Cooperative Breeding in Vertebrates

Cooperative breeders are species in which individuals beyond a pair assist in the production of young in a single brood or litter. Although relatively rare, cooperative breeding is widespread taxonomically and continues to pose challenges to our understanding of the evolution of cooperation and altruistic behavior.

Bringing together long-term studies of cooperatively breeding birds, mammals, and fishes, this book provides a synthesis of current studies in the field. The chapters are organized by individual studies of particular species or (in the case of mole-rats) two closely related cooperatively breeding species. Each focuses not only on describing behavior and ecology but also on testing evolutionary hypotheses for the form and function of the diverse and extraordinary cooperative breeding lifestyles that have been discovered. This unique and comprehensive text will be of interest to graduate students and researchers of behavioral ecology and the evolution of cooperation.

Walter D. Koenig is Senior Scientist at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University. He has studied cooperative breeding in acorn woodpeckers for more than 40 years. He is co-editor of Cooperative Breeding in Birds: Long-Term Studies of Ecology and Behavior (Cambridge, 1990) and Ecology and Evolution of Cooperative Breeding in Birds (Cambridge, 2004), and has published widely, primarily in the fields of population and behavioral ecology.

Janis L. Dickinson is Arthur A. Allen Director of Citizen Science at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Professor in the Department of Natural Resources at Cornell University. Her work has primarily been in the fields of sexual selection and social behavior in insects and birds; she has studied the behavioral ecology of western bluebirds for more than 25 years and is also co-editor of Ecology and Evolution of Cooperative Breeding in Birds (Cambridge, 2004). Her current interests include understanding how socially networked Web environments can be designed to support collaborative conservation actions.
Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Siberian jays: Delayed dispersal in the absence of cooperative breeding</td>
<td>Jan Ekman and Michael Grieser</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Western bluebirds: Lessons from a marginal cooperative breeder</td>
<td>Janis L. Dickinson, Çağlar Akçay, Elise D. Ferree, and Caitlin A. Stern</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Long-tailed tits: Ecological causes and fitness consequences of redirected helping</td>
<td>Ben J. Hatchwell</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Red-cockaded woodpeckers: Alternative pathways to breeding success</td>
<td>Jeffrey R. Walters and Victoria Garcia</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Florida scrub-jays: Oversized territories and group defense in a fire-maintained habitat</td>
<td>John W. Fitzpatrick and Reed Bowman</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Carrion crows: Family living and helping in a flexible social system</td>
<td>Vittorio Baglione and Daniela Canestrari</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Southern pied babblers: The dynamics of conflict and cooperation in a group-living society</td>
<td>Amanda R. Ridley</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

List of Contributors  
page vii

Introduction  
Janis L. Dickinson and Walter D. Koenig  
1  
Siberian jays: Delayed dispersal in the absence of cooperative breeding  
Jan Ekman and Michael Grieser  
6  
2  
Western bluebirds: Lessons from a marginal cooperative breeder  
Janis L. Dickinson, Çağlar Akçay, Elise D. Ferree, and Caitlin A. Stern  
19  
3  
Long-tailed tits: Ecological causes and fitness consequences of redirected helping  
Ben J. Hatchwell  
39  
4  
Red-cockaded woodpeckers: Alternative pathways to breeding success  
Jeffrey R. Walters and Victoria Garcia  
58  
5  
Florida scrub-jays: Oversized territories and group defense in a fire-maintained habitat  
John W. Fitzpatrick and Reed Bowman  
77  
6  
Carrion crows: Family living and helping in a flexible social system  
Vittorio Baglione and Daniela Canestrari  
97  
7  
Southern pied babblers: The dynamics of conflict and cooperation in a group-living society  
Amanda R. Ridley  
115
Contents

8 Superb fairy-wrens: Making the worst of a good job
Andrew Cockburn, Lyanne Brouwer, Nicolas Margraf, Helen L. Osmond, and Martijn van de Pol

9 Chestnut-crowned babbler: Dealing with climatic adversity and uncertainty in the Australian arid zone
Andrew F. Russell

10 Bell miners: Kin-selected helping decisions
Jonathan Wright and Paul G. McDonald

11 Superb starlings: Cooperation and conflict in an unpredictable environment
Dustin R. Rubenstein

12 Seychelles warblers: Complexities of the helping paradox
Jan Komdeur, Terry Burke, Hannah Dugdale, and David S. Richardson

13 Acorn woodpeckers: Helping at the nest, polygyny, and dependence on a variable acorn crop
Walter D. Koenig, Eric L. Walters, and Joseph Haydock

14 Taiwan yuhinas: Unrelated joint-nesters cooperate in unfavorable environments
Sheng-Feng Shen, Hsiao-Wei Yuan, and Mark Liu

15 Guira cuckoos: Cooperation, infanticide, and female reproductive investment in a joint-nesting species
Regina H. Macedo

16 Cichlid fishes: A model for the integrative study of social behavior
Michael Taborsky

17 Meerkats: Cooperative breeding in the Kalahari
Tim Clutton-Brock and Marta Manser

18 Banded mongooses: Demography, life history, and social behavior
Michael A. Cant, Hazel J. Nichols, Faye J. Thompson, and Emma Vitikainen

19 Damaraland and naked mole-rats: Convergence of social evolution
Chris G. Faulkes and Nigel C. Bennett

20 Synthesis: Cooperative breeding in the twenty-first century
Walter D. Koenig, Janis L. Dickinson, and Stephen T. Emlen

Index

The color plate section is situated between pages 158 and 159.
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