



## Leading the Research Charge in Animal Whispered Communications

FAU biologist Rindy Anderson, Ph.D., Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, has been studying whispered songs in songbirds for several years. Her work on low amplitude animal communication is highlighted in the current special issue of the journal *Animal Behaviour*, which she guest edited with her collaborator Dustin Reichard, Ph.D. Anderson authored three of the pieces in this special issue.

Anderson and Reichard noted a surge in research on quiet communication that had occurred over the past decade and recognized the need for a broad synthesis of the topic. To address the gap, they convened a symposium last August on low-amplitude communication at the Animal Behavior Society Conference in Princeton, N.J. The symposium brought together the perspectives of established researchers and young scientists to present an overview of research on the structure, function and evolution of low-amplitude communication in animals. The results of the symposium talks and subsequent discussions are highlighted in the special issue, Anderson said.

Behavioral ecologists study animal communication signals as a model system for how behavior evolves in wild populations. Most research on acoustic communication has focused on conspicuous high-amplitude signals that serve important social functions like attracting a mate or threatening a rival, she said. Recently, researchers have begun to realize that a lot of communication has gone unnoticed because it is whispered.

These quiet vocalizations present intriguing opportunities for research because they can sometimes be more complex and varied than a species' loud vocalizations. Research opportunities include the kinds of information these whispers contain, and why natural selection has favored quiet communication in such a wide variety of species, from insects to primates, Anderson said.

Click on the links below to read Anderson's articles.

- [The function and evolution of low-amplitude signals](#)
- [Why signal softly? The structure, function and evolutionary significance of low-amplitude signals](#)
- [Quiet threats: soft song as an aggressive signal in birds.](#)