

# Nicholas A. Mason (he/him/his)

[updated on August 24, 2020]

Museum of Natural Science  
Louisiana State University  
119 Foster Hall  
Baton Rouge, LA 70803-3216

[mason@lsu.edu](mailto:mason@lsu.edu)  
(845) 240-0649  
[namason.com](http://namason.com)

## PROFESSIONAL APPOINTMENTS:

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Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Science, Louisiana State University	2020–current
Curator of Ornithology, Louisiana , Louisiana State University	2020–current
Postdoctoral Fellow, NSF Biological Collections Program, UC Berkeley	2018–2020
Doctoral Fellow, EPA STAR Fellowship Program	2015–2017

## EDUCATION:

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<b>PhD</b> Cornell University, Dept. of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Advisor: Dr. Irby J. Lovette	December 2017
<b>MSc</b> San Diego State University, Dept. of Biology, Evolutionary Biology Program Advisor: Dr. Kevin J. Burns	August 2012
<b>BA</b> Vassar College, Dept. of Biology, Honors Honors Thesis Advisor: Dr. Erica J. Crespi	May 2008

## PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS:

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32. Yang, E., Unitt, P., and **N.A. Mason**. In review. Dorsal color alone does not diagnose subspecies within the "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco (*Junco hyemalis*) group. *Wilson Journal of Ornithology*.
31. Cicero, C., **Mason, N.A.**, Jiménez, R.A., Wait, D.R., Wang-Claypool, C.W., and R.C.K. Bowie. Integrative taxonomy and geographic sampling underlie successful species delimitation. *Auk: Ornithological Advances*
30. Demery, A., **Mason, N.A.**, and K.J. Burns. In review. Bill size, but not bill shape, impacts vocal evolution in a large clade of Neotropical songbirds. *Auk: Ornithological Advances*.
29. **Mason, N.A.**, Unitt, P., and J.P. Sparks. In review. Agriculture induces trophic change in a desert songbird. *Journal of Ornithology*.
28. **Mason, N.A.** and R.C.K. Bowie. In press. Plumage patterns: ecological functions, evolutionary origins, and advances in quantification. *Auk: Ornithological Advances*.
27. Chesser, R.T., S.M. Billerman, K.J. Burns, C. Cicero, J.L. Dunn, A.W. Kratter, I.J. Lovette, **N.A. Mason**, P.C. Rasmussen, J.V. Remsen, D.F. Stotz, and K. Winker. 2020. Sixty-first supplement to the American Ornithological Society's Check-list of North American Birds. *Auk: Ornithological Advances* 137:1–24.
26. Cicero, C., **Mason, N.A.**, Benedict, L.S., and J.D. Rising. 2020. Behavioral, morphological, and ecological trait evolution in two clades of New World Sparrows (*Aimophila* and *Peucaea*, Passerellidae). *PeerJ* 8:e9249.
25. **Mason, N.A.**, Fletcher, N.K., Gill, B., Funk, C., and K. Zamudio. 2020. Geographic sampling and isolation by distance impact coalescent-based species delimitation. *Systematics and Biodiversity* 18:269–280.
24. **Mason, N.A.**, Pulgarin, P., Cadena, C.D., and I. J. Lovette. 2020. De novo assembly of a high-quality reference genome for the Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*). *G3: Genes, Genomes, Genetics* 10:475–478.
23. **Mason, N.A.**, Brunner, R., Ballen, M.C., and I.J. Lovette. 2018. Cognitive and social benefits among underrepresented first-year biology students in a field course: a qualitative case study of experiential learning in the Galápagos. *Frontiers: International Journal of Study Abroad*. 30:1–19.
22. Drury, J.P., Tobias, J.A., Burns, K.J., **Mason, N.A.**, Shultz, A.J., and H. Morlon. 2018. Contrasting impacts of competition on ecological and social trait evolution in songbirds. *PLoS Biology* 16:e2003563.
21. **Mason, N.A.** and P. Unitt. 2018. Rapid phenotypic change in a native bird population following conversion of the Colorado Desert to agriculture. *Journal of Avian Biology* 49:e01507.\*

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\*Popular press coverage:1

20. **Mason, N.A.**, Olvera-Vital, A., Lovette, I.J., and A.G. Navarro-Sigüenza. 2018. Hidden endemism, deep polyphyly, and repeated dispersal across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec: Diversification of the white-collared seedeater complex (*Sporophila torqueola*). *Ecology and Evolution* 8:1867–1881.
19. Goldberg, N.R.\* and **N.A. Mason**. 2017. Species identification of vagrant *Empidonax* flycatchers in northeastern North America via non-invasive DNA sequencing. *Northeastern Naturalist* 24:499–504.
18. **Mason, N.A.**, Pasch, B., Burns, K.J., and E.P. Derryberry. 2017. Integrating museum and media collections to study vocal ecology and evolution. Pp. 57–74 in M. S. Webster (editor), *The Extended Specimen: Emerging Frontiers in Collections-Based Ornithological Research*. Studies in Avian Biology (no. 50), CRC Press, Boca Raton, FL.
17. Ballen, M.C. and **N.A. Mason**. 2017. Longitudinal analysis of a diversity support program in STEM: a national call for further assessment. *BioScience* 67:367–373. [↗](#)
16. **Mason, N.A.**, Burns, K.J., Seddon, N., Tobias, J., Claramunt, S., and E.P. Derryberry. 2017. Song evolution, speciation, and vocal learning in passerine birds. *Evolution* 71:786–796. [↗](#) <sup>†</sup>
15. **Mason, N.A.** 2017. Effects of wind, ambient temperature, and sun position on damselfly flight activity and perch orientation. *Animal Behaviour* 124:175–181. [↗](#)
14. Ligon, R., Simpson, R., **Mason, N.A.**, Hill, G., and K. McGraw. 2016. Evolutionary innovation and diversification of carotenoid-based pigmentation in finches. *Evolution* 70:2839–2852.
13. **Mason, N.A.**, Butler, M.W., and J.C. Owen. 2016. Membership trends in the American Ornithologists' Union and the evolving role of professional ornithological societies. *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* 113:806–811.
12. Zamudio, K., Bell, R.C., and **N.A. Mason**. 2016. Phenotypes in phylogeography: species' traits, environmental variation, and vertebrate diversification. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences USA* 113:8041–8048.
11. Burns, K.J., Unitt, P., and **N.A. Mason**. 2016. A genus-level classification of the family Thraupidae (Class Aves: Order Passeriformes). *Zootaxa* 4088: 329–354.
10. Toews, D.P.L.<sup>‡</sup>, Campagna, L.<sup>‡</sup>, Taylor, S.A.<sup>‡</sup>, Balakrishnan, C.N., Baldassarre, D.T., Deane-Coe, P.E., Harvey, M.G., Hooper, D.M., Irwin, D.E., Judy, C.D., **Mason, N.A.**, McCormack, J.E., McCracken, K.G., Oliveros, C.H., Safran, R.J., Scordato, E., Stryjewski, K.F., Tigano, A., Uy, A.J., and B. Winger. 2016. Genomic approaches to understanding population divergence and speciation in birds. *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* 133:13–30.
9. Freeman, B.G.<sup>‡</sup> and **N.A. Mason**<sup>‡</sup>. 2015. The geographic distribution of a tropical montane bird is limited by a tree: Acorn Woodpeckers (*Melanerpes formicivorus*) and Colombian Oaks (*Quercus humboldtii*) in the northern Andes. *PLoS One* 10(6):e0128675.
8. **Mason, N.A.** and S.A. Taylor. 2015. Differentially expressed genes match bill morphology and plumage despite largely undifferentiated genomes in a Holarctic songbird. *Molecular Ecology* 24:3009–3025.<sup>§</sup>
7. Barve, S.S.<sup>‡</sup> and **N.A. Mason**<sup>‡</sup>. 2015. Interspecific competition affects evolutionary links between cavity nesting, migration, and clutch size in Old World flycatchers. (Muscicapidae) *Ibis* 157:299–311.<sup>¶</sup>
6. **Mason, N.A.** and K.J. Burns. 2015. The effect of habitat and body size on the evolution of vocal displays in the largest family of songbirds (Aves: Thraupidae). *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society* 114:538–551.
5. Freeman, B.G. and **N.A. Mason**. 2014. New Guinean passerines have globally small clutch sizes. *Emu – Austral Ornithology* 114:304–308.
4. **Mason, N.A.**, Shultz, A.J., and K.J. Burns. 2014. Elaborate visual and acoustic signals evolve independently in a large, phenotypically diverse radiation of songbirds. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B* 281:20140967.<sup>||</sup>
3. Burns, K.J., Shultz, A.J., Title, P.O., **Mason, N.A.**, Barker, F.K., Klicka, J., Lanyon, S.M., and I.J. Lovette. 2014. Phylogenetics and diversification of tanagers (Passeriformes: Thraupidae), the largest radiation of Neotropical songbirds. *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution* 75:41–77.

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\*Undergraduate coauthor

<sup>†</sup>News feature in PNAS

<sup>‡</sup>Equal author contributions

<sup>§</sup>Popular press coverage:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 and [Perspective in Molecular Ecology](#)

<sup>¶</sup>Popular press coverage:1

<sup>||</sup>Popular press coverage:1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32

2. **Mason, N.A.**, Title, P.O., Cicero, C., Burns, K.J., and R.C.K. Bowie. 2014. Genetic variation among western populations of the Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) indicates recent colonization of the Channel Islands off southern California, mainland-bound dispersal, and postglacial range shifts. *The Auk: Ornithological Advances* 131:162–174.
1. **Mason, N.A.** and K.J. Burns. 2013. Molecular phylogenetics of the Neotropical seedeaters and seed-finches (*Sporophila*, *Oryzoborus*, *Dolospingus*). *Ornitología Neotropical* 24:139–155.\*

## FELLOWSHIPS, GRANTS, AWARDS, AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

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### Fellowships:

NSF Postdoctoral Fellowship (\$138,000)	2017–2019
EPA STAR Fellowship (\$70,000)	2015–2016
Cornell Lab of Ornithology Halberstadt Graduate Fellowship	2014
Cornell University Fellowship	2012–2013
California State University Predoctoral Fellowship	2010–2011
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Honorable Mention (x2)	2010, 2011

### Grants:

NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant (\$20,001)	2016
Cornell Sigma Xi Grant in Aid of Research (\$700)	2015
American Society of Naturalists Student Research Grant (\$2000)	2015
Andrew W. Mellon Student Research Grant (\$1000, \$1000)	2014, 2015
Sustainable Biodiversity Fund from the Atkinson's Center for a Sustainable Future (\$5060)	2015
Cornell Lab of Ornithology Athena Fund (\$3000)	2014
Graduate Student Research Award from the Society of Systematic Biologists (SSB) (\$2000)	2014
Society for the Study of Evolution (SSE) Rosemary Grant Graduate Student Research Award (\$2500)	2014
AMNH Frank M. Chapman Memorial Fund (\$1708)	2014
Betty Miller Francis '47 Graduate-Undergraduate Collaboration Grant (\$1520)	2014
Garden Club of America Frances M. Peacock Scholarship (\$4000)	2014
National Geographic Young Explorers Grant (\$4995)	2013
Cornell Lab of Ornithology Athena Fund (\$5278)	2013
Kieckhefer Adirondacks Fund, Cornell University (\$3000)	2013
Systematics Research Fund Award (\$1400)	2013
AOU Student Research Award (\$2495)	2013
Paul P. Feeny Graduate Student Research Fund, Cornell University (\$500)	2013
National Sigma Xi Grant in Aid of Research (\$500)	2013
Cornell Lab of Ornithology Athena Fund (\$5450)	2012
Collins Student Research Award, Vassar College (\$500)	2008

### Awards and Accolades:

AOS James G. Cooper Early Professional Award	2020
AOS Marion Jenkinson Service Award	2018
American Ornithological Society Elective Member	2017
Stephen and Margery Russell Distinguished Teaching Award	2017
American Ornithological Society Student Presentation Award x2	2017, 2014
Cornelia Ye Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award	2014
Slevin Assignment Sequence Prize – Knight Institute for Writing, Cornell University	2014
Whittaker Award – Best Graduate Student Presentation at EEB Symposium, Cornell University	2013
Book Award – Best Presentation by a First Year Student at EEB Symposium, Cornell University	2012

### Scholarships:

Nancy Skinner Clark Fellowship, Vassar College (\$1300; \$2000)	2014, 2015
Crouch Scholarship for Avian Behavior, San Diego State University (\$3000)	2011
Mabel Meyers Memorial Scholarship, San Diego State University (\$2000)	2011

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\*Selected as an [Editor's Choice](#)

## PRESENTATIONS:

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### Selected Invited Talks and Seminars:

Early Professional Plenary, <i>North American Ornithological Conference</i> . Virtual Conference	2020
Symposium, <i>American Ornithological Society</i> . Anchorage, AK	2019
Departmental Seminar, <i>Louisiana State University</i> . Baton Rouge, LA	2018
Departmental Seminar, <i>Clemson University</i> . Clemson, SC	2018
Departmental Seminar, <i>Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, MVZ Lunch Seminar Series</i> . Berkeley, CA	2018
Departmental Seminar, <i>University of Minnesota</i> . Saint Paul, MN	2018
Symposium, <i>American Ornithological Society</i> . East Lansing, MI	2017
Symposium, <i>EvoDay Symposium, Cornell University</i> . Ithaca, NY	2017
Symposium, <i>Inclusive Teaching in STEM, Cornell University</i> . Ithaca, NY	2016
Departmental Seminar, <i>Universidad de los Andes</i> . Bogotá, Colombia	2015
Departmental Seminar, <i>Universidad Autonoma de Mexico</i> . Mexico City, Mexico	2015
Symposium, <i>American Ornithologists' Union</i> . Estes Park, CO	2015
Symposium, <i>CIRTL Online Symposium on Teaching as Research</i>	2015
Connie Wilkins Lecture, <i>SUNY Cortland Biology Club</i> . Cortland, NY	2013
Seminar, <i>Cayuga Bird Club Monthly Seminar Series</i> . Ithaca, NY	2013
Seminar, <i>EvoGroup Seminar, Cornell University</i> . Ithaca, NY	2013
Seminar, <i>San Diego Field Ornithologists</i> . San Diego, CA	2011
Seminar, <i>BioFest 2011 Departmental Symposium, San Diego State University</i> . San Diego, CA	2011

### Contributed Talks and Posters:

American Ornithological Society, Tucson, AZ	2018
Evolution, Portland, OR	2017
North American Ornithological Conference, Washington, DC	2016
American Ornithologists' Union, Norman, OK	2015
Evolution, Guarujá, Brazil	2015
Evolution, Raleigh, NC	2014
American Ornithologists' Union, Chicago, IL	2013
North American Ornithological Conference, Vancouver, Canada	2012
American Ornithologists' Union, Jacksonville, FL	2011
Evolution, Norman, OK	2011
Evolution, Portland, OR	2010

## TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP:

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### Courses Taught

Secuenciación de Nueva Generación y su Aplicación a la Ecología Molecular, <i>UNAM</i>	Summer 2015
WRIT1430: First-year Writing Seminar: The Enchanted Isles, <i>Cornell University</i>	Spring 2015
WRIT7100: Teaching Writing, <i>Cornell University</i>	Fall 2015
BioEE1780: Writing in the Majors: Evolution and Diversity in the Galápagos, <i>Cornell University</i>	Spring 2014
BioEE1640: First-year Writing Seminar: Origin and Future of Biodiversity, <i>Cornell University</i>	Fall 2013
BioEE 2650: Tropical Field Ecology and Behavior, <i>Cornell University</i>	January 2013
Biol101L: The World of Animals, <i>San Diego State University</i>	Fall 2009 – Spring 2012

### Mentees

Emma Arulanantham (2018–present); Undergraduate at UC Berkeley  
Elisa Yang (2018–present); Undergraduate at UC Berkeley  
Oong Zheng (2018–2019); Research assistant at UC Berkeley; PhD student at University of Minnesota  
Nathan Goldberg (2016–2017); Undergraduate at Cornell; published first-author paper  
Kate Bemis (2015–2016); Undergraduate at Cornell; PhD student at Virginia Institute of Marine Science  
Rachel Armstrong (2014–2015); Undergraduate at Cornell  
Mary Margaret Ferraro (2013–2014); Undergraduate at Cornell; Curatorial Assistant at University of Michigan  
Josh Li Espinoza (2011–2012); Undergraduate at SDSU; PhD student at UC Santa Cruz  
Annabelle Bernabe (2011–2012); Undergraduate at SDSU; Biologist at US Fish and Wildlife

Deena Emerson (2011–2012); Research Assistant at SDSU; PhD student at San Francisco State University  
Heather Macdonald (2011–2012); Undergraduate at SDSU  
Cate Thelkeld (2011–2012); Undergraduate at SDSU

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH AND FIELD WORK:

Death Valley Grinnell Resurvey Collecting Trip, <i>UC Berkeley &amp; Museum of Vertebrate Zoology</i>	July 2018
Nebraska Hybrid Zone Collecting Trip, <i>Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates</i>	July 2016
Adirondacks General Collecting Trip, <i>Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates</i>	June 2015, May 2013
Oaxaca, Mexico Targeted and General Collecting Trip, <i>Cornell University Museum of Vertebrates</i>	July 2014
Grinnell Centennial Resurvey Project, <i>San Diego Natural History Museum</i>	October 2010, August 2012
Grinnell Centennial Resurvey Project, <i>UC Berkeley &amp; Museum of Vertebrate Zoology</i>	July 2011

## SERVICE & OUTREACH:

**Peer-reviews (53 reviews for 24 journals):** Evolution (9); Molecular Ecology (7); Journal of Avian Biology (4); Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution (4); Ostrich (3); American Naturalist (2); Proceedings of the Royal Society B (2); The Auk: Ornithological Advances (2); Ecological Monographs (2); Wilson Journal of Ornithology (2); Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society (2); African Journal of Zoology (1); Biological Journal of the Linnean Society (1); BMC Evolutionary Biology (1); The Condor: Ornithological Applications (1); Ecology and Evolution (1); Ecological Applications (1); Journal of Field Ornithology (1); Journal of Natural History (1); Molecular Biology Reports (1); PeerJ (1); Proceedings of the San Diego Society of Natural History (1); Trends in Ecology and Evolution (1); Zoologia (1); Zoological Science (1).

**Member of AOS Scientific Program Committee** Spring 2018 – Present  
Helped develop schedule and organize concurrent sessions for annual AOS meeting.

**Chair of AOS Early Professionals Committee** Spring 2018 – Present  
Organize events, seminars, and workshops geared toward promoting Early Professional development in the American Ornithological Society.

**Member of AOS Collections Committee** Fall 2014 – Present  
Supported the museum-based ornithology community by organizing workshops at annual meetings; advancing biodiversity informatics; and assisting ornithologist with issues concerning IACUC, import/export, and Federal agency policies.

**Member of AOS Membership Committee** Fall 2015 – Present  
Revise AOS strategy and policy to build and maintain society membership and promote ornithology in North America.

**Member of AOS Meeting Continuity Committee** Spring 2017 – Present  
Promote continuity of organizational efforts among annual ornithology conferences, including symposia and plenary speakers, local logistical efforts, and maintain institutional knowledge

**Co-chair of AOS Student Systematics Group** Spring 2015 – Spring 2018  
Prepare 4–5 proposals annually for submission to the AOU Checklist Committee. Recruit new student members and coordinate efforts to revise avian taxonomy in North America.

**Member of AOS Early-career Professionals Committee** Fall 2017 – Spring 2018  
Organize events and initiative to promote professional development of early-career academics and non-academic professionals in ornithology.

**Chair of AOS Student Affairs Committee** Fall 2013 – Fall 2017  
Chaired the AOS student affairs committee by managing a budget. Oversaw organization and logistics of student events, including professional development workshops, the Quiz Bowl, student-professional mixers, and silent auctions to raise funds for the AOS.

**Chair of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology Invited Speaker Committee** Spring 2013 – Fall 2013  
Surveyed a large community of graduate students and faculty for invited speaker nominations and tallied votes. Served as a liaison between the graduate student committee, faculty advisor Dr. Irby Lovette and the invitees.

**Member of AOS Student Affairs Committee** Fall 2012 – Fall 2013  
Assisted with the organization and implementation of the Student-Professional Ornithological Social and the Student Quiz Bowl at the 2013 Chicago AOU/COS meeting and the 2012 NAOC-V meeting.

## **PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES:**

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Society for the Study of Evolution (joined 2009); Society of Systematic Biologists (2009); American Ornithological Society (joined AOS (formerly AOU and COS) in 2009); Sigma Xi (2012); American Society of Naturalists (2013).