



QUANTITATIVE AND SYSTEMS BIOLOGY COLLOQUIUM:

The evolving behavior of a bird

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About the Speaker:

Currently a professor at the University of Chicago (formerly at the University of California, San Diego) I have spent the past 40 years studying the ecology of birds in India, primarily the Himalaya.



Date:

9/18/2025

Time:

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

Location:

SSB 130

Abstract:

Given the rate at which the environment is changing, animals respond mostly through plasticity (not genetics). I present a study over 40 years of a single species of bird in the Himalaya, which has advanced its breeding time and altered a learned call note. First, I show how climate has affected breeding times but not breeding elevations. Shifts in breeding times track cues in the environment. Unreliability of the cue means that breeding is sometimes too late or too early. Second, I show how anthropogenic noise has likely affected evolution of calls, which have evolved in a steplike fashion and become established across the entire species, whose population size is estimated as >30 million.

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