

SPI-Birds Newsletter



Welcome to the first newsletter of the SPI-Birds project, a network concerned with the Study of Populations of Individual Birds. SPI-Birds is the official name for the *Hole-nesting birds network and database* project initiated earlier this year. Why the name change? Although we have a current focus on hole-nesting passerines, it is our hope that the project will eventually extend to a broad range of bird species. Therefore, to launch this project officially we wanted to come up with a name that was broadly applicable to a range of different species and research groups: SPI-Birds.

Our goals

The SPI-Birds project has three main goals. First, we aim to create a *network* of researchers who are studying populations of birds at the individual level. Second, we want to create a central *database* of existing population studies that is searchable by population meta-data attributes (e.g. species, length of study). Finally, we plan to build pipelines in R to convert centrally stored population data from all contributing groups, which are stored in different formats, into a single standard format to facilitate multi-population collaborations and analyses. We hope this network and database will create a well-connected and informed community of researchers; facilitate the exchange of data, ideas and encourage collaboration; reduce the effort needed to find, extract, and prepare population datasets for analyses; and improve data storage for these invaluable biological research projects.

Our work so far

The SPI-Birds team has now been working exclusively on the network and database for almost a month. We have so far collated meta-data on 19 populations of hole-nesting birds, covering over **600 years** of individual level data from populations in Germany, Poland, Hungary, Finland, The Netherlands, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and the UK. For 12 of these populations we have also built pipelines in R to convert the data stored by the individual studies into a standard format that can be easily compared and collated.

All our progress is now openly visible on the [SPI-Birds website](#), which officially launched this week. Click on the tab "Find a Population" and you can see all the populations we've worked on so far. As the breeding season begins to wind down for many researchers over the next months we are expecting to receive more meta-data and population data that will be added to the website. We will keep you all updated on our progress as the network and database continues to expand.

Twitter

One of the main goals of SPI-Birds is to create a well-connected and informed community of researchers. To that end, we are also launching the SPI-Birds Twitter account (@SPI_Birds). We will use this account to share progress updates, post events that are relevant to the network, and as a tool for science communication with the general public by sharing interesting information about the populations included in the database. With the inclusion of centuries of data and a network of high class international researchers, we believe that SPI-Birds can become a major tool for science communication.

Newsletter

Get involved with SPI-Birds and contribute to our newsletter. We will use the newsletter to share updates on the project and as a medium for members of the network to share information, events, or questions. You can contribute information on potential collaborative projects, new published papers, or upcoming events (e.g. conferences and workshops). We will release a new edition of the newsletter every two months.

How can you contribute?

If you haven't yet contributed meta-data or raw data to the project please get in touch with the [SPI-Birds team](#). The more populations we have the more effective our project will be. Please also share with us any interesting recent papers, projects or upcoming events that can be included in the next edition of the newsletter. In addition, we also want to know about this year's field season. Tell us the laying date of your earliest nest in 2019. We will collate this data and share it in the next edition. Please send us information for the newsletter before August 1st. And, finally, don't forget to follow us on Twitter!

Who are we?



Antica Culina - Coordinator

Antica is working at the Netherlands-Institute of Ecology on a Veni grant. She is responsible for contacting data owners and collecting meta-data and original data.



Marcel Visser - Coordinator

Marcel is head of the Departement of Animal Ecology at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology. Marcel provides his years of experience collecting individual level bird data to the SPI-Birds team and has provided facilities to host the SPI-Birds website and database.



Liam Bailey - Developer

Liam is based in Berlin at the Institute of Zoo and Wildlife Research. He is working with the SPI-Birds team to build R pipelines for each population.



Stefan Vriend - Developer

Stefan is undertaking his Ph.D. at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. He is working with the SPI-Birds team to build data quality checks for all data included in the SPI-Birds database.