

Shedding light on the evolution and maintenance of colour polymorphism in Black Sparrowhawks

Petra Sumasgutner, Gareth Tate and Arjun Amar
petra.sumasgutner@univie.ac.at

Claude Leon post-doc fellow
FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology
University of Cape Town, South Africa

Animals often display striking variation with respect to their phenotype. Intraspecific and interspecific variation in body colour represents one of the most well studied forms of phenotypic variation. For decades evolutionary biologists have been fascinated by the mechanisms that maintain colour variation in species and traditional explanations for this diversity of colour in nature often invoke an interaction between selection for conspicuous signals and natural selection for crypsis. Colour polymorphic species have frequently been used to explore the evolutionary processes that lead to colour variation in species. Geographic variation in colour morph ratios also occurs frequently in polymorphic species and is often considered an ideal model system to examine the interplay of gene flow and local adaptation in populations. In this talk I will explore the role and maintenance of plumage colour polymorphism in a raptor, the Black Sparrowhawk (*Accipiter melanoleucus*) in South Africa.