

# SPI-Birds Newsletter

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Welcome to the June edition of the SPI-Birds newsletter. The first half of 2020 has been a turbulent time, with all of us having to adjust to new ways of working. We are also aware that many groups have not been able to start with breeding season data collection, and we hope that SPI-Birds can help to mitigate these effects, as described in more detail below. A sense of community has never been more important than in these difficult times, so we thank you all for your contribution.

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## Mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on research

If the COVID-19 situation has prevented you from collecting data in 2020, and will have a major impact on your research output, we would like to invite you to get in touch and briefly outline a project that you would like to collaborate on – this can be a work based on data from only one population or more populations. We will then derive a list of research groups that would especially benefit from collaborative projects in 2020/2021. This list will be circulated within the SPI-Birds community to facilitate the formation of research partnerships based around certain research topics. Contact us using this email [a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl](mailto:a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl).

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## Postdoc position and funding

We are very glad that so many groups have sent their primary data to SPI-Birds. Now we need to write pipelines to convert all these data into our standard format. For this, we need extra (wo)manpower in addition to Liam and Chloé's efforts, and so we are happy to announce that the Netherlands Institute of Ecology will support a one year post-doc, starting in September, to contribute to the construction of pipelines as well as to work on a scientific project using SPI-Birds data (after agreement from the data owners). We will be providing more detail on this position soon, so stay tuned.

Norwegian collaborators from NTNU are also hoping to contribute towards an additional 6-month position in pipeline construction. Ideally, we would like to extend this from 6 to 12 months and are putting together an additional 30k Euro for this purpose. Please contact Antica ([a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl](mailto:a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl)) or Marcel ([m.visser@nioo.knaw.nl](mailto:m.visser@nioo.knaw.nl)) if you see possibilities for your organisation to contribute towards this research fund, even with a smaller amount.

Finally, if you are writing a grant proposal based on several datasets hosted at SPI-Birds we would invite you to consider including contributions towards maintaining and advancing SPI-Birds. These could be

financial (allocating some fund for e.g. improvement of website functionality) or in kind (e.g. that some of the employed personnel contribute 10% of work hours towards SPI-Birds tasks).

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## **New pipelines and quality check updates**

Although the last months have been difficult, we have not let COVID-19 stop our progress on the SPI-Birds project. Our developer team (Liam, Chloé, and Stefan) have established regular remote meetings to help discuss progress and prioritise pipelines. We have been able to complete pipelines for two new populations in May, one in East Dartmoor (administered by Malcolm Burgess as part of the [PiedFlyNet](#)) and a second in Southern Germany (administered by Niels Dingemanse at the [Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich](#)). Our developers are now in touch with the data owners to discuss the pipelines and verify the outputs, after which they will be included on the SPI-Birds website.

We are also continuously updating the quality check that is carried out on data in the standard format. Our quality check will flag improbable values (potential errors), but it is likely that some of these improbable values will be true observations. We don't want these same values to be flagged each time a new quality check is conducted. To overcome this, we have now implemented a procedure that will prevent true records, that have been verified by the data owner, from appearing in future quality check reports. We hope that this will make the quality check reports more useful for data owners.

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## **SPI-Birds recognized by Open Science Festival**

SPI-Birds has been announced as one of the winners of the [Open Science Festival Use Case Awards](#). We are excited that the importance of the SPI-Birds initiative has been recognized outside of the inner circle of researchers working on individual studies of birds, and we thank you all for contributing to this success. Antica will give a presentation about SPI-Birds and receive the prize at the (online) ceremony on [2nd July]. The prize also includes a small financial component (250 euro!) that will be used for SPI-Birds related tasks.

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## **First eggs and chicks 'competition'**

We are very interested to learn (and share in the next newsletter) the 'winner' of the first eggs and first hatchlings competition for 2020 breeding season, both overall and per species. Please let us know the date of the first egg and first hatchling in your populations. You can also send us photos that we will use in our tweets. This newsletter features hatchlings from one of the first nests of great tits that hatched in Mata do Choupal, Coimbra, Portugal on the 22nd of April. Send these to [a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl](mailto:a.culina@nioo.knaw.nl)

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Thank you again for your contribution and support so far. We look forward to sending you another update in two months time.

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