BIRDS AND LANGUAGE

Conference
Thursday 19 and Friday 20 August 2021
9:00am – 5:00 pm

Zoom Webinar
The University of Sydney

Birds and Language is supported by the Sydney College of the Arts, School of Literature, Art and Media, The University of Sydney

BIRDS AND LANGUAGE

The sounds birds make form structured series, comprised of complex syntaxes, nuanced in tone, precise, sometimes excessive, often regarded as being of compelling aesthetic value. We do not hesitate to refer to many of these sounds as songs, or, more prosaically, calls. We move, easily, too, towards thinking about these sounds as a species of language.

More, we readily speak of the visual rhetorics of birds: ideas of performativity, display, mimesis and deception. We sometimes dare to think of birds as artists—not only singers, but bricoleurs, assembling extravagant, colour-coded nests, as in the case of the bowerbird. More, recently, we have become more comfortable with thinking of some birds as capable of higher-order reason, as experiments with crows demonstrate capacities to think through and to solve complex physical problems.

This conference poses a simple question:

What is it to talk of birds and language?

How might such a question provide the impetus and grounds for an interdisciplinary encounter between the natural sciences, the humanities, and the creative arts?

PROGRAMME

Thursday 19 August

9:00 – 9:30 Madeleine Kelly Welcome and context

Papers on birds, sky and materiality

9:30 – 10:00 David Brooks Bird Song (extracts)
10:00 – 10:30 Elizabeth Presa Of gods and birds

Morning Tea 10:30 – 11:00

11.00 – 11:30 Jessica Laraine Williams, Dr. Roger Alsop, Alex Last, Dr. Mathew Berg Unseeing elegy of the tetrachromats

Papers that explore music, birdsong and the Umwelt

11.30 – 12:00 Mark Pemberton The Aesthetic Wonder of Birdsong
12:00 – 12:30 Hollis Taylor Birdsong: Language or Music?

Lunch 12:30 – 1:30

1:30 – 2:00 John Tonkin On the spatialised rendering of Birdcalls
2:00 – 2:30 Mark Byron Not of One Bird But of Many': The Long Migration of Clément Janequin's Le Chant des Oiseaux
2:30 – 3:00 Genevieve Campbell Wayai, how the Bush Stone Curlew tells a Tiwi Ancestral story
Afternoon Tea 3:00 – 3:30

3:30 – 4:00 Julia Miller  Linguistics and Ethno-ornithology: Bird songs and bird stories from the Western Province of Papua New Guinea

4:00 – 4:30 Jen Valender  Silenced strings  2021, single channel, colour video, 3:28min

5 - 7 POP-UP EXHIBITION via Zoom, website and Virtual world (links will be sent to attendees)

Tully Arnot, Robyn Backen, Stuart Bailey, Felix Cehak, Catherine Clover, Ashley Eriksmoen, Alex Gawronski, Helen Hardess, Tiana Jefferies, Madeleine Kelly, Blake Lawrence, Leo Lazarus, Sanne Mestrom, Melody Owen, Raquel Ormella, Pamela See, John Tonkin, Shonah Trescott, Jessica Laraine Williams, Roger Aslop and Mathew Berg.

Friday 20 August

9 – 9:30 Ian Maxwell, Introduction to Day 2

Papers that explore mimesis, mimicry and sight

9:30 – 10 Jay Johnston and Ruth Barcan  Looking Askance: Human–Bird Sensory Ecologies

10 – 10:30 Tessa Laird  Pretty polyglot: parrotization as the difference in repetition.

10:30 - 10:45 – Ashley Eriksmoen  Linear Semiosis  PechaKucha (a quick, image-heavy slide talk, 15-20 slides in 6-8 minutes)

Morning Tea 10:45 – 11:00

11 – 11:30 Johanna Bell  How do we represent extinction on the page? Poetic experiments for a verse novel

11:30 – 12 Jessica C Masters  Henry Green’s pigeons and the death of symbol

Communicating with birds and speculative fiction

12 – 12:30 Stuart Cooke  Ethological Poetics: reflections, refractions, and concerns

Lunch 12:30 – 1:30

Thinking and Storytelling with trees and birds - lunch workshop - 12:40 – 1:20  Brigitta Summers

1:30 – 2 Oliver Hamalainen  Corella Flashmobs: Psittacine avant-garde happenings as sites of cultural production - Creative essay

2 - 2:30 Dr Zoë Sadokierski and Dr Timo Rissanen  Conversations with Regent Honeyeaters PART TWO

2.30 – 3:00 Toyah Webb  Avian ‘Making Kin’ in Jeff VanderMeer’s  Southern Reach Trilogy

3:00 – 5:00 Artists in conversation from the pop-up event

END OF CONFERENCE