

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC (IN ENGLISH)

Coordination within social group enables animals to face challenging tasks that could not be completed by solitary individuals. For example, group coordination may allow chasing down larger prey or defending larger territory. Such coordinated behavior is usually accompanied by coordinated displays which might signal or even enhance group coordination (howling of wolves, war songs and dances in humans). In tropical duetting and chorusing bird species, both males and females sing and participate actively in the territorial defense.

Vocal duets and choruses are one of the most puzzling communication systems that can be observed in the animal kingdom. Coordination of behaviour between pair members is probably critical for defending a larger territory and getting access to more resources. Coordinated singing, therefore, could reflect the ability of group members to collaborate in territorial defense.

In this project, we will study *Cisticola chubbi*, an African bird species that sings both in duets and choruses and performs a dancing behaviour during singing. In this species, males and females start singing their songs simultaneously and they sing in highly coordinated fashion. We will analyse detailed recordings of duets and choruses to find out whether dancing helps birds to coordinate their songs. We will also play back highly and loosely coordinated duets to see if territorial owners consider highly coordinated singing more dangerous or whether this simulated threat to their territories makes the birds sing in more coordinated way. Thus, we will address two main questions about duetting behaviour: how and why birds coordinate their singing.

Duetting and chorusing bird species were suggested as suitable models for understanding other coordinated behaviours. Our research will therefore help to better understand coordinated behaviours in general. For example, coordination (rythm, turn taking, mutual attention) is also a basic principal in human speech and language.