

## **Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award, 2005:**

Author: McGraw, Kevin J.

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NED K. JOHNSON YOUNG INVESTIGATOR AWARD, 2005:

KEVIN J. MCGRAW



Kevin J. McGraw, October 2004. (Photograph by Jessica Slater.)

The Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award was created to recognize outstanding and promising ornithological research contributions made by persons early in their careers with the hope and expectation that such individuals will provide future leadership in ornithology within and beyond North America. The AOU is proud and confident of its selection of Dr. Kevin J. McGraw as the 2005—and, indeed, the first—recipient of the Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award.

Dr. McGraw's contributions come in the field of avian visual communication and coloration, and he is credited with pioneering a new approach to the study of ornamental traits. By taking an integrative approach that combines concepts and techniques from evolutionary biology, behavioral ecology,

behavioral endocrinology, avian nutrition, and immunoecology, he has helped to solve questions about why and how birds assume the colors they do. He is a world authority on the carotenoid pigments of skin and feathers and other sources of color. By addressing how colors are synthesized, influenced by access to dietary components, and affected by health, condition, and heritage, he has greatly advanced our understanding of how avian ornaments develop and evolve.

Dr. McGraw's remarkably productive early career began with an undergraduate honors thesis entitled *Hummingbird–flower co-evolution at a montane riparian site in Costa Rica* (B.S., 1997, Lawrence University) that was followed in quick succession by graduate degrees from two institutions known for their ornithological

excellence (*Information content of carotenoid-based plumage coloration in the House Finch*, M.S., 1999, Auburn University; and *The costs and benefits of sexual coloration in songbirds*, Ph.D., 2003, Cornell University). After a brief post-doctoral fellowship in 2004 at the University of California, Davis (*Colorful pigments as natural immunostimulants in wild birds: An ecological perspective*), Dr. McGraw assumed his current position as Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences at Arizona State University.

Dr. McGraw's publication record has been described as extraordinary and phenomenal. In addition to the many papers that have appeared in high-impact journals, he is the co-editor with his M.S. advisor, Geoffrey Hill, of two volumes on avian coloration published by Harvard University Press in 2006. Even more impressive than his rate of publication is the fact that his research has been characterized by unerring attention to scientific rigor and cutting-edge questions. Dr. McGraw has worked with numerous collaborators, his elders, his peers, and younger scientists, and is known for his ability to go seamlessly and cooperatively from question to result to publication. The rapid creation of knowledge that characterizes Dr. McGraw's research has allowed his studies to have near-immediate influence on the research of others, with the result that the whole field of bird coloration has advanced significantly in recent years.

His future contributions seem likely to more than match his early impact. He is currently studying color patterns in hummingbirds, penguins, parrots, and finches and has mastered the power of a comparative approach, while continually expanding his research expertise by acquiring new technical abilities. The AOU anticipates that his work will be of increasing interest to a widening variety of avian biologists interested in the roles of hormones, behavior, parasites, immunity, and neurobiology in accounting for the splendor we call bird coloration.

*Award criteria.*—The Ned K. Johnson Young Investigator Award recognizes outstanding and promising work by a researcher early in his or her career in any field of ornithology. Candidates excel in research and show distinct promise for leadership in ornithology within and beyond North America. They must have received their doctorate within five years of being nominated, must not have received the award previously, and must be a member of the AOU at the time of nomination. The award consists of a framed certificate and an honorarium provided through a gift to the endowment of the American Ornithologists' Union honoring Ned K. Johnson, a lifelong supporter and former President (1996–1998) of the AOU. This is a new award, presented for the first time in 2005, and is funded by the Ned K. Johnson Fund of the AOU.

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#### AOU CONSERVATION AWARD, 2005:

THOMAS E. LOVEJOY

Thomas E. Lovejoy's contributions as an avian scientist, conservation biologist, and activist are especially deserving of recognition through the first AOU Conservation Award. His vision, accomplishments, and influence have launched important research initiatives in conservation biology, have shaped global actions and thinking about biological diversity and its conservation, and have been effective in species preservation.

Dr. Lovejoy earned his Ph.D. in 1971 at Yale University under the tutelage of G. Evelyn Hutchinson, and conducted pioneering field work on the community ecology of Amazonian rainforest birds that introduced bird-banding to Brazil. Dr. Lovejoy then worked as one of the first staff scientists at the World Wildlife Fund, where he contributed to early efforts in the conservation of Neotropical migratory birds and conceived the idea for the Biological Dynamics