

Preface: the Editors

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On a sad day in June 2000 Luis Felipe Baptista died unexpectedly near his home in San Francisco, California, at the age of 59. The science of birdsong lost one of its most erudite and charismatic authorities. In a prologue to this book, Baptista's long time friend and colleague Robert Bowman contributes a brief overview of some of his most illustrious accomplishments. Within months of his death still grieving colleagues decided to celebrate his remarkable career with a symposium, and ultimately with a book, on the remarkable progress that has been made by him and many other scientists around the globe in the study of birdsong.

In an enterprise spanning more than three years, the debts the editors owe to others are many. Among his many responsibilities Luis had served as Curator of Ornithology and Mammalogy at The California Academy of Sciences. The staff members of the Academy were unstinting in their support of the Baptista symposium, especially Terry Gosliner, Nina Jablonski, and Doug Bell. Sylvia Hope played a key role at many stages, including the planning and execution of the book, and Kathleen Berge was most helpful in organizing and conducting the symposium. A cadre of distinguished experts assembled on November 3 2001 for the day-long meeting. Although the speakers had been encouraged to present up-to-the-minute overviews of their area of expertise, no one was quite prepared for the extent and the richness of the new information presented. It covered all aspects of research on the vocal behavior of birds, never brought together before in the same forum. This book was the next step, after supplementing the list of authors to complete the coverage.

In an era when everyone specializes, it is all

too easy for people working in one corner of the science of birdsong, say the neurobiology of vocal learning, to get out of touch with progress in other aspects of their discipline, such as the impact of the environment on the evolution of birdsong. We hope that this book will help to familiarize everyone working in the field with the remarkable progress that their colleagues have been making. Above all we hope that this book will appeal to general readers, especially to bird watchers and others who already appreciate nature's music. Luis Baptista was renowned for his skill in communicating to others, both his love of birdsong, and the excitement of scientific ornithology. In that same spirit we have strived to ensure that, wherever possible jargon has been held in check, while still maintaining the highest scientific standards, in both text and figures. The one-page 'boxes' spaced at intervals throughout the text, written specifically at the invitation of the editors, provide extra detail on some topics, and further explication of technical issues. We have solicited sound recordings of songs and other avian vocal signals wherever these could be found and assembled them in the two compact discs at the back of this book.

In our editorializing it was a pleasure to interact with the sixteen biologists who joined us in writing chapters for the book. Without exception they were cooperative in dealing with our questions and suggestions, and sympathetic to our desire, wherever possible, to strike a balance between technical content and readable prose, an endeavor in which Gregory Ball and William Searcy gave some valuable help. At all stages, from preparing, editing and checking the manuscripts, organizing and formatting figures and color plates and with Judith Marler,

scrutinizing proofs, Rebecca Wylie was a tower of strength. We owe special thanks to the 44 authors who made extra efforts with the boxes, creating new text and figures for the purpose and, together with the chapter authors, helping to assemble and donate sound recordings for the compact discs. Tackling the daunting task of putting the C.D.'s together would have been unthinkable without the generous help of Jack Bradbury and his staff at the Macaulay Library

of Natural Sounds at the Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University, especially Steve Pantle, Bob Grotke and Mary Guthrie. For the color plates that Elsevier/Academic Press encouraged us to include, we are pleased to display the work of photographers who specialize in creating images of birds caught in the very act of vocalizing. They add a further dimension to our efforts to convey something of the saga of *Nature's Music*.