

Elliott Coues Award, 2005:

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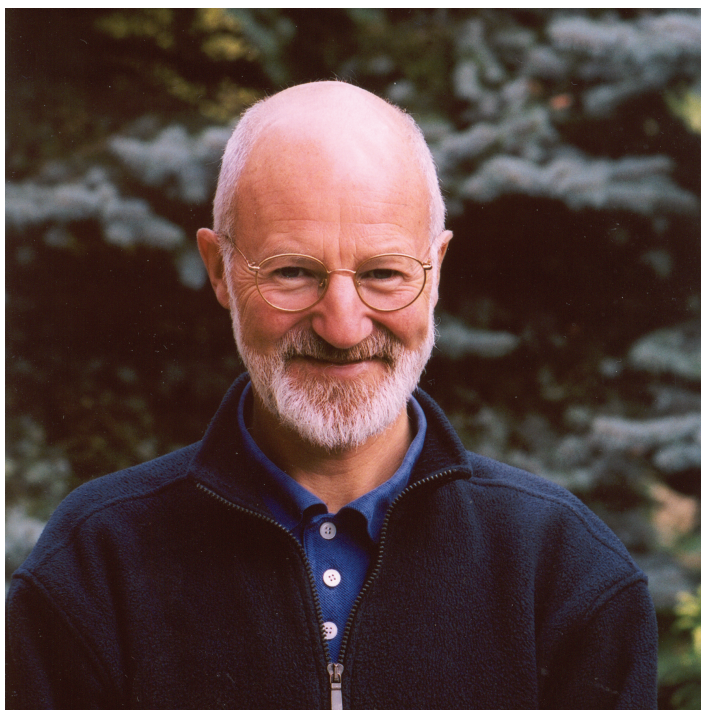
Awards



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ELLIOTT COUES AWARD, 2005:

NICHOLAS B. (NICK) DAVIES



Nicholas B. Davies, May 2004. (Photograph by Frances Wei.)

Professor Nicholas B. Davies has made prodigious empirical, theoretical, and organizational contributions to the field of avian behavioral ecology. Starting with his dissertation studies of optimal foraging in wagtails, he has consistently produced landmark papers on an astounding array of topics, most famously sexual conflict and extraordinary flexibility in the mating system of Dunnocks (*Prunella modularis*) and the most in-depth and complete studies of adaptations for brood parasitism by Common Cuckoos (*Cuculus canorus*). A particularly admirable component of his work that has led to these significant contributions is the intimate marriage of natural

history, theory, and experiments. In today's era of quick experimental tests of theoretical predictions without strong grounding in the natural history of the species being tested, Professor Davies has consistently conducted theoretical research that is steeped in a detailed understanding, description, and integration of the natural history of the species that he studies. He has used this firm grounding in natural history to test major theoretical predictions with great success in advancing theory and scientific understanding for a diverse array of topics. Along the way, he also produced the first important evolutionary game-theory models for biparental care, the first

systematic application of DNA fingerprinting for the analysis of mating systems, and an unparalleled research program that combines the most sophisticated of modern tools with solid natural history, observation, and field experimentation. Since 1979, he has supervised 36 Ph.D. students and has hosted 33 postdoctoral research students, many of whom have gone on to academic appointments.

In addition to his own contributions to the primary literature, he has co-edited the flagship series of review books on behavioral ecology, coauthored a highly influential textbook, written two well-received popular books on his research program (one on Dunnocks, one on brood parasitism), helped launch the International Society for Behavioral Ecology (and served as its president) and its journal, *Behavioral Ecology*. In an age of tight research funding that conflicts with temptation to study exotic species in faraway lands, Professor Davies's Dunnock work merits special praise as an outstanding example of how world-class research can be accomplished through banding, experiments, and careful behavioral observations of a small, drab bird just outside one's office window.

Professor Davies has received many prestigious honors for his professional contributions, including the Scientific Medal of the Zoological Society of London (1987), the William Bate

Hardy Prize of the Cambridge Philosophical Society (1995), the Medal of the Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (1996), and the Frink Medal of the Zoological Society of London (2001). His book *Cuckoos, Cowbirds and Other Cheats* was selected for the Best Book of the Year Award by the British Trust for Ornithology (2000). He is a Fellow of the Royal Society (1994) and was elected a Corresponding Fellow of the American Ornithologists' Union in 1999 and an Honorary Fellow in 2005.

In short, Professor Davies is the very model of a modern field ornithologist. For his untiring pursuit of scientific excellence and interesting scientific questions through the marriage of detailed natural history, theory, and clever experiments, added to his major contributions to the field of behavioral ecology, the American Ornithologists' Union is pleased to award Nicholas B. Davies the Elliott Coues Award for 2005.

Award criteria.—The Elliott Coues Award recognizes extraordinary contributions to ornithological research. There should be no limitation with respect to geographic area, subdiscipline(s) of ornithology, nor the time course over which the work was done. The award consists of a medal and an honorarium provided through the endowed Ralph W. Schreiber Fund of the American Ornithologists' Union.

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WILLIAM BREWSTER MEMORIAL AWARD, 2005:

ROBERT M. ZINK

Robert M. Zink, a leading scholar in avian evolution, holds the Breckenridge Chair in Ornithology and has served as Curator of Birds at the Bell Museum of Natural History and as Professor of Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior at the University of Minnesota. Among the recurrent themes in his work are the tempo of avian diversification and speciation, species limits, phylogeny, and comparative phylogeography. Two areas deserve special mention. First is his role in creating a vigorous dialogue concerning the theory and practice of ranking taxa at the

species and subspecies levels. In this debate, which has permeated ornithological thinking for more than a century, Professor Zink and co-authors have articulated the advantages and disadvantages of the phylogenetic species concept in both theoretical and applied situations. He has been forthright in throwing down the gauntlet to challenge how current subspecific categories are being used (and misused) in conservation biology.

The second is the use of new technologies and analytical approaches in studying geographic