Fly-by-night research

New research shows that birds migrate together nocturnally in dispersed flocks

By Diana Yates
News Bureau Staff Writer

A new analysis indicates that birds don’t fly alone when migrating at night. Some birds, at least, keep together on their migratory journeys, flying in tandem even when they are 200 meters or more apart.

The study, from researchers at the UI and the Illinois Natural History Survey, appears this month in Integrative and Comparative Biology. It is the first to confirm with statistical data what many ornithologists and observers had long suspected: Birds fly together in loose flocks during their nocturnal migration.

Researchers have spent decades trying to determine how birds migrate at night, when most bird migration occurs. But nighttime tracking of tiny flying objects over a quarter mile to a half mile up is no easy task. They have used stationary tracking spots and long-range radar to try to figure out what is going on in the night sky. Some have even watched birds cross the face of the moon.

Decades of such observations suggested that birds travel together at night, but not in compact flocks as they do during the day, said principal investigator Ronald Larkin, a professor of animal biology, who conducted the new study with Robert Sazfozi. Larkin is a wildlife ecologist with the Illinois Natural History Survey, where Sazfozi also worked as a research scientist. Sazfozi currently is an affiliate of the INHS.

Previous studies “sometimes very strongly suggested that the birds were flying tens of meters apart and yet somehow keeping together,” Larkin said. But the evidence for this was “indirect and suggestive,” he said.

Even if it could be established that the birds were flying in groups, Larkin said, no one knew whether they were simply being swept along together passively or whether they were actively, intentionally, traveling together.

In the new analysis, the researchers took a fresh look at bird-flight data Larkin had collected in the 1970s and ’80s using low-power-density tracking radar. The radar directs microwaves in a narrow cone—a “pencil-beam” that can be pointed at virtually any target within range. “If there is a bird target here, you can see it on the radar display as an echo,” Larkin said. “You throw a switch and it locks onto the target, it tracks the target, and wherever the bird flies, the radar points at it.”

State scientific surveys are now part of UI

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

The four state scientific surveys—the Illinois State Geological Survey, the Illinois Natural History Survey, the Illinois Waste Management and Research Center, and the Illinois State Water Survey—have become part of the UI’s Urbana campus, under a measure signed June 30 by Gov. Rod Blagojevich. The surveys will be organized as a new unit, the Institute for Natural Sciences and Sustainability, under the university’s auspices in Fiscal Year 2009, which began July 1.

“The historic relationship between the surveys and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has built a foundation which will now allow us to expand our land grant mission in support of the survey activities throughout the state,” UI Chancellor Richard Herman said. “The synergies made possible by joining the surveys with the university will benefit the people of Illinois by bringing together scientists who will address real-world problems for the people of the state of Illinois.”

Blagojevich, who proposed transferring administration of the surveys to the university under the FY2009 budget, recommended for the university in February, signed Public Act 96-0728, which amended the Water Use Act of 1983 among other legislation, and created the University of Illinois Scientific Surveys Act. The UI will receive an additional $15.8 million in general revenue funds along with personnel and property that will be redirected to the UI from the Department of Natural Resources.

The institute, which also may be called the Illinois Sustainable Technologies Center, will serve as a focal point for applied energy, environmental SEE SURVEYS, Page 2.

Branding initiative under way; unit logos to be phased out

By Sharita Forrest
Assistant Editor

A branding initiative under way; unit logos to be phased out

WE ARE STRONGER WHEN WE SPEAK AS ONE

In an e-mail message, Chancellor Richard Herman and Provost Linda Katehi announced the next phase of the branding initiative by asking campus units to phase out their unit logos and incorporate the I Mark and the Illinois logos into their visual identities. A brand perception survey conducted by the Survey Research Lab in 2006 indicated that key audiences recognized the names “University of Illinois” and “Illinois” as being the Urbana campus.

The research indicated that “Illinois” had far stronger brand recognition than “UIUC,” particularly with audiences outside the state of Illinois. The I Mark—which can be found on everything from apparel to license plates to half-time commercials broadcast during sporting events—has developed powerful brand recognition among audience worldwide since its inception.

Use of the I Mark and the campus logo will present a consistent identity to audiences, enable units to connect their strengths with those of their peers on campus and help audiences recognize the breadth and depth of Illinois’ research, academic and public-engagement efforts.

By strengthening the Illinois brand, the campus will build a stronger reputation, which can translate into expanded opportunities for research, public engagement and recruiting. By associating themselves with the campus and Illinois logos, which have proven and broader audience recognition, units will be able to connect with audiences immediately and harness the power of the Illinois brand.

The campus units are being encouraged to build comprehensive visual identities for themselves that convey their unique products, services and missions. In addition SEE ILLINOIS, Page 2.

It’s relative

A new genetic study of native North Americans offers new insights into the migration of a small group of Athapaskan natives.

Page 4
The main goal of your upcoming festival is “putting literature at the heart of our lives.” Why do you believe the love of reading for children is so important in a child’s life and development?

Literature provides children with chances to identify with great stories, ponder older tales, and encounter protagonists evoked by imagery, and quite simply, a chance to spend time in another’s world. Enjoyment is the key, though that does not mean that each book or story ends happily-never-after or without the possibility of producing a wide range of emotions.

In an age of television, the Internet, video games and other distractions, how can parents encourage reading for their children?

Accept and value children’s choices and look for ways to make connections to new media and technology materials that have been challenged by many technologies – radio, phonograph, television – yet the number of books published for children remains at approximately 5,000-plus a year. Look for book adaptations of popular films and television shows. Share audio versions of stories with audio players. Search online for sites like nolnyngontostics.com, which caters to the interest of many youth in modern, animated graphic novels. Lastly, try to cover the kinds of characters and/or themes that are prevalent in television shows and other media and find comparable literature for children.

In collecting the data, Larkin, Szafoni and colleagues had used the radar in a new way. They were not tracking birds that had been chased by many technologies – radio, phonograph, television – yet the number of books published for children remains at approximately 5,000-plus a year. Look for book adaptations of popular films and television shows. Share audio versions of stories with audio players. Search online for sites like nolnyngontostics.com, which caters to the interest of many youth in modern, animated graphic novels. Lastly, try to cover the kinds of characters and/or themes that are prevalent in television shows and other media and find comparable literature for children.

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Personal information in e-mail marketing can backfire

By Jan Dennis
News Bureau Staff Writer

Businesses risk chasing away prospective customers if they ask for your e-mail address and then send them uninvited messages, according to new research from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

“People bristle at personalization just for the sake of personalization,” said Tiffany Barnett White, a UI marketing professor and co-author of the study, which found that even small degrees of personalization can backfire on e-mail marketers.

White and her co-author, Sharon Shavitt, of the Norwegian School of Economics, found that consumers express discomfort when marketers use data they’ve gathered for other purposes. That makes e-mails that include the recipient’s name and hometown, for example, less likely to be accepted as genuine.

“It’s not just that people are not interested in personalization, they actually don’t want to be bombarded with it,” White said. “Don’t just use a tool because you have it. Use it with the consumer’s perspective in mind. Think about the psychological impact of the information. Some consumers feel threatened by sales pitches they consider over the top.”

To click, personalized e-mails need to offer value and also quickly explain how personal information such as buying habits and location intertwines with your interests, according to the study. ineffective messages can backfire on companies that they might not otherwise have gone searching for, White added.

“Even when someone has volun-
teerly given you personal informa-
tion, they still have preferences about how firms use it,” White said. “They don’t want the pummeling with a mountain of facts about them-
sehves unless they perceive a very good benefit,” White said.

“Just because you have the data doesn’t mean you can use it,” said Dennis Baron, who has written essays for The American Language, both published by Yale University Press.

The study surveyed undergraduates and asked them to gauge response to marketing e-mails with varying amounts of personal data, ranging from just names and hometowns to more detailed information such as buying habits and location.

In the end, the degree of per-
sonalization was less important than the nature of the content and whether it told customers how the deal and their personal infor-
mation interwined, according to study co-author Sharon Shavitt. When e-mail marketers used personalized language to sell products or services, they were more likely to be accepted.

“Firms were no better off for personalization,” White said. “In fact, in some cases, they were worse off.”

Without value, personalized e-mails can backfire, making con-
somers feel threatened by sales pitches they consider over the top.

“To click, personalized e-mails need to offer value and also quickly explain how personal information such as buying habits and location intertwines with your interests,” White said. “Use it – otherwise it could be perceived as a personal invasion.”

Baron, who has written essays for The American Language, calls his blog “the go-to site for language in the 21st century.” His books cover some of these same top-
ics related to grammar and language, and he has written for The New York Times, Chica-
go Tribune and other newspa-
pers and has long been a favorite source for reporters and columnists tackling top-
ics related to grammar and language, calls his blog “the go-to site for news.” Since he began blogging two years ago, Baron has been publishing an average of one essay a week, about a year ago, when the application was enhanced to include a graphics component, he began using im-
age to render his messages.

“Meant that my posts reached more people in a couple of months than the three books I published with Yale University Press,” Baron said. “Go figure.”

Why all the interest in words about word use? “People have strong opinions about the language issues of the day, and while many of us have learned to think of language study – especially grammar – as either dull or scary, we discuss issues like minority language rights, bilingualism, the linguistic rights of workers, standard and nonstandard varieties of English, the position of English on the world stage, language legislation, slang, profanity, obscurity, spelling, new words, and many other language issues ea-
gerly, sometimes passionately,” Baron said.

His books cover some of these same top-
ics. They include “The English-Only Quest: An Official Language for Americans?” and “Grammar and Good Taste: Reforming the American Language,” both published by University Press.

The English professor – who’s more likely to be found leading discussions about evolving digital writing genres with his stu-
dents than embellishing their homework assignments with red ink – lists his blog among the suggested readings for the cours-
es he teaches. Those courses include Eng-
lish 300 and 482. “Writing Technologies – Communicating in the Digital Age” and language 482: “Descriptive English Gram-
mar” – otherwise known, he jokes, as “The Idiot’s Guide to the English Language.”

Whether “The Web of Language” is be-
ing read by students, colleagues or members of the general public who stumble upon it, while surfing the Web, Baron’s motivation is to focus on the material in his books – typically crafted with equal parts information and satire – remains the same.

“Why I hope to accomplish is to get readers to think more critically about some of the key issues of language policy, so that they can better understand what’s being dis-
cussed, and so they can recognize language myth and misinformation and make in-
formed decisions for themselves,” he said.

Baron is working on a book-length study, “From Pencils to Pixels: Communicating in the Digital Age,” and “What Writers Do,” a study of writing processes.

Earlier this year, his linguistics expertise was enlisted to bolster arguments presented before the U.S. Supreme Court. Baron was the chief author of an amicus brief filed in support of the District of Columbia in District of Columbia v. Heller, which sought to overturn a lower court ruling in which the majority decision was based in part on a linguistic argument interpreting the Second Amendment as precluding gun control. The brief by Baron and two col-
leagues provided a linguistic analysis based on what the framers of the Second Amend-
ment intended when they wrote it, and it still means today.◆

ON THE WEB
The Web of Language
http://illinois.edu/go/baronblog

Image 44x100 to 145x151

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“The Web of Language” is the best-read blog published using software created by the university’s Web Services.

The study only looked at re-
plies to e-mail pitches, according to the study, co-written by market-
ing professors Sharon Shavitt of the Norwegian School of Economics and Debra Zahay of Northern Illinois University. “If the offer was valuable and justified, the level of personal in-
formation didn’t matter,” White said. “Firms should consider abandoning personalization completely and just focus on offering value.”

“Don’t just use a tool because you have it.” White added. “Use it with the consumer’s perspective in mind. Think about the psychol-
y personal infor-

By Melissa Mitchell
News Bureau Staff Writer

Language expert’s blog gaining popularity as ‘go-to site’

By Dennis Baron

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Books removed for online version

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ON THE WEB
The Web of Language
http://illinois.edu/go/baronblog
Y chromosome study sheds light on Athapaskan migration

By Diana Yates
News Bureau Staff Writer

A large-scale genetic study of native North Americans offers new insights into the migration of a small group of Athapaskan natives from their subarctic homeland to the northwestern United States. The migration, which left no known archaeological record, is believed to have occurred about 500 years ago. The study, led by researchers at the UI, is detailed in this month's issue of the American Journal of Physical Anthropology. It relied on a genetic analysis of the Y chromosome, which is passed down exclusively to male Athapaskan migrants. Previous genetic studies of this group focused on mitochondrial DNA, which is passed down exclusively from mothers to their offspring.

The new findings reinforce the hypothesis that the Athapaskan migration involved a relatively small group that nonetheless was very successful at assimilating and intermixing with native groups already living in the Southwest. The newcomers were so influential that the Athapaskan language family now dominates many parts of the Southwest and Mesoamerica, and eastward to Hudson Bay.

How the Athapaskan migrants were able to spread their language — and so successfully — is unknown. Anthropologists note that the migrants probably arrived in the Southwest at a time of stress among indigenous groups as a result of an extended drought.

The new study also revealed how pervasively European males intermixed with native groups, said principal investigator Ripan Malhi, a molecular anthropologist in the department of anthropology in the UI's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Malhi and his colleagues looked at specific proteins found on the Y chromosome that can vary from person to person.Tiny differences in the sequence of molecules that spell out the genetic code can be used to determine whether and how closely individuals are related. Those who share many of these genetic signatures are more likely to share a recent common ancestor than those who don't.

The researchers analyzed 724 Y chromosomes from 26 native populations in North America. By including groups from across the continent (they studied tribes from Alaska to the Yucatan Peninsula and to southeast U.S.), the researchers were able to analyze genetic differences among many native groups and to get an idea of the degree of European male infiltration into the native gene pool.

Consistent with a previous study of native North American mitochondrial DNA (also led by Malhi), the new analysis found a pattern that suggests a small group of subarctic Athapaskans migrated to the Southwest. This pattern is reflected in the fact that many Apacheans carry the genetic signature of a small subset of subarctic Athapaskans. These findings also confirm that new studies of biogeography and archaeological data in the Midwest and the Southwest. The study, along with the new genetic analysis of the Y chromosome, provides more evidence that the Athapaskan migration into the Southwest involved a small group of individuals.

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The researchers noted that...
U.S. firms a role model for fair hiring standards, study says

By Jan Dennis
News Bureau/Staff Writer

U.S. companies are helping spread fair hiring practices across the world as they set up shop in developing nations, according to a new study of gender and age discrimination co-written by a UI labor expert.

American-based firms tend to follow U.S. hiring laws, even when they do business in countries with no anti-discrimination standards on the books, based on findings that will appear in the Journal of International Business Studies.

"American companies are very much enmeshed in the laws set by companies all over the world," said John Lawler, a professor in the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. "So I think to the extent they do these sorts of things, they create a very positive model that's going to have an impact internationally.

The study examined recruitment ads published by multinational corporations seeking management and professional workers in Taiwan and Thailand from 1993 to 1999, when neither country had laws against gender and age discrimination.

Gender and age discrimination in the ads generally reflected the hiring practices of the corporations' home countries, not the laws and cultures of the two Asian nations, according to the study, co-written by business professors Cinudy Wu of Baylor University and Xiang Yi of Western Illinois University.

Only about 10 percent of ads placed by U.S.-based companies contained gender discrimination, compared with 24 percent for European-based firms and 47 percent for Asian corporations, most headquartered in Japan, Lawler said.

Age discrimination was more prevalent, he said, appearing in 12 percent of hiring ads published by American-based companies, 30 percent by European-based corporations and more than 50 percent by Asian firms.

Lawler says the findings indicate that companies typically follow their home-country hiring standards when they do business on foreign soil.

"U.S. firms are particularly sensitive to gender bias," he says, operating under laws that have banned sex-based discrimination since the Civil Rights Act was passed nearly 50 years ago. "Laws in Europe and Asia are generally not as stringent or strictly enforced, he said.

Lukewarm, the findings mirror comparatively lower legal standards for age discrimination, published in the U.S. and around the world, Lawler said.

He says lower discrimination rates for American-based companies could also stem from the fact they often have foreign language skills or can bring their own talent with them in part from the media glare in the U.S.

"I think they worry about the potential for negative publicity," he said. "If discrimination overseas comes to light, their behavior internationally can cause a backlash at home."

Even though companies apparently try to do business abroad as they would at home, he says local managers who run the overseas operations sometimes sidetrack their efforts.

"Multinational corporations have ways they would like to see things done, but often times it's less than seamless to export those practices," Lawler said. "Local people who were bred in the local culture may accept them, but with modification, or accept them, but never fully implement them."

Lawler says he expected U.S. companies would fare better than their European and Asian counterparts, but was surprised by the outcome of their efforts.

"I think it speaks well of American companies in their international operations," he said. "They can be seen as a model, and that can have an impact on host nations as they become more economically developed."

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Good example

John Lawler, a professor in the Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, says U.S. companies are helping spread fair hiring practices across the world as they set up shop in developing nations.
achievements
A report on honors, awards, appointments and other outstanding achievements of faculty and staff members

Schoyer S. Korban, a professor of molecular genetics and biotechnology in the department of natural resources and environmental sciences, received the NACTA Teacher Fellow Award at the Annual Conference of the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture held at Utah State University in June.

NACTA is a professional society that focuses on promoting, recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching agriculture and related areas at the post secondary level in North America.

Shelly J. Schmidt, a professor of food chemistry, won the 2008 Marcel Loncin Research Prize awarded by the Institute of Food Technologists, a not-for-profit international scientific society with 22,000 members working in food science, technology and related professions.

The award was presented at the institute’s Annual Meeting and Food Expo in New Orleans. It includes a $50,000 honorarium paid in two annual installments and a plaque from IFT. With the funding, Schmidt will study the relationship between the glassy-to-rubbery transition in amorphous food materials using water vapor sorption-based experiments and compare the resultant findings to the glass transition and absorption-based experiments and links for more information. Allison Sutton, a professor and head of the Undergraduate Library, has been selected as the 2008-2009 Donald C. Gallop Fellow in American Literature by the American Library Association. The citation recognizes efforts to use games and gaming as tools for learning, literacy development and communication.

Scholars are elected as ICA Fellows primarily in recognition of distinguished scholarly contributions to the field, with consideration also for service to the association and other socially or professionally significant service.

Delia, who also is executive director of international research relations at Illinois, was recognized for his “innovative, trend-setting” early research in language and speech production, which launched a new tradition in the study of children’s communication practices. As a “pioneer in stimulating interpretive research throughout the entire field, according to the ICA. Wilson, who heads the communication department (formerly department of speech communication) at Illinois, focused on promoting, recognizing and rewarding excellence in teaching agriculture and related areas at the post secondary level in North America.

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A three-part “multimedia theatrical experience” titled “Inventions Suite,” created and performed by the interactive dance company Toennes-Marchant-Smith, will be on the program of this year’s Ingenuity Festival of Art and Technology in Cleveland on July 25 and 26. The artists behind the company name are John Toenjes, David Marchant and Benjamin Smith.

Toennes is a UI professor and music director for the department of dance. Marchant is senior lecturer in dance at Washington University, St. Louis, and co-artistic director of Zo Motion Arts. Smith is a UI doctoral student in music composition.

“I am excited and proud to be performing at this event,” Toenjes said. “Last year’s festival featured Toska Ranch, which is the most famous interactive company in the world. So, it’s an honor to be in the festival, to be sure.”

Toennes said the piece to be featured at the upcoming festival is intended to draw the audience into “a world of improvisational ‘musivideo’dance,’” captivated with musical creations born of beautiful movement and musical manipulation, and challenged with the question of man’s relationship to machine. A video performance of the work’s first two parts – “Leonardi’s Chimes” and “Songs of the Elastic Hallucin” – can be viewed online at Toenjes’ Web site.

WORKSHOPS

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ON THE WEB

• Ingenuity Festival
  www.ingenuitycleveland.com

• John Toenjes
  www.toenjes.com (for videos, click on movies)
**CAREERS AND EMPLOYMENT AT THE UI** • [www.uiuc.edu/goto/vojobs](http://www.uiuc.edu/goto/vojobs)

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