

Davide Dominoni

European Ornithologists' Union meeting, Badajoz, Spain

I attended the European Ornithologists' Union annual meeting, held in Badajoz, Spain. The conference was jointly organised by the European Ornithologists' union and the University of Extremadura, and saw the participation of more than 500 delegates. I gave my contribution by organising the symposium "Coping with the stress of city life: mechanistic studies in urban ecology", which was held in the Auditorium of the congress palace and saw the participation of more than 80 people in the audience.

The symposium was open by two keynote talks, Dr Karl Evans from the University of Sheffield, UK, and Dr Veronika Bokony from the University of Pannonia, Hungary. Dr Evans gave introduced the general physiological and behavioural responses associated with urbanization, and then focused on recent case studies from his group aimed at investigating the role of squirrel predation songbirds.

Dr Bokony's talk was much more focused on the physiological mechanisms underlying the colonisation of urban areas. She is particularly interested in stress, and showed compelling evidence that supports the notion that the stress axis may be under particular pressures in urban areas. She has also highlighted, though, how some of these studies are somehow in contradiction with each other, and that the stress responses to urbanisation may be context dependent. Two PhD students came up next, Amparo Herrera-Duenas from the University of Madrid, Spain, and Pablo Salmon from Lund University, Sweden. Amparo talked about her PhD research on the health of House sparrows in urban areas, using markers of oxidative stress from the blood, whereas Pablo show interesting data from a recent experiment part of his PhD, aimed at distinguish between environmental and genetic effects on telomere length in urban and rural Great tits.

Last, I went on stage to deliver the final talk of the morning. I talked about a field study that I performed in spring 2015 in Glasgow, where I aimed to establish the diet of urban and rural blue tits, and the potential consequences that diet might have on the reproductive success of this species in urban areas. I received great attention and interest by the delegates, who came to ask me several questions after the end of the symposium.

During the conference I also had the opportunity to chat with several attendees who I never met before, thus expanding my academic network and the exposure of my work, but also with other researchers whom I already met at other conferences, or with whom I have ongoing collaborations. This gave me the chance to further expand present collaborations and think about potential ideas for future ones.

The conference has also given me the chance to build some scientific relationships with academics in Italy. This is important because it allowed my research and my profile to be exposed to other researchers in my home country, which could open future career opportunities. Being an early career postdoc researcher who aims to reach a position of professional maturity and independence, it is really crucial to establish such networks.

In summary, my participation in this conference has helped me to develop current projects and collaborations as well as establishing contacts with new researchers with whom I will collaborate in the future, enhancing my future career opportunities.