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28 October, 2020

Drs. Thomas Alerstam and Jan-Åke Nilsson,

Evolutionary Ecology

Lund University

Box 117, SE-221 00

Lund, Sweden

Dear Drs. Alerstam and Nilsson,

Please find enclosed a manuscript for an article written by Libby Natola, Ashley IJ Curtis, Jocelyn Hudon, and Theresa M Burg entitled “Introgression between *Sphyrapicus nuchalis* and *S. varius* sapsuckers in a hybrid zone in west-central Alberta” for consideration of publication in *Journal of Avian Biology*. Our study combines Genotyping-by-Sequencing data and traditional genetic markers to describe a hybrid zone between the red-naped and yellow-bellied sapsuckers (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis* and *S. varius*) in west-central Alberta, Canada.

Sapsuckers have long been species of interest to ornithologists and evolutionary biologists because their propensity to hybridize points to them being in the intermediate stages of the speciation process. While hybrid zones involving red-breasted (*S. ruber*)and red-naped sapsuckers, and red-breasted and yellow-bellied sapsuckers are well described, no one has yet published any population genetic data into hybridization between the red-naped and yellow-bellied sapsuckers. We characterize a region in west-central Alberta where the ranges of these two species overlap and they hybridize, and we delineate the geographical extent of the hybrid zone, quantify introgression rates, and compare early vs late generation hybrids within the zone.

We believe this manuscript is appropriate for publication in the *Journal of Avian Biology* because it constitutes a missing piece in this intriguing speciation complex. Furthermore, hybridization and the effects of habitat and plumage are of great interest to evolutionary biologists and our results are applicable across taxa. The manuscript has been read and approved by all people entitled to authorship and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Thank you for your consideration of this paper.

Sincerely,

Libby Natola