

Avian conservation translocations: from reinforcements to reintroductions to rewilding

12-13 November 2024 | Zoom & X (Twitter) & Bluesky



ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are arranged in programme order.

KEYNOTE & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 0900

How does population monitoring and modelling get more birds in the bush? A perspective from the interface of science and practice



Kevin Parker (he/him)

Parker Conservation, New Zealand | @Reintrobiology

Conservation translocations have played a critical role in the recovery of threatened birds in Aotearoa New Zealand. More than 1200 translocations of 55 species have occurred over c. 150 years with five species only existing as translocated populations, 10 species having >1 population because of translocation, and >14 species considered more secure than they would have been because of conservation translocations. However, the decision to translocate is not trivial, especially when source populations are small, and the consequences of failure are high. There is also an inherent trade-off between the cost imposed on translocated individuals, and population gains for the species, because conservation translocations are inherently stressful and risky for translocated individuals. Therefore, a key question for improving translocation outcomes is: how do we measure and predict translocation success? Here, I present three case studies where targeted post release monitoring and population modelling have been used to inform translocation outcomes and predict success, by: 1) illustrating the trajectory of a declining population of karure/kakaruia/Chatham Island black robins (*Petroica traversi*), alongside the impacts of a reinforcement translocation on this trajectory and the ability of the only other population of black robins to sustain harvest for translocation; 2) documenting the varying impacts of increasing numbers of two key invasive predators, stoats (*Mustela erminea*) and cats (*Felis catus*), on three translocated species at a mainland sanctuary (tīeke/North Island saddlebacks (*Philesturnus rufusater*), toutouwai/North Island robins (*Petroica longipes*) and popokatea/whiteheads (*Mohoua albicilla*)); and 3) predicting the impact of landscape connectivity on translocation success of popokatea/whiteheads.

Kevin Parker is a conservation scientist with expertise in reintroduction biology, threatened species management, and restoration ecology. His research and management perspective has been strongly influenced by extensive experience in applied conservation management as a scientist, park ranger, zookeeper, and through direct involvement in >70 translocations of 11 bird species and one

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invertebrate. He is a member of four threatened species recovery groups and provides advice to many translocation projects in Aotearoa New Zealand, and internationally.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 0930

Headstarting and translocating Eurasian Curlew: challenges and outcomes

Katharine Bowgen (she/her)

British Trust for Ornithology, UK | @modelbirder

Lowland breeding Curlew in the UK are an urgent conservation priority, as extirpation of many local populations is imminent. Four projects have trialled translocation of Curlew, using eggs that originate from nests with an otherwise low chance of survival. A “headstarting” project also has been running concurrently in the West of England where eggs are returned to the nesting areas from which they were taken. The projects have successfully reared and released Curlew and monitored their dispersal and survival through GPS- and radio-tracking. Within two years, translocated juveniles have returned and, in some cases, subsequently successfully-bred in and close to existing Curlew breeding sites. This talk will present an overview of the projects to date, addressing successes and challenges in the context of the wider UK Curlew populations. The apparent recruitment of translocated Curlew into lowland breeding populations would indicate that these methods can provide an additional tool to support Curlew populations, where used alongside other complementary conservation management strategies.

Katharine Bowgen is a research ecologist investigating wader species across the UK year round and analysing them in the context of their wider populations and conservation challenges. One of her current projects involves working with several other organisations and researchers to investigate the potential for Curlew headstarting as an additional tool to support Curlew populations and they have collaborated on this talk together.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 0945

Preliminary results of the first translocations of a passerine species in continental Europe: the endangered Dupont's lark

Helena Navalpotro (she/her/ella)

Centre de Ciència i Tecnologia Forestal de Catalunya (CTFC), Spain | @HNavalpotro

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The Dupont's Lark (*Chersophilus duponti*) is a small lark exclusively found in Spain within Europe. With only around 3200 males remaining, its population is declining and facing a high extinction risk due to habitat fragmentation. The LIFE Connect Ricotí project aims at translocating around 70 individuals for reinforcing/rescuing some subpopulations between 2023-2026. To date, 18 males and 4 females were captured in 3 source populations and translocated to 2 recipient locations reaching distances of 50km to 150km. A comparable number of individuals were captured and released in source areas as control. All birds were equipped with coded tags (1g; 2-year lifespan) for tracking using automated receivers. Surprisingly, despite previous expectations of limited movements in the species, 32% of translocated birds returned to their original areas. So far, translocated animals have stayed between 2 and 131 days in the new area. More preliminary results on this ongoing project will be forthcoming from what is likely the first translocation of a European continental passerine.

Helena Navalpotro is a biology graduate from the University of Barcelona, with a Master's in Terrestrial Ecology and Biodiversity Management (UAB). She has been working in the field of bird conservation for 10 years, and since 2019 has been working in the CTFC. Here she works with steppe birds, mainly monitoring them but also analysing the data from GPS devices. In 2022 Helena started working on automated radiotelemetry systems to monitor the translocations of Dupont's Larks within the LIFE Connect Ricotí project.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1000

Movements and behaviour of UK White Storks

Aldina Franco (she/her)

University of East Anglia, UK | @aldinafranco

White Storks have recently been reintroduced in the UK and successfully bred in 2020, more than 600 years after the last breeding record. Since 2019, the UK White Stork project has been releasing a small number of juvenile storks (~25 birds) every year at the Knepp rewilding site, of which 8/year have been fitted with GPS tracking devices. The released storks are offspring of Polish and French injured adult storks that successfully breed in captivity at the Cotswold Wildlife Park. We summarise the movements and migratory behaviour of the GPS tracked storks. There was high variability in movement behaviour between years, but the majority of the UK storks managed to migrate across the channel to continental Europe, most crossed from Dover to Calais, wintering in diverse locations in Southern Europe (e.g. Southern France and Spain) with some travelling as far as Morocco. Using data collected over the last 5 years, we provide population viability estimates based on the demographic parameters and the percentage of migratory and resident storks in the UK population.

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Aldina Franco is an ecologist interested in understanding the global patterns of distribution of biodiversity and the drivers and determinants underlying species' range limits and population trends. Her group investigates the role of dispersal and migration as key mechanisms enabling species to respond to global environmental change.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1015

Adaptive management for Spoon-billed Sandpiper headstarting based on 10+ years-worth of data and experience

Jodie Clements (she/her)

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK | @WWTconservation

Between 2012-2021, international organisations partnered up to initiate a pioneering 'headstarting' programme for the critically endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper (SBS), *Calidris pygmaea*, releasing 236 birds in far-northeast Russia. Headstarting eliminates the early-life threats posed in the wild by removing eggs for artificial incubation and releasing independent chicks back into the population increasing overall productivity. Unpublished research suggests headstarting SBS contributes significantly in reducing the rate of decline, and despite contradictory estimations of its impact, it is agreed that continuation is needed to stabilise the population while causes of decline are addressed. We also know that headstarting SBS has the potential to be more impactful, with prospective need to release at previously used breeding sites. Here we pull together several pieces of research looking at early life effects, age of release, and impacts on the local population, to propose evidence based modifications to headstarting protocols aimed at increasing survival and recruitment rates.

Jodie Clements is a long term aviculturist specialising in conservation action techniques, namely conservation breeding and headstarting methods.

PLENARY & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1100

Process and progress in the translocation and reintroduction of bird populations

Carl G. Jones

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, UK



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The origins of translocations, introductions and reintroductions have their origin deep in the past when birds were moved around for hunting and other utilitarian purposes. The early history of reintroductions were largely to restore or supplement game bird populations and mostly involve species with precocial young. Reintroductions and translocations specifically for conservation date to the late 19th century, although only became adopted as a common approach a century later. Challenges remain in the reintroduction of social species that have altricial young and long development periods, such as the larger hornbills, parrots and condors. As we learn more about the management of bird populations it is becoming clear that for many species long term post-release care is an important component. Reintroductions have always been controversial with purists who argue that with the restoration of habitats and protection bird populations will recolonise and recover naturally, as occurred in UK with the Avocet, Marsh Harrier and Osprey in Scotland. However, in a rapidly changing world the natural recolonisation of many species is unlikely within any reasonable timescale and the reintroduction of species increasingly needs to be viewed as not only restoring species but as an important component in the (re)-building of ecosystems.

Carl Jones is Chief Scientist at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and has been involved in reintroductions for over four decades. He has worked on 15 different species of birds, and several species of reptiles including the use ecologically similar species to be used as ecological replacements for extinct taxa. In addition to reintroductions, he is interested in long term post release management to maximise survival and productivity.

POSTER & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1200

Gut microbiome variation across translocated populations of the Seychelles Warbler (*Acrocephalus sechellensis*)

Zoe Crighton (she/her)

University of East Anglia, UK | @zoe_crighton

The success of conservation translocations is highly variable. One often overlooked factor that may influence translocation success are host-associated microbial communities. The gut microbiome (GM) has been implicated in a range of physiological processes crucial to host health, but has received little attention in the arena of conservation biology. We investigated how the GM varies across four translocated populations of an endemic island bird, the Seychelles Warbler, which was brought back from near-extinction following four translocations. Our results show significant differences in both GM diversity and composition between island populations, highlighting a need to understand the possible consequences of this variation. Few studies have investigated and described GM variation in non-model organisms, and fewer still in the context of conservation translocations. However, studies

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such as this are necessary to further our understanding of the role that the GM plays in the health of wild populations in relation to environmental change.

Zoe Crighton is a Marine Ornithologist currently working in the offshore renewables industry. Prior to this, she completed an MSc in Applied Ecology and Conservation at the University of East Anglia, where her research focused on how the gut microbiome of an endemic island bird varied across translocated populations.

POSTER & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1210

Managing risks from highly pathogenic avian influenza: a wader headstarting case study

Katie Beckmann (she/her)

University of Edinburgh, UK | @IBIS_journal

Co-authors: Rosa Lopez Colom¹, Nicola Dessi¹, Nigel Jarrett¹, Michelle O'Brien¹, Daniel Calvo Carrasco¹, William Costa¹, Tanya Grigg¹, Rebecca Lee^{1,3} and Ruth Cromie¹

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³ The Royal Society for Protection of Birds, The Lodge, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2DL, UK

Avian translocations present multiple risks including pathogen transmission between translocated birds, other animals and humans. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) viruses are notifiable and present a particular disease risk given their broad host range, zoonotic potential, wide geographic distribution and capacity to cause a high level of mortality. Project Godwit was initiated in spring 2017, for five release years, to reinforce the black-tailed godwit (*Limosa limosa limosa*) population in eastern England through headstarting. HPAI H5N8 virus had been circulating, and the source and release areas had been within designated 'Higher Risk Areas' for HPAI, until late winter 2016-17. A health risk analysis estimated that HPAI presented an uncertain risk to godwits in rearing and release aviaries and following release. Consequently, preventative disease risk management measures were implemented including quarantine thresholds, pre-release screening and contingency planning. Ultimately, avian influenza viruses were not detected and there was good survivorship of released birds.

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Katie Beckmann is a Lecturer in Wildlife Health and Conservation Medicine at the University of Edinburgh and a European Veterinary Specialist in Wildlife Population Health. She has worked on conservation translocation projects for multiple bird species and other taxa, and is a member of the IUCN Conservation Translocation Specialist Group.

POSTER & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1220

Post-translocation survival and breeding of Madagascar Pochard, “the world’s rarest duck”

Alex Nicol-Harper (she/her)

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK | @alexnicolharper

The Madagascar Pochard (*Aythya innotata*) was believed extinct before its rediscovery in 2006. With only ~20 birds at a single site (Bemanevika), the decision was made to translocate to an additional site: Lake Sofia. Following establishment of a captive breeding centre, 125 birds – from ducklings to adults – have been released since 2018 (jointly by WWT and Durrell to 2021, and by Durrell since). Dedicated post-release monitoring effort allows us to track individuals’ survival and breeding attempts. As of early 2023, 93 birds were known to be on the lake, with 7/21 surviving from 2018, 26/35 from 2021, and 49/55 from 2022, plus 11 wild-reared offspring (some believed to be second-generation). Released birds first bred during the 2019/20 season, and more recently averaged 0.88 broods per surviving female per year. Broods are less likely to be reduced by more than half on Sofia than Matsaborimena (the primary lake at Bemanevika).

Alex Nicol-Harper is a Principal Research Officer in the Wetland Bioscience team at WWT. She uses her background in ecology and conservation, with a focus on population modelling and breeding biology, to advise on recovery projects for a range of bird species, both UK-based and worldwide.

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Overview and analysis of mortality causes for the Griffon Vulture *Gyps fulvus* in Cyprus

Martha Petrou

BirdLife Cyprus | @birdlifecyprus

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Since the 1990s, the Griffon Vulture population in Cyprus has suffered from frequent mortality events, mainly due to poisoning incidents. Population Viability Analysis modelling predicts that under current conditions, the species will go extinct within 15 years, due to a continuing decline largely driven by frequent poisoning incidents. With less than 20 individuals remaining on the island, restocking efforts have brought a second chance for the species survival on the island. Data and information related to mortality events were gathered for the period 1996 – May 2023) under the four-year (2019-2023) 'LIFE with Vultures CY' (LIFE18 NAT/CY/001018) project. It is estimated that between 1996-2023 there have been over 70 mortality cases, with the main records being 77.8 % caused by poisoning and 8.3 % by collision/electrocution. In addition, 18% mortality in individuals released using a soft-release method has been recorded, out of which $9\pm 6\%$ of released individuals died within the first month after their release and $14\pm 6\%$ died between 4 and 20 months (average 10 ± 6 months) after their release.

Martha Petrou is an ecologist and conservationist currently working at BirdLife Cyprus under the LIFE with Vultures project, which aims to save the Griffon Vulture from local extinction.

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Successful translocation of a long-distance migrating passerine: new impetus for the conservation of the globally threatened Aquatic Warbler

Žymantas Morkvėnas

Baltic Environmental Forum, Lithuania | @ZMorkvenas

Co-authors: Susanne Arbeiter^{1,2} and Franziska Tanneberger^{1,2}

¹ Institute of Botany and Landscape Ecology, Greifswald University

² Greifswald Mire Centre, Greifswald, Germany

Translocations are a conservation measure that is increasingly applied to assist the recovery of animal populations threatened with extinction. Long-distance migrating passerines, however, have been rarely addressed in translocation projects so far. One such species is the globally threatened Aquatic Warbler *Acrocephalus paludicola*, a habitat specialist breeding in fen mires in Central Europe and wintering in sub-Saharan Africa. The global breeding population severely declined during the last decades due to habitat loss. Although the implementation of conservation measures has stopped the decline in the core breeding area, peripheral populations continue to decline. The aim of this pilot study was to reveal whether translocated Aquatic Warblers will return to a distant release site after wintering in Africa. Our translocation method is based on natal habitat imprinting of juvenile

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passerines before their first migration. In 2018 and 2019, 50 chicks (10 whole broods) each year were translocated 526 km from Belarus to Lithuania at an age of about 7 days and hand-raised with predominantly wild insects captured in the surroundings of the release site. Survival rate of chicks until soft release from outdoor aviaries was 98% (49 fledglings released) in 2018 and 100% (50 fledglings released) in 2019. In 2019, 11 Aquatic Warblers (9 males, 2 females) were resighted at the release site after returning from wintering grounds. In 2020, 9 birds (6 males, 3 females) were observed, including 3 males from the 2018 release cohort. An average apparent first year survival of 0.30 was estimated. The very successful outcome gives new impetus for the restoration prospects of declined populations of the Aquatic Warbler to halt extinction at the margins of the breeding range.

Žymantas Morkvėnas is leader of NGO Baltic Environmental Forum in Lithuania, actively working in biodiversity conservation in farmland and fen mires for 25 years. He deals with conservation of the globally threatened Aquatic Warbler. After a successful pilot, he is currently scaling up conservation translocation of Aquatic Warbler in its breeding range.

KEYNOTE & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1500

Use-inspired modelling: demographic analysis in the context of conservation translocation decision making

Sarah J. Converse

University of Washington, USA | @conversesj



Quantitative models are one of the primary means by which population ecologists learn about, and represent their understanding of, demographic processes. In the context of conservation translocations, and population management more broadly, however, the critical function of population models is to help decision makers evaluate available management actions with respect to management objectives. Such models can usefully be identified as population management models, as their purpose is not to develop or capture ecological knowledge, but instead is to assist managers in identifying effective management measures to conserve populations. Conservation translocations comprise a particularly challenging type of population management action, as available information is often relatively sparse and risks are typically large. I will introduce the concept of decision analysis as a framework for guiding conservation translocations, and more specifically for guiding the development of population management models useful for informing conservation translocations. I will also discuss particular considerations relevant to developing population models for conservation translocations. Developing population models within a decision-analytic framework can help scientists and managers keep their focus on determining the levers available to pull, and the

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smartest way to pull those levers, to effect the greatest success for species in need of conservation assistance.

Sarah J. Converse is the Unit Leader of the USGS Washington Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit and an Associate Professor at the University of Washington in Seattle, USA. Her research focuses on the development and application of methods to understand the functioning of populations and to improve their management, especially for small and declining populations. Much of her research has focused on combining decision analysis and population modeling to advance the effectiveness of conservation translocations.

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Knowledge is power: how collaborative research supported a reintroduction of the Western Grasswren

Saul Cowen (he/him)

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia | @CowenSaul

Managers seeking to undertake successful conservation translocations rely on a sound understanding of the translocated species' biology, including social and reproductive behaviours as well as the genetics of likely source populations. The Western Grasswren (*Amytornis textilis*) is a small, cryptic bird with limited geographic range that has been reintroduced to Dirk Hartog Island in Shark Bay, Western Australia. Prior to the translocation, a research project was initiated to investigate significant gaps in knowledge of the breeding and social biology, and population genetics of the species. This research then used a population viability analysis framework to explore potential translocation scenarios. In the course of this research effective capture and monitoring techniques that were vital for the translocation were also developed. The reintroduction of the Western Grasswren represents an example of a successful collaboration between scientists and cross-tenure land managers to address important knowledge gaps to support evidence-based decision-making in species translocations.

Saul Cowen is a Research Scientist with the Western Australian Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. His focus is scientific research to support conservation management of threatened fauna, including planning and implementing translocations of several bird species.

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Reintroduction strategy development and evaluation for a threatened grassland passerine using decision analysis

Hannah A. Sipe (she/her)

University of Washington/University of Montana, USA | @IBIS_journal

Decision-analytic methods applied to reintroduction problems can help overcome common challenges in reintroduction, such as complex management alternatives and uncertainty. We engaged in a decision-analytic process to develop a framework for reintroduction of a threatened grassland passerine, the Streaked Horned Lark (SHLA; *Eremophila alpestris strigata*), in Washington State, USA. We generated a variety of management alternatives that captured options throughout the entire reintroduction process. To evaluate these alternatives in terms of their ability to meet species conservation goals, we developed a metapopulation model and parameterized it with elicited expert judgements and empirical demographic information to predict site-level abundance and persistence. Predicted reintroduction site persistence and abundance were highest for strategies involving adult breeding pairs released with their dependent young and strategies involving larger numbers of releases. Our framework offers insight about the development and evaluation of reintroduction strategies for metapopulations in highly fragmented landscapes.

Hannah A. Sipe received her PhD at the University of Washington Cooperative Research Unit, where her research focused primarily on the development of decision-analytic tools to inform avian management and reintroduction decisions. Currently, Hannah is a post-doctoral researcher with the Montana Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1600

A protocol for the design and implementation of translocations in inland passerines

Pedro Sáez Gómez (he/him)

Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (UAM), Spain | @IBIS_journal

The Dupont's Lark (*Chersophilus duponti*) is a small steppe passerine belonging to the Alaudidae family, whose distribution is restricted to Spain and northern Africa. Currently classified as 'Endangered' in the Spanish List of Threatened Species, only 3200 males and between 600 and 1200 pairs are left, representing the whole European population. Here we present a protocol for

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implementing a pioneering translocation program, to improve the functional connectivity of the Dupont's Lark Iberian metapopulation. This protocol combines a robust updated assessment of the current population status, a population viability analysis testing different translocation scenarios at source and recipient locations, a disease risk and animal welfare assessment, automatic post-release monitoring methods for both translocated and control animals, and evaluation of all potential eventualities during capture, handling, transport and release. Following closely IUCN Reintroduction Guidelines, this protocol provides a general template for other translocation projects focused on small birds.

Pedro Sáez Gómez is a biologist with broad research interests in evolutionary ecology and conservation biology, focusing on spatial ecology and processes arising from human activities. His research combines field observations and experiments with statistical modelling and remote monitoring to address basic questions in evolutionary ecology and applied questions in conservation biology.

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Learning and uncertainty: adaptive management of conservation translocations

Stefano Canessa (he/him)

University of Bern, Switzerland | @Stefano_Canessa



Adaptive management has become a sort of conservation cliché, advocated by all, implemented by many, but interpreted differently by everyone. The basic idea of adaptive management is simple: we learn from the results of our actions to keep improving our decisions. This is especially appealing for conservation translocations that take many years to complete, with substantial initial uncertainty but opportunities to learn along the way. However, there are some big challenges to turning the intuitive principle of adaptive management into real practice. First, learning involves risk, and different people see different risks in different ways. Second, to learn properly, we need explicit predictions and formal updating of knowledge. Third, learning about complex systems – in the case of translocations, natural and manipulated at the same time – is usually not as easy or reliable as we think. Fourth, technical improvements in modelling and optimization offer only a partial solution: deep thinking is always required. I will illustrate these challenges, and how they can be addressed, using two case studies of translocation programs at different scales in space, time, knowledge and budget. I will focus in particular on how we can expand widely used demographic tools such as population viability analysis, to be more explicit about our risk tolerance and more realistic about our ability to learn and improve.

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Stefano Canessa is a Research Fellow at the University of Milan and University of Bern. His research focuses on demographic modelling and decision-making for endangered species management, particularly disease mitigation and conservation translocations. He is a member of the IUCN Conservation Translocation Specialist Group and has been involved in species recovery plans worldwide, ranging from frogs and turtles to birds and bats.

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Conserving Kyloring – taking the plunge with wild-wild translocations of a Critically Endangered parrot

Sarah Comer

Department of Biodiversity, Conservation & Attractions, Western Australia | @IBIS_journal

Kyloring, the cryptic Western Ground Parrot (*Pezoporus flaviventris*) is teetering on the edge of extinction. With an estimated population of < 150 birds, Kyloring occurs in a single wild population on the south coast of Western Australia. At risk from bushfire and predation from invasive feral cats, establishing a second population is a priority. The ecology of the species is not well understood, and the decision to implement a wild-wild conservation translocation was challenging. Taking birds for translocation, with no guarantees of success, was explored in depth through a collaborative assessment of the complex risks, assessing habitat potential and management capacity. With the first stage of this project completed there is optimism that the risk was worthwhile, but ongoing interventions will be required to maximise the chances of establishment. Here we share some of the challenges and rewards of an adaptive and collaborative approach to conservation of this enigmatic parrot.

Sarah Comer is DBCA's Regional Ecologist for the south coast of Western Australia, and chair of the South Coast Threatened Birds Recovery Team. She has been working with a dedicated team on conservation and management of Kyloring and other threatened birds for the past 25 years.

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Head-starting Burrowing Owls to increase hatch-year survival and site fidelity in Alberta, Canada

Graham Dixon-MacCallum (he/him)

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Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo, Canada | @WilderInstitute

Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia*) are threatened or at-risk throughout much of their distribution in western North America, and in Canada they are listed as Endangered. For Canada's Burrowing Owls, the most limiting life-stage is the ½-year period from juvenile to 1st-year adult. We use head-starting to test if this population bottleneck can be circumvented. Burrowing Owl nests were located each spring and youngest brood-members were taken into human care when > 20 days old. These owlets were held over winter and soft-released the following spring as adults near capture sites. Between 2016 and 2023, we released 119 owls: 54 male-female pairs, and 11 lone females. Released owls initiated 59 nests, of which 49 were successful, fledging 246 owlets. We used satellite transmitters and band re-sighting to estimate survival post-release. Head-starting shows promise for burrowing owls but further study is needed to improve survival on migration.

Graham Dixon-MacCallum holds a BSc in Biology from Acadia University and an MSc in Biology from the University of Victoria. Graham has been working for the Wilder Institute/Calgary Zoo for 7 years, and has lead the organization's Burrowing Owl project since 2017.

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Considerations for health and welfare in successful conservation translocation programmes - the tūtuturua/New Zealand Shore Plover as a case study



Kate McInnes

Dept of Conservation, New Zealand | @IBIS_journal

Conservation translocations are the intentional movement of animals from one place to another for a conservation benefit. The goal is usually to release animals with the maximum probability of post-release survival and breeding, and health and welfare are core to this goal. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), welfare is an animal's physical and mental state in relation to the conditions in which it lives and dies. An animal experiences good welfare if it is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, free from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress, and is able to express behaviours that are important for its physical and mental state. Health is a key component of animal welfare, with animal health professionals optimising the physical and behavioural health and welfare of animals to prevent, treat and control diseases. The WOAH definitions of both health and welfare cross-reference each other, as it is impossible to separate these intrinsically linked concepts, and they need to be managed in concert. Acknowledging the need to maximise both welfare and health facilitates planning and decision-making throughout all

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management aspects of the translocation, including individual selection, behaviour, genetics, parasites, pathogens, diet, nutrition, aviary environment, husbandry practices, capture, handling, transport, and release. The result is a robust individual which is well suited to, and able to survive and thrive, at the release site. This talk will explore different aspects of welfare and health in a captive breed-for-release programme involving a small shorebird, the tūturuatu/New Zealand Shore Plover.

Kate McInnes is a wildlife veterinarian with 26 years' experience at the Department of Conservation in New Zealand. Her involvement in conservation translocations includes hands on work, technical, policy, and planning advice across a range of taxa, and contribution to development of the IUCN Wildlife Disease Risk Analysis Manual. She is currently undertaking an Avian Influenza vaccine safety and efficacy trial for five critically endangered species which is underpinned by health and welfare considerations.

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Managing the health aspects of a long-term Golden Eagle reinforcement project

Gidona Goodman

The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies/University of Edinburgh, UK | @IBIS_journal

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project is an innovative project to re-establish a viable sub-population in the geographically isolated south of Scotland. Veterinary involvement has been a key feature throughout the project providing technical expertise and advice on a wide variety of health and husbandry issues. Golden Eagle chicks have been successfully translocated and hatched from 2018-2024. An additional experimental programme to translocate sub-adults was included from 2021. A disease risk analysis guided the development of protocols for the nest-side health assessment of chicks and their translocation and rearing. This process also enabled the collection of samples for sexing, generation of a forensic database and exploration of genetic diversity. The emergence of HPAIV presented additional challenges which needed to be addressed. The novel sub-adult translocations also required new protocols given there was no rearing period. The project has been highly successful with a lower than predicted mortality rate.

Gidona Goodman has been a lecturer at the University since 1999. She has worked as a clinician with zoo and wild animals and teaches under and post graduates students. As part of the conservation sciences group, she focuses on avian wildlife health and conservation projects. Co-authors Neil Anderson and Anna Meredith.

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OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1900

Evaluation of the diet of the White Stork at Knepp Estate during the breeding season

Şeniz Mustafa (she/her)

University of Brighton/White Stork Project, UK | @senizdoesnature

The presentation will be looking at my research on the diet of the reintroduced White Storks in the UK. These birds were reintroduced in the latter half of the 2010s, and their population continues to grow. I investigated the diet of the storks that can fly and used a quarantined population as a control group to compare against a population that is solely supplementary fed. The analysis of the wild (flying) storks took place during the breeding season where they both forage and are supplementary fed. This entailed identifying components of the diet, predominantly Coleoptera, with some mammals, snails and human items (i.e. hair bands). Furthermore, looking at the extent to which they choose to forage against feeding on supplementary food. This will help to understand how they interact with their environment, and whether they are able to forage in the UK in the future without being supplementary fed.

Şeniz Mustafa is a Master's student at the University of Brighton studying ecology and conservation. Her research often focuses on bird ecology, and she has a keen interest in reintroductions. Şeniz is on the youth panel for Butterfly Conservation and the committee for the Sussex Mammal Group.

OFFERED TALK & X | TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER | 1915

Applications of Project Godwit early-life effects analysis results to future translocation work for Black-tailed Godwit

Alex Nicol-Harper (she/her)

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK | @alexnicolharper

From 2017-2022, WWT and RSPB headstarted 206 Black-tailed Godwit (*Limosa limosa limosa*) in eastern England as part of pioneering EU LIFE-funded Project Godwit. Eggs were brought into captivity and chicks were reared to fledging before being released, with two-thirds translocated between Nene and Ouse Washes (and the rest released at source site). Early-life effects analyses were conducted to investigate correlates of success – offering the potential to inform adaptive management within the Natural England-funded Godwit Futures project, which aims to reinforce existing populations as well as conduct future re/introductions. Relevant findings include: higher

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return rate associated with larger release cohorts; variable success rates across two 'no regrets' clutch-rescue scenarios; increasingly female-biased sex ratios across release–return–recruitment cohorts; and a lack of survival penalty associated with additional tags (radio, geolocator). We highlight the challenges involved in statistical analysis of translocation successes, given the ubiquity of confounding variables and overriding welfare considerations.

Alex Nicol-Harper is a Principal Research Officer in the Wetland Bioscience team at WWT. She uses her background in ecology and conservation, with a focus on population modelling and breeding biology, to advise on recovery projects for a range of bird species, both UK-based and worldwide.

KEYNOTE & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0800

The role of conservation translocations in rewilding

Phil Seddon (he/him)

University of Otago, New Zealand | @IBIS_journal



Often applied and much misunderstood, the concept of rewilding has shifted markedly from its North American roots, and now suffers from an overabundance of definitions. In some contexts, rewilding seemingly has come to mean almost any form of ecological restoration. Broadly we can recognise two types of Rewilding 2.0: passive rewilding where anthropogenic pressures are removed and some natural or novel ecological state develops, and trophic rewilding where missing biotic elements are actively restored. In trophic rewilding, conservation translocation, the movement and release of organisms to establish new populations, particularly through reintroductions, has a key role in the restoration of faunal elements that would not naturally recolonise an area. In the case of global species extinctions rewilding projects might consider the translocations of ecological replacements, functional proxies of the lost species, to restore lost ecosystem processes. Appropriate ecological replacements might be near relatives, extant but unrelated taxa occupying a similar niche, or even genetically modified hybrids such as through the proposed genetic modification of the Nicobar pigeon to replace the dodo in Mauritius, or hybrid bar-tailed pigeons as replacements for passenger pigeons in North America. Rewilding as a term is here to stay and conservation translocations will form an increasingly important element in many trophic rewilding projects.

Phil Seddon is a Professor of Zoology at the University of Otago, New Zealand. Phil has been involved in conservation translocation research and management for over 30 years. He is an active member of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Translocation Specialist Group, and has advised reintroduction projects

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in New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Canada, USA, Indonesia, and the Middle East. He is a co-author of the IUCN Guidelines on Reintroduction, and the IUCN Guiding Principles on De-extinction.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0830

The Mississippi Sandhill Crane supplementation, 1981-present

Scott Hereford

Fish and Wildlife Service, USA | @BiologistScott

The Mississippi Sandhill Crane (*Grus canadensis pulla*) is an endangered non-migratory subspecies found in the wild only on and near the 7,810-hectare Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) in Mississippi, USA. The Refuge was established in 1975 to provide protection and recovery for the cranes, restore and maintain their wet pine savanna habitat, and provide compatible wildlife-oriented recreation. Refuge management actions include area closure, active predator removal, prescribed burning 2,023 ha annually, mechanical and chemical vegetation treatments to restore, enhance and maintain thousands of ha of savanna habitat, mowing 180 ha fields annually, creation or enhancement of 26 shallow roost ponds, and 41 years of annual releases of captive-reared juveniles. In response, the crane population has increased from 30-40 individuals and only 5-6 nesting pairs to 170 cranes and 44 nesting pairs, exceeding recovery plan objectives.

Scott Hereford is the Supervisory Wildlife Biologist at the Mississippi Sandhill Crane National Wildlife Refuge. He worked briefly with the International Crane Foundation and the University of Wisconsin before joining the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1985 and is a Past President of the North American Crane Working Group.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0845

The Marianas Avifauna Conservation Plan: progress and challenges in the Western Pacific

Ellie Roark

CNMI Division of Fish and Wildlife, Northern Mariana Islands | @FledgeCast

The remote, unpopulated or sparsely populated islands in the northern half of the Mariana archipelago in the Western Pacific play an important role as a potential refuge for species at risk of disappearing from the human-dominated landscapes of the more southerly Mariana islands, due to

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introduction of the Brown Tree Snake or other anthropogenic threats. Over the last 14 years, the local Division of Fish and Wildlife and its partners have completed 11 translocations of five species of native forest birds to the islands of Sarigan, Guguan and Alamagan. We report preliminary results from follow up surveys to these islands, including independent colonization of the islands by some species. We present evidence that species-area relationship in the northern islands may influence the long-term viability of translocated populations. We also report preliminary results from new post-translocation monitoring efforts using automated recording units.

Ellie Roark is a wildlife biologist and ornithologist, and has served as the translocation project coordinator for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Division of Fish and Wildlife on Saipan since 2021. In this position, she is responsible for planning, coordinating and supervising all conservation and monitoring efforts in the uninhabited or sparsely inhabited islands in the archipelago, and for revising and executing long-term conservation and recovery plans for vulnerable CNMI endemic avifauna. She holds an MSc from the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0900

Assessing invasion risks using EICAT-based expert elicitation: application to a conservation translocation

Maude Vernet (she/her)

University of Bern, Switzerland | @VernetMaude

Conservation translocations, aiming at recovering threatened species, can involve risks to recipient ecosystems. Due to limited data and uncertainty, assessing these risks must rely on expert opinion, complicating decision-making. We developed a risk assessment protocol combining formal expert elicitation and IUCN-recommended Environmental Impact Classification for Alien Taxa (EICAT), and applied it to the extinct-in-the-wild sihek (Guam Kingfisher). We elicited estimates of risk from experts across five candidate release sites. We aggregated estimates using simulation-based and Bayesian approaches, including and excluding expert confidence. Experts identified potential impacts of sihek introduction on the recipient ecosystem through predation, competition and disease introduction. One site, identified as entailing lower risks, was chosen for further assessments. EICAT's standardized definitions reduced linguistic uncertainty and subjectivity common to expert-based assessments. Expressing judgments as probabilities allowed transparent assessment of uncertainty and of expert confidence's influence on the overall estimation. Formal quantitative elicitation and aggregation improved communication with stakeholders.

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Maude Vernet is an MSc candidate in the Division of Conservation Biology, University of Bern. Her research focuses on assessing the risk of introducing sihek beyond its historical range, using a mix of expert elicitation and ecosystem modelling.

POSTER & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0915

Human versus machine: comparing post-release survey methods in a reintroduction of Aotearoa/New Zealand hihi (*Notiomystis cincta*)

Victoria Franks (she/her/hers)

University of Salford, UK | @VixFranks

New technologies are increasingly available to help monitor wild animal populations. In translocations, these methods may improve our ability to gather large amounts of information about the post-release fate of a population, helping to inform future decision-making. However, it is important to ground-truth the performance of remote monitoring technologies against established methods (such as in-person surveys), so that we know what data is being collected and the strengths or limitations of the approach being used. During a reintroduction of threatened Aotearoa/New Zealand hihi (*Notiomystis cincta*) in 2020, we compared the post-release population data collected by in-person surveys, with a newly-deployed remote monitoring system. All hihi were fitted with radio frequency identification passive integrated transponder (RFID PIT) tags in leg bands, which logged the visits each individual made to supplementary feeding stations provided at the release site. I will present the findings from these comparisons in terms of the detail of information, population numbers, and resighting estimates each method provided. While the reintroduction itself was unsuccessful this time, the opportunity to compare post-release monitoring data still provided valuable insights on the application of RFID technology to post-release monitoring.

Victoria Franks is currently a lecturer in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the University of Salford. Her research focuses on understanding how behaviour can be used to inform conservation management in in-situ and ex-situ populations, with a particular interest in conservation translocations. Alongside this, I also research how different technologies can be used to collect meaningful data to inform the conservation of wild animal populations.

POSTER & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0925

Bringing back Guam's ko'ko': lessons from translocating an experimental population on Rota

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Lauren Thompson (she/her)

Guam Division of Aquatic & Wildlife Resources | @IBIS_journal

New technologies are increasingly available to help monitor wild animal populations. In translocations, these methods may improve our ability to gather large amounts of information about the post-release fate of a population, helping to inform future decision-making. However, it is important to ground-truth the performance of remote monitoring technologies against established methods (such as in-person surveys), so that we know what data is being collected and the strengths or limitations of the approach being used. During a reintroduction of threatened Aotearoa/New Zealand hihi (*Notiomystis cincta*) in 2020, we compared the post-release population data collected by in-person surveys, with a newly-deployed remote monitoring system. All hihi were fitted with radio frequency identification passive integrated transponder (RFID PIT) tags in leg bands, which logged the visits each individual made to supplementary feeding stations provided at the release site. I will present the findings from these comparisons in terms of the detail of information, population numbers, and resighting estimates each method provided. While the reintroduction itself was unsuccessful this time, the opportunity to compare post-release monitoring data still provided valuable insights on the application of RFID technology to post-release monitoring.

Victoria Franks is currently a lecturer in Wildlife Biology and Conservation at the University of Salford. Her research focuses on understanding how behaviour can be used to inform conservation management in in-situ and ex-situ populations, with a particular interest in conservation translocations. Alongside this, I also research how different technologies can be used to collect meaningful data to inform the conservation of wild animal populations.

POSTER & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0935

Ensuring best practice - the English Code for conservation translocations

Jeremy Sabel

Natural England, UK | @NEChiefSci

Conservation translocations, including reintroductions and different forms of population reinforcement, have become increasingly popular in recent years. However, some practitioners are unaware of the English Code which seeks to highlight both the risks and opportunities of these projects. This poster will summarise the key elements of the code and discuss related topics such as assisted colonisation, funding, native status, causes of decline, reasonable timescales, ecological risk assessment, disease risk assessment, captive breeding and stakeholder engagement. We will explain

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our organisational position and illustrate it using case studies that represent examples of both best practice and those that are less well thought through. Finally, we ask the conference attendees to help us prioritise which birds species in England should be selected for potential translocation projects over the next 10 years. Participants will be provided with a link to a 'wish-list' and asked to select from three options: 'support', 'neutral', 'oppose'.

Jeremy Sabel is a Senior Officer Species Recovery in the Species recovery & reintroductions team, Natural England.

POSTER & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0945

Learning to move to survive in the wild

Irene Pacheco Guardiola

Miguel Hernandez University, Spain | @IBIS_journal

Captive breeding involves raising wild animals outside their natural habitat to preserve endangered species. Often, the result of these measures is maladaptation or high mortality of individuals. We assessed the effect of the captive breeding programmes in Marbled Ducks using movements as a proxy of behaviour. We used 107 individuals tagged with GPS devices. We modelled movement at different temporal scales (daily and monthly) according to season, habitat place, and category. Our results showed that, at a small scale, movement responded to the habitat configuration, season and the individual category. However, at a larger scale movement is mostly explained by the category of the individual (captivity vs wild). In both temporal scales, wild born individuals moved more than captive bred. Therefore, movement in Marbled Ducks seems to have a learned component. Tracking animals released and comparing the movement of individuals can reveal a knowledge transmission between experienced conspecifics.

Irene Pacheco Guardiola is an environmentalist from the University of Valencia, specialised in wildlife from the University of Murcia. Irene is currently a PhD student at the Miguel Hernandez University with a thesis on the ecology of the Marbled Ducks from the field of movement ecology in order to identify habitat/species relationships, distribution, and behaviour.

POSTER & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 0955

The feasibility of reintroduction of Red-billed Chough *Pyrrhonorax pyrrhonorax* to the Dorset coast using a novel 'wild-take' approach

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Brittany Maxted (she/her)

Birds of Poole Harbour/Bournemouth University, UK | @BrittanyMaxted

The Red-billed Cough *Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax* was once widespread across the British Isles. However, due to centuries of human persecution and habitat loss in the form of agricultural intensification the species was lost altogether from Southern England during the 20th Century. Despite recent natural recovery in areas such as Cornwall, many populations remain isolated and vulnerable to genetic effects. With significant habitat restoration over recent decades on the Purbeck coast in Dorset there is an opportunity to establish a reintroduced population, which will help to accelerate Cough range expansion and provide a vital stepping-stone between recently established, disparate populations. I will report the findings of our feasibility study for South Purbeck and Portland examining both foraging and nesting habitat suitability, and will outline a newly developed reintroduction methodology never before trialled in this species. Where previous projects have used captive-bred Cough for release, the Dorset project proposes to translocate young from healthy wild populations elsewhere in the British Isles, using new husbandry and monitoring techniques as well as those already applied successfully to other corvid species. If proven effective, this new approach could offer a lower cost, lower effort alternative, accelerating further restoration but also enabling the supplementation of existing declining populations.

Brittany Maxted is the Species Recovery Coordinator for Dorset-based charity Birds of Poole Harbour, where she has managed the Osprey Translocation Project since 2017. She is also a PhD Researcher at Bournemouth University, studying the settlement ecology of the expanding Scottish Osprey population.

KEYNOTE & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1030

Listening to the species: the key to long term success of the reintroduction of endangered Grey Crowned Cranes in Rwanda

Olivier Nsengimana

Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association | @RwandaWildlife



Ten years ago in Rwanda, there were Grey Crowned Cranes (*Balearica regulorum*) in captivity everywhere in hotels and in the gardens of private houses. Many people were unaware of the environmental consequences of keeping cranes as pets and did not know about their endangered status and the laws protecting them. The species and its habitat were also threatened by human factors often driven by conditions of poverty, livelihood disadvantage and lack of conservation

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awareness as well as people and animals competing for the same habitat. There were only an estimated 300 Grey Crowned Cranes remaining in the wild in Rwanda and with increasing threats to their habitat and being continually poached for the illegal trade, they were rapidly heading towards extinction. Olivier will present the conservation project he implemented explaining how he and his team successfully removed all Grey Crowned Cranes from captivity in Rwanda, reintroducing healthy cranes to Akagera National Park, as well as working closely with communities living nearby crane habitats to ensure the illegal pet trade is abolished. Since beginning the project, the population of Grey Crowned Cranes in Rwanda has more than doubled. However, in order to sustain this success, Olivier and his team have worked hard to continually adapt the community conservation approaches, co-creating nature-based solutions that benefit both people and wildlife. The development of the project has relied heavily on post-release monitoring. Through an enlightening story of crane number 039, Olivier will reveal the lessons he has learned from the listening to and observing the species and how this has shaped the project to ensure a growing and stable population of Grey Crowned Cranes across the region.

Olivier Nsengimana is a wildlife veterinarian in Rwanda, as well as having a Master of Veterinary Science, Conservation Medicine from the University of Edinburgh. Olivier designed a unique conservation project to abolish the illegal trade of the endangered Grey Crowned Cranes in Rwanda and won the Rolex Award for Enterprise which allowed him to start implementing the work. He established Rwanda Wildlife Conservation Association (RWCA) in 2015 with the aim to apply home-grown solutions to protect and restore threatened wildlife and wild places throughout Rwanda. Olivier's commitment and passion to community conservation has won a number of high-profile awards and his non-profit organisation now employs over 200 people with projects across multiple species and ecosystems.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1100

Engaging communities and stakeholders in a Golden Eagle conservation translocation

Cat Barlow

Southern Uplands Partnership, UK | @CatBarlowaquila

The South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project is an innovative conservation initiative aimed at re-establishing a viable sub-population of golden eagles in isolated southern region of Scotland. It combines both established (pulli) and novel (sub-adult) conservation translocation efforts with extensive community and stakeholder engagement, ensuring that local people and land managers are integral to the process and not just outcome of reintegration of this apex predator into the

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region. A genuine partnership approach and collaboration with key stakeholders have been essential to the project's early success. By encouraging early involvement and addressing concerns, the project has been able to create a supportive environment that enhances the likelihood of long-term success for reintroducing this apex predator into the Southern Uplands. This holistic approach prioritizes fostering positive relationships with land managers, farmers, and conservation groups and is crucial to the long-term sustainability of golden eagles in the Southern Uplands.

Cat Barlow is a conservation ecologist with 25 years' experience, specializing in birds of prey and conservation conflicts. She has led the award-winning South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project since its inception in 2015. Cat holds a PhD in Recreation Ecology from the University of Warwick and a Bachelor's in Biological Sciences from the University of Leeds.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1115

Dispersal and immigration in a recently translocated population of Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* in Southern England

Brittany Maxted (she/her)

Birds of Poole Harbour/Bournemouth University, UK | @BrittanyMaxted

The Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* has suffered extensive historical declines due to human persecution, becoming extinct throughout much of Western Europe over the last two centuries. Translocation was first trialled as a restoration technique for Ospreys in North America in the 1980's and has since been employed successfully to restore the species to several key areas of its native breeding range within Europe. I will report on the initial results of one such recent translocation project in Southern England, placing a focus on the patterns of dispersal amongst translocated individuals, alongside interesting cases of immigration of individuals from neighbouring populations. I will also discuss the socio-economic impacts of the restoration of this and other large avian species to the area via translocation.

Brittany Maxted is the Species Recovery Coordinator for Dorset-based charity Birds of Poole Harbour, where she has managed the Osprey Translocation Project since 2017. She is also a PhD Researcher at Bournemouth University, studying the settlement ecology of the expanding Scottish Osprey population.

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OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1130

Thoughts on storks: public perceptions of an avian reintroduction aiming to connect people with nature

Rachel White

University of Brighton, UK | @Rach_L_White

Species reintroductions are an increasingly popular conservation tool. A recent and understudied driver for several high-profile conservation translocations has been to inspire, engage and connect people with nature. One such initiative is the White Stork Project in England. We surveyed 3531 people in Britain to establish and explore baseline perceptions toward White Storks and their reintroduction, including their cultural salience. Findings were compared and evaluated between (i) self-selecting and nationally representative samples and (ii) residents living close to release sites versus non-locals. While 86% of participants supported the reintroduction, we identified stark differences between the two samples regarding awareness, knowledge and experience of, and attitudes towards White Storks and their reintroduction. Collectively, our findings have implications for understanding how the British public might respond to future coexistence with White Storks. Furthermore, we encourage discussion and research on the role of conservation translocations to (re)establish socio-cultural relationships between people and nature.

Rachel White is a Principal Lecturer at the University of Brighton. Rachel's research encompasses avian ecology and conservation, focusing on human-bird interactions, citizen science, and extinction risk. Rachel is passionate about sharing her sense of wonder and excitement about the natural world, including finding effective ways to (re-)connect people with nature.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1145

Towards a multidimensional and integrated approach to conservation translocations

Filippo Marino

University of Leeds, UK | @Filippo__Marino

Conservation translocations, the human-mediated movements of living organisms for conservation purposes, have become widely implemented measures to address the ongoing global biodiversity crisis. A long implementation history led to the development of the subdiscipline of reintroduction biology in the last three decades. Nevertheless, we still lack an integrated and systematic approach to

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conceptualising, implementing and investigating such transformative measures in consideration of all the socio-ecological dimensions involved. We distil five years of interdisciplinary research based on a multi-pronged and mixed-method study of conservation translocations, with a particular focus on raptors and the reintroduction of Hen Harriers *Circus cyaneus* in southern England. Our research offers a holistic approach to guide research and management of conservation translocations that acknowledges these as complex processes within complex socio-ecological systems. We propose a multidimensional evaluation framework and, acknowledging existing challenges and opportunities, we provide recommendations towards an integrated approach to improve translocations in the UK that benefits nature and society.

Filippo Marino is a postdoctoral research fellow with broad and interdisciplinary expertise encompassing several crucial aspects of biodiversity conservation, in particular conservation translocations and human-wildlife interactions and conflicts. Filippo is equally interested in pushing forward our understanding of social and ecological factors shaping global biodiversity, aiming to inform future policies.

X-ONLY | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1300

Hand-rearing and translocation trial of the critically endangered Whenua Hou diving petrel

Te Arawhetu Waipoua (she/her)

University of Otago, New Zealand | @flying_force

The critically endangered kuaka (Whenua Hou diving petrel; *Pelecanoides whenuahouensis*) is a burrow-nesting petrel, restricted to breeding in the foredunes of Whenua Hou. The species face threats from vessel-based light pollution, interspecific competition, and climate change including storm-induced erosion of fragile breeding habitat. Establishing a new colony through translocation could benefit kuaka. Translocations of petrels require hand-rearing of pre-fledging chicks on the destination site to reset their philopatric behaviour. We documented a hand-rearing and translocation trial of kuaka in preparation for future translocations. Ten chicks were translocated from natal burrows to nest boxes behind the colony, and hand-reared on a bespoke diet. All hand-reared chicks fledged successfully, with similar fledging mass and slightly longer wing lengths than naturally-reared chicks. Our trial highlighted the importance of selection criteria, natural growth curves to infer feeding regimes, nutritionally rich diets, and strict hygiene, providing a foundation for future kuaka translocations.

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Te Arawhetu Waipoua is a MSc candidate in Marine Science at the University of Otago, with her research focusing on fine-scale GPS tracking of a critically endangered seabird's at-sea distribution. She has a keen interest in conservation biology and mitigating human impacts on marine ecosystems.

X-ONLY | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1310

Keshopur Chumb Community Reserve: a lesser-known wetland of international importance

Virat Jolli

Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability (BEST), India | @jollivirat

The Keshopur Chumb Community Reserve (KCCR), a designated Ramsar Site in the Gurdaspur district of Punjab, India, stands out as a distinctive wetland managed by the local community. This wetland is a source of livelihood for the villagers who harvest lotus stems, water chestnuts, and grasses. It is a vital ecological site, attracting over 25,000 waterfowl during the winter season. In the winter of 2023-2024, a comprehensive bird monitoring and community analysis was conducted. The most frequently observed migratory species included the Northern Pintail, Northern Shoveler, Common Pochard, and Eurasian Wigeon. Notably, the Bar-headed Goose and Greylag Goose were also spotted within the reserve. The Sarus Crane, now a resident species, was observed, indicating the reserve's suitability as a habitat. However, only 3 individuals (2 adults and one immature) were recorded at the reserve area. Additionally, a significant number of wader birds such as Sandpipers, Plovers, Redshanks, and Lapwings were recorded. The diversity of migratory bird species underscores the reserve's importance as a prime birding destination. Translocation of Sarus Cranes from adjoining states such as Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to KCCR will improve gene pool and prevent local extinction of Sarus due to inbreeding in near future. Further, KCCR holds the potential to support a broader range of avian species. However, impending land-use changes pose a threat to the reserve's future. To safeguard the reserve's ecological integrity, a 1 km buffer zone—where only agricultural activities are permitted—has been proposed to ensure its long-term preservation.

Virat Jolli is President of Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability (BEST) organization based in New Delhi, India. He is involved in the monitoring of birds and has been working to establish a community based monitoring scheme in the Himalayas. His research interest includes, avian conservation, citizen science and urban ecology. He also teaches environmental science to undergraduate courses in University of Delhi.

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Headstarting planning amid climate change: unforeseen health issues in a Eurasian Curlew headstarting project

Rosa Lopez Colom (she/her)

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK | @rlo_wwt

In 2022 and more extensively in 2023, Eurasian Curlew (*Numenius arquata*) headstarting (HS) projects across England (UK) encountered unforeseen health issues primarily due to poor resilience to high temperatures during rearing stages. This study examines the impact of climate change on HS conservation interventions and underscores the need for adaptable strategies. The primary health issues observed included fungal and bacterial infections, 'blistering' of growing wing feathers (remiges), oedema, myopathy, and delayed growth. In response, environmental cooling measures were introduced, hygiene protocols reviewed, and treatments adapted and scheduled for cooler periods of the day. Despite these measures, continued high temperatures led to further health complications. Findings suggest that previously successful rearing protocols may fail under extreme environmental conditions, requiring flexible contingency plans and adaptable treatment approaches. Future projects will incorporate these insights, emphasising the importance of further research on the effects of extreme weather on bird health and resilience in captivity.

Rosa Lopez Colom has been a conservation veterinary officer at WWT since 2020. She graduated from Universitat Autònoma Barcelona Vet School, specialising in wildlife conservation medicine. Rosa provides veterinary support for WWT's translocation projects, coordinates an avian influenza passive surveillance programme at WWT sites and performs wild bird postmortems as part of a GB Wildlife Health Partnership.

KEYNOTE & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1330

The interdisciplinary nature of conservation translocations: mixing science and practice in reintroducing the 'Alalā, Hawai'i's last remaining corvid

Alison Greggor

San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, USA | @AlisonGreggor



Conservation translocations are inherently interdisciplinary interventions, especially when they involve releasing animals bred in human care. They require expertise and preparation across sites

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and partners, and must combine research approaches in order to craft species-specific protocols. I will share experiences, research breakthroughs and lessons learned in releasing Hawai'i's last living corvid species, the 'alalā (*Corvus Hawaiiensis*). After decades of conservation breeding and extinction in the wild, release efforts aim to reestablish a breeding population of this unique seed dispersing, tool using species. In preparing birds for release we combine behavioral training, disease screening and physical competency measures. We have designed anti-predator training, foraging exposures, and a system of monitoring social interactions. We work with a variety of partners to help monitor birds post-release, and adjust strategies based on outcomes. Like many endangered species programs, putting research into practice can be a challenge when sample sizes are small and opportunities for manipulation are limited. Yet there can still be ways to learn from both successes and failures as we continue on the path towards recovery.

Alison Greggor (Ph.D., University of Cambridge, UK) is a Senior Researcher at the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance. Her work covers research, conservation breeding and translocations with SDZWA's Hawaiian bird and Pacific pocket mouse programs. She closely collaborates with government and NGO conservation partners to implement research findings and advance conservation goals. With a background in animal behavior and cognition, she advocates for evidence-based conservation and closing the researcher-practitioner gap.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1400

Release of White-rumped Vultures *Gyps bengalensis* in Nepal: how successful has reintroduction been?

John Mallord

RSPB, UK | @IBIS_journal

The near extinction of three species of *Gyps* vultures in South Asia, caused by unintentional poisoning by the veterinary drug diclofenac, led to the establishment of several conservation breeding populations across the region, including in Nepal. Here, removal of diclofenac from the environment has allowed the release of the captive population of White-rumped Vultures *G. bengalensis* back into the wild, and closure of the breeding centre. Between 2017 and 2023, a total of 69 birds were released, all fitted with GPS transmitters to allow daily monitoring, identification of mortality and causes of death; 70 wild birds were also trapped and tagged. Survival rates and home range sizes were significantly lower for released birds, especially those released as adults. Issues included poor hygiene around the Vulture Restaurant, and limited flight capabilities of the released birds. However, several released birds have started to breed, both around the Vulture Restaurant and further afield.

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John Mallord works as a Senior Conservation Scientist for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) in the UK. He leads on RSPB's research into Asia's vultures, working to help the recovery of much-depleted populations, including by providing scientific support to in-country partners in South and South-east Asia.

OFFERED TALK & X | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1415

Conservation Translocations as a pseudo-experimental design to study both conservation and ecology

Ron Efrat

University of Haifa, Israel | @ron_efrat

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PANEL TALK | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1500

Conservation translocations: learning from experience and looking to the future

Martin Gaywood

Nature Scot, UK



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Conservation translocations are on the increase. No longer just a tool of last resort, they continue to be used in initiatives designed to improve the conservation status of threatened species, but also to restore ecosystem functions and processes in wider nature restoration projects. They are photogenic, appealing projects that can engage and excite people, and provide hope during what can sometimes feel like a hopeless biodiversity crisis. The experience gained over the past few decades means that there is now extensive information and guidance to help practitioners. Conservation translocations can be complex, requiring the input of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary specialisms in topics such as ecology, disease risk management and the social sciences. Creative new approaches continue to be developed, such as the use of keystone species and multiple species to restore ecosystems, assisted colonisations in response to threats from climate change and disease and ecological replacements to restore ecological functions lost through extinction. Genetic and genomic tools have increasingly important roles, developments in synthetic biological techniques present new opportunities but also ethical dilemmas, and animal welfare standards are being given increased attention. Particular consideration is now being given to how we in the conservation community need to get better at engaging with local communities and other stakeholders who host translocated species, may be affected adversely or wish to access socio-economic opportunities. This talk will draw on experiences from home and abroad, and consider how the conservation community can use this developing tool to benefit nature with the support of key communities.

Martin Gaywood is Species Projects Manager at NatureScot and Senior Researcher at the University of the Highlands and Islands. He has worked on beaver reintroduction since 2000, the National Species Reintroduction Forum, Scotland's Species Action Framework, Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations, Scotland's Beaver Strategy, lead editor of 'Conservation Translocations' published by CUP and a member of the IUCN SSC Conservation Translocation Specialist Group. He's received a Churchill Fellowship to research conservation translocations in a changing climate.

PANEL DISCUSSION | WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER | 1520

Conservation translocations: looking to the future

The session will involve a discussion of the future role of all types of conservation translocation, and how we consider potential risks and benefits. This includes not only how we can use these tools to improve the conservation status of focal species, but also as a way of restoring ecosystems. The importance of socio-economic considerations as well as biological ones, will be examined, along with how we balance the need to encourage the use of best practice with what some feel is over-regulation. Also, should practitioners be more experimental and be prepared to accept failure, and how can we make sure such valuable experience is recorded and shared?

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Geoff Hilton (Chair)

Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, UK



Geoff Hilton is the Head of Conservation Evidence at WWT, and a member of the England Species Reintroduction Task Force. He worked for ten years in the international research team at RSPB where he was involved in island restoration projects, including for the Critically Endangered Montserrat Oriole and Azores Bullfinch. At WWT, he has participated in the scientific support for translocations of Spoon-billed Sandpiper, Madagascar Pochard, Common Crane, Black-tailed Godwit and Eurasian Curlew. He is interested in the mainstreaming of translocation within the conservation toolkit, and in using species restoration to drive the recovery of functional ecosystems.

Sarah Dalrymple

Liverpool John Moores University, UK



Sarah Dalrymple is a Reader in Conservation Ecology at Liverpool John Moores University, UK. She is a plant ecologist focusing on threatened species and responses to global threats such as climate change, and on the efficacy of conservation interventions such as reintroductions and assisted colonisation. Her current research uses a combination of field and computer-based methods to inform translocations of threatened species including site selection and predicted population persistence under future climate scenarios. Sarah works closely with practitioners and policymakers to ensure that ecological research is relevant and accessible, and holds positions on the Applied Ecology Resources Advisory Board, the IUCN Species Survival Commission and the England Species Reintroductions Taskforce. She has co-authored the IUCN SSC Guidelines for Reintroductions and Other Conservation Translocations and the Scottish Code for Conservation Translocations.

Lee Schofield

Ecologist and author



Lee Schofield is Nature Recovery Lead for the Lowther Estate, working on the Penrith to Kendal Arc Landscape Recovery Project, which covers a 15,000 hectare swathe of the Eastern Lake District. He is author of *Wild Fell: Fighting for Nature on a Lake District Hill Farm*, an account of a decade working for the RSPB at Haweswater, where he oversaw pioneering conservation work across an upland mosaic of woodland, bog, mountain and meadow.

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John Ewen

Zoological Society London, UK

John Ewen is a Professor at the Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society London. His research focuses on small population recovery, often involving conservation translocation, and the decision science that packages this. He enjoys working with recovery teams on solutions to complicated decisions starting from being explicit in our values (expressed as objectives) and then using our science to ensure we best achieve them. One of his mottos is 'science doesn't make decisions, it informs them'. Although he works across a broad range of species, he has been most closely involved with hihi, a threatened passerine species found in New Zealand.



Delphine Pouget

Natural England, UK

Delphine Pouget is a Principal Officer at Natural England (England Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation), focussing on promoting best practices in conservation translocation grounded in the English Reintroduction Code and IUCN guidelines. Although working mostly in England, she is fostering collaboration with the other UK nations. Currently, Delphine is spearheading the beaver reintroduction project, coordinating policy implementation, stakeholder engagement, and restoration efforts in England. Delphine is a member of the recently formed England Species Reintroduction Taskforce which provide evidence-led advice and guidance on conservation translocations in England. Delphine is particularly interested in fostering human-wildlife coexistence through better stakeholder engagement.



Mary Davies

RSPB, UK

Mary Davies is a Senior Species Recovery Officer for the RSPB. Mary has been involved with several reintroduction projects in the UK including those involving Cirl Buntings, Common Cranes and Corncrakes. Mary chairs the RSPB's Translocation Advisory Group, coordinating advice on policy, positions, proposals and projects relating to conservation translocations. More recently Mary has been involved with the RSPB's Asian Vulture Programme and coordinates the [SAVE](#) consortium (Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction).



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Hannah Sipe	University of Montana, USA
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Lauren Thompson	Government of Guam DAWR, USA
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