept saying, "oh my Gosh" over and over . . . Keep me posted on how this flies. I will be curious to see if you hear from any of the officers.*

### **5. pretty ugly stuff . . . coverups . . . hilarious . . . proposed recall vote on Officers who have sold out the Society**

*Thanks for alerting me to this. In all my years, I've seen some pretty ugly stuff, but this is right up there at the top. You don't need to know a lot about birdsong to see to the bottom of it all. I agree. I'd call it outright fraud, and then all the coverups become almost hilarious, unless you take science seriously, which apparently few of these people do. You have to give the defendants credit for how they've been able to stop you at every turn. Except for that forum in the journal. Yes, kudos to the editors. What are those Europeans thinking? I don't think you're going to hear from any of those behavior officers. They are in over their heads. I don't know this behaviour group, but if they take themselves seriously, I doubt anybody else will if this all comes to light. If I were a member of this group and valued it I'd lobby the officers to take some drastic steps. If they didn't I'd probably ask for a recall vote by all members of the society. Once they get wind of how their officers have sold them out, they should be furious enough to throw them all out and start over with a new slate.*

### **6. Your critique of the "performance" literature is masterful and eye-opening.**

*Your critique of the "performance" literature is masterful and eye-opening. Before reading your piece, I was uneasy about this line of research, but had not thought deeply about the source of my discomfort. But your critique was so clear, so thorough, and so convincing that I can now easily see the "vocal deviation" story as the sham that it is. As you document so well, the seemingly widespread acceptance of the idea has no basis in evidence, but is strictly the result of clever marketing and storytelling. The published responses to your critique were revealing in this regard; they are weak, whiny, defensive, and almost completely lacking any substantive rebuttal of your main points. I am struck by the authors' inability to acknowledge any sort of error or weakness in their work. After reading those responses, my respect for the scientific intellect of Podos, Vehrencamp, and the other authors has declined from low to zero. Also, intrigued by the published exchange, I explored your web site and the documentation there of Podos's behavior during this dispute. I am stunned by his absolute*



*refusal to communicate directly with you (and other critics), and absolutely floored and mystified by his decision to report you to the police. Jeff's actions reveal extraordinary paranoia and insecurity, and also a lack of honesty and integrity. I am greatly saddened by this revelation.*

Dear xxxxxxxxxx

Thank you for your candid summary of these issues

Would you permit me a brief follow Up?

Are you a member of the Animal Behavior Society?

If you were an ABS officer, what would you do?

What are the consequences of doing nothing and keeping Podos president? Especially if this blows up into another Marc Hauser story on scientific fraud?

Anything else you'd like to say?

Sincerely. Don Kroodsma

*Yes, I am a longtime member of the ABS. I believe that Jeff Podos is a highly unsuitable president of the society, even though I don't think that he is guilty (or at least has not been shown to be guilty) of scientific fraud in the classic sense of fabricating or falsifying data. Really, he doesn't need to falsify data because, as you have demonstrated, the theories he promotes are so flexible that literally any data he might collect will be interpreted as supporting the theory. But his approach is fraudulent in another sense: it uses all manner of shoddy methods, researcher degrees of freedom, statistical abuses, and rhetorical sleight of hand to reach predetermined conclusions. It is an approach designed to advance careers, not to discover truths. Sadly, this kind of science is widespread, but that does not justify the society's decision to place a practitioner of it in a leadership position. Equally worrisome are the ethical lapses that have characterized Podos's response to criticism of his work. An ethical scientist does not stonewall good-faith inquiries about his research, and certainly does not call the police on colleagues for no apparent reason. The ABS's elevation of Jeff Podos to its highest office sends a terrible message to the outside scientific world, and sets a terrible example for young scientists. It badly undercuts the organization's credibility and reputation.*

#### **7. fyi—check out these links about Cornell's Wansink**

fyi—check out these links about Cornell's Wansink; the similarities to your criticisms of the performance literature are rather remarkable

**Why the Joy of Cooking is going after a Cornell researcher;** <https://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2018/2/28/17061828/joy-of-cooking-brian-wansink-cornell-p-hacking>

**Emails Show How An Ivy League Prof Tried To Do Damage Control For His Bogus Food Science;** [https://www.buzzfeed.com/stephaniemlee/brian-wansink-cornell-smarter-lunchrooms-flawed-data?utm\\_term=.qjDdzgQoD6#.kaqZ3aG6E8](https://www.buzzfeed.com/stephaniemlee/brian-wansink-cornell-smarter-lunchrooms-flawed-data?utm_term=.qjDdzgQoD6#.kaqZ3aG6E8)



**The Inside Story Of How An Ivy League Food Scientist Turned Shoddy Data Into Viral Studies;** [https://www.buzzfeed.com/stephaniemlee/brian-wansink-cornell-p-hacking?utm\\_term=.oidqOMIL42#.ijy354rW](https://www.buzzfeed.com/stephaniemlee/brian-wansink-cornell-p-hacking?utm_term=.oidqOMIL42#.ijy354rW)

I've been studying your performance forum. I agree; #6 above nails it. Some of Wansink's papers have been retracted. In my own mind I have retracted every paper that Podos has ever published and will never cite one again. That includes the Galapagos work too. Let the burden of proof be on Podos to reinstate them as science.

Best summarizing quote from the links above: "this is not science, it is storytelling."

Here's another: "One of the fundamental principles of the scientific method is transparency — to conduct research in a way that can be assessed, verified, and reproduced," he told BuzzFeed News. "This is not optional — it is imperative."

Brian Wansink won fame, funding, and influence for his science-backed advice on healthy eating. Now, emails show how the Cornell professor and his colleagues have hacked and massaged low-quality data into headline-friendly studies to "go virally big time."

[NOTE: The above alert led me to post the following on the "Wansink dossier" website:

Briefly . . . I just discovered all the Wansink material yesterday. I read through it with total fascination, as I have been waging a nearly four-year battle in my own field on almost exactly the same issues (admittedly, birdsong may not be as important as the food issues, but the principles of science are the same). Early on, one of the "target authors" actually used the University Police to threaten me with criminal harassment charges if I asked him questions about his research (and I am emeritus in the same university Biology Department he is!).

As Tim van der Zee said to BuzzFeed: "One of the fundamental principles of the scientific method is transparency — to conduct research in a way that can be assessed, verified, and reproduced . . . This is not optional — it is imperative." Another quote from BuzzFeed that summarized everything I am dealing with: "this is not science, it is storytelling."

Threatened as a criminal for being a scientist, I began documenting of all my attempts along the way to address what I saw as egregious examples of scientific and ethical misconduct. So far, what has astounded me even more than what gets published as science is the seeming indifference to it all by university watchdogs (from departmental chairs all the way up to the provost), journal editors, officers of the (scientific) Society in which the primary target author has risen to the office of President, and more.

My efforts continue (see <http://donaldkroodsmas.com/performance>), as the only way non-science like this can be stopped is if the costs of producing it exceed the benefits. So far, the costs in my field seem to have been minimal, and the benefits considerable. I find that disheartening.

A huge thank you to Tim, Nick, and others working on these issues. The stakes are huge, for Science in general.

**SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY and the ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SOCIETY: Matters arising from Liu, Soha, & past-president Nowicki (2018, Anim. Behav. 139:117-125)—19 June 2018**

**Kroodsma to Animal Behavior—disappointing and shameful**

From a reader of the journal, in an email to me:

*"I saw a recent performance article by Liu, Soha, and Nowicki. They pretend that your paper [Forum, Kroodsma 2017] does not exist. No citation, no mention. They just recite the same old "facts" about vocal deviation, cite the same old papers, use the same old rhetorical sleight of hand, and just generally carry on as if the premise of their paper had never been questioned. At first I was kind of surprised (the elephant in the room seems way too big to ignore), but then I realized that it's a tactic straight out of the Trump playbook. Just keep repeating your ridiculous story loudly and confidently, and a certain number of credulous and/or inattentive people will believe it."*

Hello Susan, hello Mike:

I find it difficult to believe that a paper on birdsong performance could be accepted and published in Animal Behavior without addressing the elephant.

Pretty disappointing . . . pretty shameful of Nowicki et al.

I think the email I received says it well.

best . . . Don

**Response by Editor Beecher: Interesting**

I agree they should have cited your review. But it's interesting that the results do not actually support the performance hypothesis, as they state in the conclusion of their abstract:

*"Contrary to our expectations, [birds] were at least as likely to match to playback of higher-performance songs as to playback of lower-performance songs ... [and] they did not preferentially respond with their highest-performance song type as a counter-singing strategy. Our results support the idea that in swamp sparrows, song type matching functions primarily within the dyad rather than to broadcast superior performance ability to other conspecifics in the communication network".*

I haven't read the full paper yet, but hopefully they are equally clear there that the results do not support the performance hypothesis.

### **Kroodsma to Animal Behavior: ugly, beyond astonishing**

I find it astonishing, really, that an article like this passes reviewers and editors to find its way to publication in its published state. And in Animal Behavior, of all places! Podos (2017) is cited. It's not that the authors weren't aware of the elephant. They just chose to ignore it. That is the problem with this entire Nowicki/Podos lineage: If something doesn't jive with your story, just ignore it; certainly don't expose it and make anyone aware of it. Alternative explanations for the story? They just don't exist.

This is an area I happen to know more than a little about.

What about the subjects I know little about? What am I to make of other articles published in the journal? This kind of article undermines everything published in the journal. Everything. It cheapens every paper by every scientist, and cheapens the entire Animal Behavior Society.

It's largely irrelevant that the results "do not actually support the performance hypothesis" [Beecher's statement]. The same rationale, the same false "facts," the same tired citations of pseudoscience trotted out for context, etc. permeate the paper. It's an entirely false narrative, deceptively told, a story designed to promote careers rather than come to finding some truth about the natural world.

And it's not like this is a paper published by someone who shouldn't know any better. This is a past president of your ABS [in protest over this nonsense, I've resigned as an ABS Fellow]. This IS the ABS, until proven otherwise. As you yourself once wrote, Mike, when the replication crisis and real science catches up with the ABS, it's going to be really ugly (not your exact words, but something to that effect).

It's really ugly now. And it's beyond astonishing.

### **Response by editor Beecher: "I agree"**

My short response: I agree.

But as MLK said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice".

### **Response by chief editor Foster: "I am very sorry this happened . . . the Nowicki group behaved badly . . ."**

Hello Don,

I am very sorry this happened. I agree that the Nowicki group behaved badly here, not citing your paper nor really acknowledging the controversy. We all know the peer review is not perfect. I am not sure what else I can say. The reviewers and the editors just missed it. I do not read all of the papers that come in, it would kill me and would do no one any good as I the breadth of material covered in the journal is too great for me to be an expert on all but a small part.

I believe we have an excellent set of editors who work hard. So I apologize for the omission/oversight but not for any one person's role in it.

Enjoy early summer. Our black flies seem to have had a very short season which is very nice.

Best,

Susan

## **Kroodsma to Animal Behavior: ABS needs a serious house-cleaning**

Hello again Mike, Susan:

Missives from me will not continue forever, I assure you (my "four year term" is up in July of this year), but I want to be perfectly clear on one matter, lest someone misinterpret what I'm saying: *It's not about me.*

Mike, your first words in response to my initial comments were "I agree they [Liu, Soha, and Nowicki, 2018] should have cited your review." Your first words imply that this is about "citations." It's NOT, of course. This is not some kind of a petty, shallow citation game in which I feel slighted that my Forum (Kroodsma, 2017) was not cited by someone. *This is not about ME.*

Susan, thank you for your response, but it reads (at least in part) as an apology to me. Again, *this is not about me.* (I can certainly understand how you'd be sorry this happened. Depending on how isolated this kind of event is, it does not speak well for the journal and what appears there.)

This is all far deeper and bigger than anything about "me."

This is about professional integrity, professional ethics, about a code of professional conduct that any scientist should subscribe to, if one is to be a scientist. It's about telling whole truths, not half truths (half lies), about honesty vs. duplicity, about science vs. story-telling, about science vs advertising. It's about how we conduct ourselves as scientists if we are searching for an understanding of the natural world.

It's about training more young investigators (Nowicki coauthors) to the dark side of science, to the art of deceptive publishing and story-telling, about the waste of more NSF money for nonscience. It's about unconscionably placing young investigators in harm's way (I will no doubt once again be accused of being "against women in science."). It's about undermining the credibility of all birdsong scientists specifically and all scientists generally. It's about cheapening the journal Animal Behavior, and the entire ABS, all for personal gain and promotion.

The integrity issues are all summarized well by Feynman in his "cargo cult science" article (<http://calteches.library.caltech.edu/51/2/CargoCult.htm>), excerpted here:

*. . . there is one feature I notice that is generally missing in cargo cult science. That is the idea that we all hope you have learned in studying science in school--we never say explicitly what this is, but just hope that you catch on by all the examples of scientific investigation. It is interesting, therefore, to bring it out now and speak of it explicitly. It's a kind of scientific integrity, a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty--a kind of leaning over backwards.*

*Details that could throw doubt on your interpretation must be given, if you know them. You must do the best you can--if you know anything at all wrong, or possibly wrong--to explain it. If you make a theory, for example, and advertise it, or put it out, then you must also put down all the facts that disagree with it, as well as those that agree with it.*

*In summary, the idea is to give all of the information to help others to judge the value of your contribution; not just the information that leads to judgement in one particular direction or another. . . . The easiest way to explain this idea is to contrast it, for example, with advertising. . . . the thing I'm talking about is not just a matter of not being dishonest; it's a matter of scientific integrity, which is another level.*

The article by Liu, Soha, and Nowicki (2018) illustrates why I believe nothing that Nowicki has ever published. It also illustrates why, when many years ago I was asked by the Duke Biology chair to write a letter of promotion for Nowicki, I offered only a letter recommending demotion (turns out, not surprisingly, that my letter was not needed). This publication by Liu et al. is vintage Nowicki, not an isolated article on which his group has behaved badly. What I find so astonishing is that Nowicki is so brazen about it, coming on the heels of my Forum, a draft of which he has had since late 2014.

What is entirely missing in Liu et al. is the kind of scientific integrity that Feynman writes about. It is precisely the same problem with Podos, Peters, and Nowicki (2004), Goodwin and Podos (2014), Moseley, Lahti, and Podos (2013), and so many more, all defended vigorously by Podos (2017), illustrating with just these examples how this lack of scientific integrity has been culturally transmitted across three generations in the Nowicki lineage.

In these papers, the research process and the research message is deliberately distorted, thereby generating a better story, in the process deceiving all who read this material. This isn't just "behaving badly," and it's not just "bad science"; it is not science at all, and is the very definition of **scientific fraud**. This is the principle problem with all of the Podos et al. material that I have evaluated, as I repeatedly point out in my Forum and elaborate on in my detailed, unpublished response to Podos (see especially item #2 in "*Bullshit is Scientific Fraud*," available at <http://donaldkroodsmas.com/performance>, with "bullshit" defined as "speech or literature intended to persuade, with little to no regard for the truth").

Other Nowicki students not mentioned in my Forum offer plenty of other examples—here's one that I was alerted to in an email from one of the "literature watchdogs" with whom I communicate.

*Here is an article by Derryberry (a former Nowicki student) and one of her students [Phillips]: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-25834-6>*

*As with the Liu et al. article, they do the "no integrity" thing of presenting highly contested conjectures as if they were uncontested facts.*

*This pattern really reminds me of the Fox News/Breitbart/Limbaugh "epistemic bubble." If you live inside the bubble, where lies, conspiracy theories, and distortions are presented as if they are true and obvious, you end up thinking that this bizarre version of the world actually is reality. I think that researchers in the Nowicki family tree are living in a mini epistemic bubble, in which the vocal deviation idea is accepted by everyone and has never been questioned.*

*Fortunately, I think they are mainly just talking to one another at this point (though perhaps aided by certain enablers in editorial offices).*

And with Nowicki a past president of ABS, and his student Podos the current president, with their collaborator Searcy in between, what does this say about the scientific integrity that one can expect from the Animal Behavior Society? It's not pretty. With all of this scientific misconduct by the elected "leadership," I have resigned in protest as an ABS Fellow. And it was as if the Executive Committee, consisting of all the elected officers (including past president Searcy and Nowicki student Hughes) and presided over by Podos, was happy to see me go, as they found nothing exceptional in all of the scientific and ethical misconduct that I have pointed out (details at <http://donaldkroodsmas.com/performance>, section 6).

Case closed, declared first president-elect John Swaddle. No dissenting voice from the second president-elect Jennifer Fewell. No dissenting voices from anyone, past president, secretary, treasurer, members-at-large, NOBODY, even though I explicitly asked each of them if they really wanted to be part of such a decision. No comment from anyone on Podos' using the UMass police to threaten me with criminal harassment charges for daring to ask questions about his research, though this is a blatant violation of the Ethics in Publishing subscribed to by the ABS. For me, all this is damning. A leadership that condones the misconduct that I expose renders the Animal Behavior Society an irrelevant Society in the field of science.

The ABS is in serious need of a house-cleaning. Trouble is, who's going to do it? Not the elected Executive Committee, led by a President who is among the worst offenders of this kind of misconduct, as neither he nor his close colleagues on the Executive Committee have recused themselves from judgments on these issues. No one in the Nowicki lineage can lead; they have traveled this road together, and their careers rely on each other (see item 41.4 in *Bullshit* for the challenge I offer anyone in this lineage to repudiate this nonsense). In the meantime, the misconduct is rewarded, with elections to High Office in the ABS, with best student paper awards given disproportionately to students cultured in the fine art of story telling . . . and which

students will get the jobs in animal behavior? Those with resumes including best student paper awards certainly have an advantage. The trajectory for all this is alarming.

I know the ABS means a lot to you. Lest it come to be known as an abbreviation for All Bull Shit, something serious needs to happen. I have some suggestions; I bet you do too. Perhaps you'll see mine soon.

All in an attempt to shorten the arc to justice in the moral universe . . . Don Kroodsma

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## **A SEARCH FOR LEADERSHIP FROM ABS FELLOWS**

15 July 2018

To: XXXXX, Fellow, Animal Behavior Society

From: Don Kroodsma (ex-Fellow)

Re: Scientific Integrity and the ABS

With all due respect to 'open and honest' editors, reviewers, and members of the ABS, the recent publication by Liu, Soha, and past-president Nowicki (2018), combined with all that preceded it (details at donaldkroodsma.com/performance, section 6), raises serious questions about the scientific credibility of both the Journal and the Society:

- 1) If so much of the only topic that I can thoroughly evaluate in Animal Behavior cannot be taken at face value, why should I believe anything published on other topics in the Journal?
- 2) Given the low standards for science by Presidents of the ABS, and how it is all condoned by the "Executive Committee" (all elected ABS officers), what kind of credibility should members of the ABS expect in the wider scientific community?

I will offer my answer to that second question: **ZERO**, unless, once the misconduct is exposed (see website link above), some leadership arises from somewhere (Fellows? Graduate students?) that can steer the ABS to levels of scientific credibility and respectability appropriate for a scientific society.

If my voice were to be heard, I'd suggest the following:

1. Adopt a Code of Professional Conduct, perhaps similar to that of the American Ornithological Society (<http://www.americanornithology.org/sites/default/files/files/imce-img/AOS%20Code%20of%20Conduct%20August%202017.pdf>). For starters, the opening statement there advocates "the open and honest communication of research and exchange of ideas"; openness and scientific integrity are sorely lacking in the birdsong literature I have addressed (e.g., ABS President Podos refuses to communicate with me and has used the University of Massachusetts police to threaten me with criminal harassment charges if I ask him questions about his research).
2. Appoint a Czar and a Committee to enforce the Code. To protect the integrity of a *scientific* Animal Behavior Society, I am confident that such a Committee would deal swiftly and harshly with the issues that I have raised.
3. Ask for the immediate resignation of the current president, Jeff Podos. Any other response continues to undermine the integrity of the Society and every one of its members.
4. Given that the entire Executive Committee has condoned the kind of misconduct that I have exposed, I'd ask for the resignation of the entire Committee. What kind of credibility, for example, do first president-elect Swaddle and second president-elect Fewell have when they condone all that has transpired? (Again, for details see section 6 of website referenced above.)

Doing nothing does enormous damage and sends all the wrong messages,

- 1) to all ABS members, and especially to young investigators who are considering a career studying animal behavior and looking for role models on how to 'get ahead',
- 2) to all scientists everywhere, each of whom loses stature and credibility when misconduct remains unchecked,



and 3) to a public that is increasingly distrustful of scientists, and perhaps rightfully so, using ABS as an example.

Sincerely . . . Donald Kroodsma

(All responses to me will be posted to section 6 at donaldkroodsma.com/performance; your name will be included unless anonymity is requested.)

### **Comments from Fellows (above "Search for Leadership" letter was sent to each active Fellow):**

#### **1. Who else is drinking the Kool-Aid?**

(From an ABS member, but not a Fellow) I hope some Fellows rise to the occasion. If nothing else, you might find out if there are any among the Fellows who have not drunk the Kool-Aid that is apparently passed around at ABS officer meetings . . . Best not to include my name. I'm still active in publishing and seeking grants on birdsong, and I'm rather sure there will be consequences against any birdsong biologist who speaks out on this issue, as I am aware there has been for you.

#### **2. Perhaps worry most about birdsong research, not the Journal or Society in general**

Thank you for alerting me to all that has gone on the last four years. I am astonished. To be sure, I share your concerns over the behavior of ABS officers, especially the presidents.

For the birdsong research. I think the main problem is related to the overall decline of vocal communication research. I fear that the field has devolved to become a real backwater, populated mostly by second-rate intellects. Two effects of this are 1) Most people doing vocalization research don't have any ideas of their own, but they still think that their papers need to have a hook. So they are extremely susceptible to ideas, however silly, from people like Podos and Nowicki, who might not be good scientists but are good communicators and clever marketers. If you need an idea and don't have an original thought, the Podos/Nowicki shelf has several to choose from. 2) Too few vocalization researchers are good at independent critical thought. So the path of least resistance is to see two papers that disagree, make no attempt to actually evaluate the content of the papers, conclude that "this is a controversial topic," and then say/cite whatever is convenient.

I hope to one day see a paper or two that at least tries to grapple honestly with the substantive issues you raised. It's too depressing to think that no one will see through the transparently empty flailing in the Podos and Vehrencamp responses (I don't think they qualify as "rebuttals."). I feel sure that if birdsong were a larger, more major-league field, none of this would be happening because the vocal deviation thing would never have gained traction. (A more hopeful way to look at it is that the smartest birdsong researchers never work on this topic or refer to the silly hypothesis, so the only papers about it are by people who aren't smart enough to steer clear of the wreckage).

#### **3. John Alcock:**

Hi Don

I too am a retiree and an insect person as well. I therefore choose not to become involved in what is clearly a long battle on your part. Sorry and best wishes

John

Kroodsma response:

Hi John:

Thanks for the reply (if you're still in Arizona, you're up early!). You're a lot smarter than I am, to not get involved. Too nice a guy, too.

Am I sorry I took this on? I'm not sure, mostly because I'm not sure what has been gained, if anything. Time will tell, I guess. Right now, I'm pessimistic that anything has changed or will change for the better.

But I sat in the banquet room for the ornithology meetings those four years ago and, when the two student awards went to two Podos' students whose papers were entirely false (a 'clean sweep', boasted Podos), my gut turned. A few gentle inquiries of Podos led to strong push back (understatement), and one thing just led to another. Then four years rushed by!

best . . . Don

#### 4. Anonymous Fellow: highly supportive (understatement), but unprintable

#### 5. Philip Stoddard

Hi Don.

I followed the controversy for a while, sighed, and gave up. I said at the time, and I still believe, that a rigorous repeat of any of these song performance studies would be far more helpful to the cause of truth than simply critiquing the existing studies.

If you (or anyone) points out that methods in a published paper have some problems, people often say "yeah, but it's a great idea in a good journal and could still be right". That's a dumb response, of course, but I know scientists who voted for Trump because they didn't like Clinton. Much more effective at refuting bad findings are papers saying "We redid this study REALLY carefully, using improved methods, and the effect is just not there." That's when the edifice actually begins to crumble.

Kroodsma response: Dear Mr. Mayor:

Yes, I hear your sigh; I've heard all about how these flawed studies should be replicated from your doctoral advisor as well. But, and I don't think you missed this, because your vision is not so narrow, this is about far more than the "performance hypothesis." Using the performance literature as an example, this is about a culture of science that isn't science at all; it's about a culture of corruption and deception that is designed to promote careers rather than search for what birds actually do. It is, quite frankly, about "bullshit," about a literature that is intended to persuade with little to no regard for the truth. And, to quote the title of my response to Podos on my website, "BULLSHIT is SCIENTIFIC FRAUD" (item #3 on <http://donaldkroodsma.com/performance>).

Your sigh reminds me of my postdoctoral advisor's response to my pseudoreplication seminar in the late 1980's. His was far more than a sigh—he just wanted me to do the research "right," and others would follow. Not for a moment do I think that would work. Instead, I went ahead and published an article that, I hope, has broader significance about statistical approaches in a wide variety of studies than just doing one particular study right.

To me, to use an old (not electric, probably) fish analogy, you would provide the fish in one well-done study, but I want to point out how we just might consider going about the fishing in the first place. Studies that selectively present only evidence in favor of the chosen hypothesis could still prove the earth is flat. Yet, Podos vigorously defends this approach to "science."

And, even if I did the study "right" and got negative results, where would we be then? I'd have wasted my time, because an infinite number of things could be found that I did wrong, at least in the eyes of those who will defend their dogma to the death. It is not specifically the performance hypothesis they are defending, but rather their careers that have been built on the methods used throughout.

And . . . I have better things to do with my life than try to rigorously test all of the silly ideas that pop up in the literature from this group. I ask them to do their own science. And if they want to be president of a society, why not set a good example for young investigators in the field? Is that too much to ask? Probably.

Throughout the past century, flawed theory has been changed by careful scientists repeating studies using better methods or alternate models of interpretation. The literature has no lack of examples, particularly in physics. Everybody remembers "cold fusion". The Science paper in which bacteria were claimed to use arsenate in DNA in place of phosphate is another great one. I recall my own early work on individual recognition in Song Sparrows, which Bill Searcy tried to keep from being published until Hubert Markel saw through the bullshit, apologized, and published my paper in BES. Similarly, references to "individual voices" disappeared from the birdsong literature after nobody could replicate Danny Weary's statistically weak result.

Kroodsma. You address, as I see it, individual studies that were just wrong, or poorly done. I'm addressing something far larger than individual studies.

Recently, I had a great story going in my own research program (funded by NSF, no less) that I am about to shoot down with my own data at the coming ABS meeting, where, for reasons that elude me, the talk is scheduled in the "social behavior" session instead of "communication", but whatever. To my great disappointment, a very carefully controlled replication of the masters thesis one of my own graduate students revealed that my our electric fish (the males anyway), ignore useful public information in male signals, even when the information is extremely reliable and useful. Did I say how disappointed I am?

Observing the sociology of science, it appears that being rigorous in your critique of the performance literature is not enough. Your challenges won't hold psychological sway until some careful scientist takes the time to repeat at least one of these studies using better acoustic analysis and more sophisticated statistical methods. I'd hoped you'd do it yourself, because your methodological rigor is unassailed. The effort you devote to the "performance" website suggests that ship has sailed. Hopefully, some determined young devil will get out of the armchair and do the field work that will bring down houses made of cards.

Kroodsma: Thank you for your vote of confidence, but I'm not going there. Maybe, just maybe, a young devil will rise to the occasion, but if I were still advising students, I wouldn't encourage what I consider a waste of time.

Well, it's still Saturday. The mayor of South Miami has much work to do, so Phil the Scientist needs to sign off and let him get to it.

best,

Philip

## 6. Gordon Burghardt

Hi Don,

Had not known about this controversy so thank you for sharing. There is a lot here to absorb and I do not have time now to look at it all, but would not critical new experiments published in the peer literature by you or others decide the issue and move the field forward? Sorry that you felt you had to give up your Fellow status in ABS.

Best, Gordon

Kroodsmas response:

Hi Gordon. Good to hear from you. It's been a long, long time!

Yes, there's a lot on that website. I just kept accumulating stuff for four years, and it's a bit embarrassing how I've kept at it! Must have been (still is) important to my way of being. The "opposition" certainly hasn't cried uncle! They're still going full steam.

Yes, I agree that a single, strong study on this topic would be nice, but . . . who's going to do it? Who has the credibility to do such a study, when the literature is awash with authors who have authored and promoted these studies? And if the results of a strong study are negative, who in the field of performance dogma is going to believe it? (See more on this in my response to Philip Stoddard, above).

My primary goal has been to point out the nonscience in this performance literature, as an example of sexual selection studies in birdsong, but an equally important goal has been to expose what I feel is a culture of nonscience in this field, advocated by recent Presidents of the Animal Behavior Society. The lengths that ABS President Podos has gone to in order to hide his work from public scrutiny is rather extraordinary (see especially Sections 1, 2, and 3 on my website). There's nothing "open and honest" about what has transpired.

Best . . . Don

## 7. Robert Gibson:

Hi Don:

I'm not in a position to comment on the merits (scientific or otherwise) of the issues you raise. I would just point out that in my experience, where alternative, strongly-promoted hypotheses could explain the same set of observations, it is very rare that a priori argument resolves the debate. Usually the only way to get agreement among researchers is to conduct a new empirical study that has the potential to falsify each hypothesis. Sometimes it requires the weight of several such studies to change the paradigm. I can think of examples in our field where it has taken decades for this to happen. I am not claiming any originality for these points: they were made by Karl Popper and Thomas Kuhn a very long time ago.

Best wishes,

Robert Gibson  
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University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
429 MANTER, UNL, 68588-0118  
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Kroodisma response: Thanks for your reply, Robert. Yes, fine points. I won't elaborate here in any kind of response, but simply refer you to comments made above, to others who have responded. I'm winding down (see below--#9).

### **8. Anonymous**

I find all this very disturbing. This is not the Animal Behavior Society that I thought I belonged to, or want to belong to. I think you sent your messages to the wrong members of ABS. We fellows are old and tired, and set in our ways. You should have sent the message to the young ones. It is their future. I just might do that myself. I see that all the emails are listed in the membership directory.

### **9. Kroodisma: I QUIT.**

Like Forrest Gump, I feel that I've been running for a long time. And like Forrest, I'm going to stop dead in my tracks. I'm going home. Or fishing. Or someplace where the birds are singing. Maybe I also have an IQ of 75—persisting on these matters for four years is supporting evidence. A lot of Gump's "Shit Happens" has occurred during these last four years. I'm moving on. If anyone else wants to 'run', be my guest.

If anyone wants a voice 'on the record' for these matters, please put PLEASE POST in the subject line of the email to me and I'll try to check here once a week or so to post those requests.

--Don Kroodisma

## **APPENDIX—Bill Searcy (past ABS president) and Conflict of Interest**

25 January 2008

Dr. William Searcy

Editor, Animal Behavior

Dear Bill:

I have before me your deliberations on our manuscript that we submitted to *Animal Behavior*. In that manuscript, we challenge the cherished and widely held belief that song repertoire size in songbirds has evolved largely as a result of female choice, with females preferring large to small repertoires. I'd like to think through your response to our manuscript, in hopes that you might help me understand how you came to your conclusion that you "regretfully must decline to accept [i.e., reject] your paper for publication by *Animal Behaviour*."

First, I would like to say that Bruce Byers, as first author and prime mover on this paper, should really be writing this response to you. I convinced him, though, that he should give me the task, as I know you (the editor) and both reviewers, and you and I have a 20-year history of disagreement on what constitutes "good science." In my opinion, that history is of considerable consequence here.

When we submitted our paper, we chose to recommend two reviewers. We recommended Mike Beecher because he is one of the field's preeminent scholars, well-respected, and we would especially value his input. We recommended Steve Nowicki because we were confident he'd offer the most negative review possible, and we would value the most rigorous challenge to every one of our points. We expected then that some editor would impartially sort through the comments and come to a wise, unbiased decision about the value of this manuscript to those of us who study animal behavior, and especially to those of us who want to understand birdsong.

We do not regret our recommendations for reviewers; we got the thoughtful review from Beecher and we got a most negative (though not very useful) review from the other reviewer. What we did not get was the kind of editor we expected. Let me address first the reviews and then the editorial process.

**Reviewer #1.** Signed by Michael Beecher. By all standards, this review rates our manuscript as excellent. It is the kind of thoughtful, thorough review that we'd expect from Beecher; he addresses major points and suggests that we might elaborate here and there, but concludes that those elaborations are not necessary. His first paragraph summarizes his reaction to our manuscript:

This is a very timely review. The trumpeting of the conclusion that bird song repertoires are an "aural peacock's tail" has far outstripped the support for that conclusion, and it is about time someone said so. *Animal Behaviour* has been perhaps the most common repository for these studies and this particular conclusion, and so it would seem to be a very appropriate place for this review. The review is unusually well-written, and makes its points with great clarity. I think this paper will prove to be an extremely valuable addition to the literature, one that should have a very positive effect on future research in this area. I can find no significant problems with this paper . . .

**Reviewer #2.** Anonymous. [Clive Catchpole] And here is the most negative of reviews that we expected. We were hoping for a rigorous, point-by-point attempt to rebut our manuscript, but instead got something quite different. A friend I showed it to characterized it as an "emotional rant." Given that you seem to have taken this review seriously, let me consider here a few points from that review.

" . . . everyone else in the field disagrees with . . . " Byers and Kroodisma. Michael Beecher is thus a nobody, and I would wager that I could find a dozen other nobodies of considerable prominence in this field who would applaud Beecher's review. Furthermore, even if our view is in the minority, since when is having a minority view conclusive evidence of being wrong.

Reviewer claims that we have "taken female preference out of the context of sexual selection theory." Does he claim this because we don't give equal space to matters of intra-sexual selection? Our manuscript focuses on and challenges the widely held conclusion that song repertoires are an "aural peacock's tail." We can make no sense of this reviewer's point here.

Our careful, detailed, critical, case-by-case evaluation of the literature is "outmoded." This reviewer would seem to prefer an uncritical statistical analysis to see if there are any trends in the conclusions of authors. We disagree strongly with his approach. The kind of mindless statistical analysis advocated by the reviewer (and as performed by Read and Weary) yields only a mindless conclusion that does nothing to evaluate the quality of the data that have yielded that conclusion. Sadly, a critical evaluation of data does seem to be outmoded in today's literature. Even if 17 of 22 lab studies "found an effect," for example, we want to know if there are other explanations for the data, whether the authors were trying to "prove" their favorite hypothesis or whether the authors tested multiple hypotheses; in short, we want to know the quality of the data, not the quantity.

" . . . the authors have been very selective in their critique." Bruce, do you want to address this?

Anonymous Reviewer #2 declares that we fail to "a) address fundamental issues, and b) provide new insights into the subject." What could be more fundamental to research on birdsong and animal behavior in general than a logically argued challenge to a widely held belief that is most likely wrong. As Beecher states in his review, "repertoire size in fact seems an unlikely candidate as a target of female choice." . . . "What new insights? No new ideas . . ." declares this anonymous reviewer. We would love to have this reviewer's thoughtful consideration of each of the points that we raise in the manuscript; until we have such a review from him, all we can say is "read the manuscript." When this manuscript is published, we would hope that it has

the effect that Beecher predicts: "this paper will prove to be an extremely valuable addition to the literature, one that should have a very positive effect on future research in this area." That seems pretty fundamental to us.

**The editorial process.** Frankly, Bill, I am surprised that you would find it appropriate to serve as editor for this paper, for two reasons.

**Reason #1. Conflict of interest.** You and your close collaborator(s) have a substantial body of research that we challenge in this manuscript. Should this manuscript be published in the prominent (but appropriate, according to Beecher) journal of *Animal Behavior*, it would be widely read and if its conclusions are accepted, the consequences for you and your close collaborators could be professionally unpleasant.

**Reason #2. Our history.** You and I have a 20-year history of disagreement about what constitutes good science. You submitted your rebuttal (Searcy 1989) to my pseudoreplication paper (Kroodsma 1989b) before it was even published, and I replied (Kroodsma 1989a). A subsequent international conference was held in England to sort out these issues (McGregor, Catchpole, Dabelsteen, Falls, Fusani, Gerhardt, Gilbert, Horn, Klump, Kroodsma, Lambrechts, McComb, Nelson, Pepperberg, Ratcliffe, Searcy and Weary 1992). Had your opinion prevailed, we would know even less about birdsong than we do today. To put it bluntly, I believe you are as wrong on this current issue as you were on the pseudoreplication issue.

Perhaps you feel that you could overcome any potential bias and remain impartial when deciding the fate of our manuscript, but I doubt that any outside observer think that humanly possible.

Let me address two thoughts that you offered: "I do not see the logic of the argument that a preference for larger repertoires has to be universal for such a preference to play a role in the evolution of repertoires." We do not claim that preference by females for larger repertoires per se could not occur. We don't see the evidence that it exists, and we find multiple reasons why we don't think it will be found (none of those reasons being addressed by you or the anonymous reviewer, by the way). Let's suppose that there is at least one songbird species in which females have selected for large repertoire sizes. Considering all of the literature on this topic, perhaps you could tell me which one species best serves as a model for the effects of the female's directional selection on song repertoire size. Would it be the grackle? Or the song sparrow?

And your conclusion: "At any rate, I do not feel that the ratings your manuscript received reach the threshold necessary for acceptance by *Animal Behaviour*." So you have taken the over-the-top ratings by Beecher and the negative-as-possible ratings by the other reviewer and, what, averaged them? Do you give any consideration to the relative quality of the two reviews? Never in my nearly 40 years of submitting papers for publication have I received two reviews that were such polar opposites, in both their



quality of content and in their conclusions. Nor can I imagine an editor who would take these two ratings and say, in essence, that they cancel each other out and therefore the paper is not worthy to be published in *Animal Behavior*.

Sincerely,

Donald Kroodsma

Bruce Byers

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