



Research Interests

Behavioural ecology of birds

- causes of population decline in South Australian birds.
- bioacoustic characteristics of birds and their role in species change
- morphological variation and foraging behaviour in Darwin's Finches (Galapagos Islands) and Australian birds (Mt Lofty Ranges & K.I.)

Ecotourism

Community involvement

Biodiversity Conservation

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The BirdLab is currently made up of 8 PhD and 5 Honours students. The focus is the behavioural ecology of birds.

The Lab conducts two main research programs:

- identifying the fitness costs of a recently introduced parasitic fly to birds of the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador,
- identifying the causes of population decline in South Australian birds.

Both projects have high international conservation priority, given the severe impacts of parasitism in bird species no less iconic than Darwin's finches, and national concerns over the high level of declining birds in Australia.

During 2003-2004, they conducted the first systematic study of avian parasites in the Mount Lofty Ranges (SA) & found evidence for distinct geographical tick distributions as well as physiological costs of tick parasitism in Australian birds.

BirdLab researchers also use experimental methods to study

- effects of predation in natural populations of passerines in SA
- bioacoustic characteristics of birds & their role in speciation scenarios,
- morphological variation and foraging behaviour in Darwin's Finches & Australian birds to better understand trait utility & adaptive landscapes

Research Collaborations and Consultancies

Sonia was awarded a three year ARC Linkage Grant in 2006 to continue her research on birds and bird conservation in the Mt Lofty Ranges & Kangaroo Island.

- Conducting multidisciplinary collaborative research on Australia's biodiversity & landscapes
- Providing innovative interpretation of biodiversity research for a wide variety of end-users