

Jarome Russell Ali

Postdoctoral Researcher
New York University

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Education/Training

Postdoc	2024-present	New York University Biological Anthropology/Primateology
PhD	2023	Princeton University PhD Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
MA	2019	Princeton University MA Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
MSc	2016	Imperial College London MS Ecology, Evolution and Conservation (First Class Honours)
BSc	2014	University College London (UCL) BSc Zoology (First Class Honours)

Publications

- Price-Waldman, R. M., **Ali, J. R.**, Shultz, A. J., Hogan, B. G., & Stoddard, M. C. (2025). Hidden white and black feather layers enhance plumage coloration in tanagers and other songbirds. *Science Advances*, 11(30), eadw5857.
- Weise, C., **Ali, J.R.**, Ortiz, C.C., Tibbetts E.A. (2024) Geographical variation in signals and responses: individual identity signals linked with capacity for individual face learning across *Polistes fuscatus* wasp populations. *Animal Behaviour* (in press).
- Morrison, ES, ..., **Ali, J.R.**, ... & Shultz A.J. (2024) Bird Name-a-thon: Categorizing English bird names using crowdsourcing. [\[bioRxiv\]](#)
- Ali, J. R.**, Blonder, B, Pigot, A. L. & Tobias, J. A. (2023) Bird extinctions threaten to cause disproportionate reductions of functional diversity and uniqueness. *Functional Ecology*, 37(1), 162-175
Coverage included English ([phys.org](#), [TreeHugger](#)); Spanish ([National Geographic](#)), [Portuguese](#) and Polish ([National Geographic](#))
- Tobias, J. A., ... **Ali, J. R.**, ... & Schleuning, M. (2022). AVONET: morphological, ecological and geographical data for all birds. *Ecology Letters*, 25(3), 581-597.
- Ali, J. R.**, Deacon, A. E., Mahabir, K., Ramnarine, I. W., & Magurran, A. E. (2018). Heterospecific shoaling in an invasive poeciliid: shared history does not affect shoal cohesion. *Animal Behaviour*, 138, 1-8.
- Morris, J., Ford, A. G., **Ali, J. R.**, Peart, C. R., Bills, R., & Day, J. J. (2016). High levels of genetic structure and striking phenotypic variability in a sexually dimorphic suckermouth catfish from the African Highveld. *Biological journal of the Linnean Society*, 117(3), 528-546.

Teaching Experience

2021	EEB 328 Ecology and Epidemiology of Parasites and Infectious Diseases (Field course)
2021	EEB 308 Conservation Biology
2019	EEB 329 Sensory Ecology
2018	EEB 309 Evolutionary Biology
2017	EEB 211 Life on Earth: Chaos and Clockwork (Introductory Ecology & Evolution)

Research Experience

New York University: Form and function of conspicuous natal coats in primates

- Used calibrated photography, visual modelling, phylogenetic comparative methods and behaviour experiments (in Vietnam) to characterise and test functional hypotheses about the evolution of conspicuous primate natal coat colouration.

Princeton University: Evolution of parrot plumage colouration

- Quantified plumage variation in *Amazona* parrots and Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*). Used imaging of museum specimens, modelling of avian vision and phylogenetic comparative methods to explore hypotheses about plumage colouration. Performed lab experiments to test the resistance of feathers to bacterial attack.

University of the West Indies: Trinidadian Guppy (*Poecilia reticulata*) ecology

- Designed and constructed a mesocosm project to perform behavioural experiments with guppies. Collected wild guppies in the field and maintained populations in the lab. Assisted undergraduate students with final year projects.

Imperial College London: Functional diversity of birds

- Used multidimensional hypervolumes and the largest morphological database of bird traits to quantify the diversity of 99% of avian shapes. Showed that predicted extinction might have worse effects on avian functional diversity than expected based on species numbers alone.

University College London: Geometric morphometrics of *Chiloglanis anoterus* catfish

- Collected digital photographs of catfish specimens and extracted morphometrics data. Quantified morphological diversity and demonstrated that male tail shapes reveal potential cryptic species.

University of the West Indies: Social behaviour in Trinidadian guppies (*Poecilia reticulata*)

- Collected guppies from field sites. Designed and performed assays of shoaling behaviour. Showed that guppy shoaling behaviour remained consistent in the presence of another species, which adds to the explanations for the success of *P. reticulata* as an invasive species.

Presentations & Conferences

2025	The form and function of conspicuous primate natal coats	Association for the Study of Animal Behaviour (presented by J. Higham)
2025	The evolution of conspicuous primate infants	New York University Postdoc Symposium
2025	The function of conspicuous primate natal coloration: an experimental approach	American Society of Primatologists
2024	The function of conspicuous primate natal coloration: an experimental approach	3 rd Joint Congress on Evolutionary Biology (poster)
2024	Characterizing the form and function of conspicuous primate natal coats. From melanogenesis to melanin technologies.	Royal Society conference. (Justyn, N. M., Ali, J. R., Higham, J. P., & Allen W. L.; flash talk and poster presented by Justyn)
2022	Plumage Evolution in Amazon parrots	American Ornithological Society-Birds Caribbean Conference 2022
2021	Plumage evolution in a putative ring species	Living Light Conference 2021
2021	Plumage Evolution in Amazon parrots	Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology (SICB)
2019	Ring Around the Rosellas: Plumage evolution in a putative ring species	Evolution in Philadelphia Conference (EPiC)

2018	Plumage Evolution in Amazon parrots	Evolution in Philadelphia Conference (EPiC)
2018	Plumage Evolution in Amazon parrots	International Society for Behavioural Ecology (ISBE) Conference
2017	Shoaling with strangers: heterospecific shoaling in an invasive poeciliid	The University of the West Indies Faculty of Science and Technology Research Symposium

Fellowships & Grants

2022	Princeton GSP Conference Grant (\$640)
2022	Princeton Program in Latin American Studies Conference Grant (\$500)
2022	American Ornithological Society D&I Travel Award (\$1280)
2021	American Ornithological Society Student Research Award (\$1880)
2019	Princeton Ecology and Evolutionary Biology Graduate Research Fund (\$2500)
2019	Zoological Lighting Institute Grants-in-Aid of Photobiology Research (\$500)
2018	Princeton Program in Latin American Studies Summer Research Grant (\$1000)
2018	Student travel award (International Society for Behavioural Ecology \$500)
2017	Outstanding Scholar Fellowship (University of Connecticut, not accepted)
2015	Advanced Level Scholarship – Awarded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for studies at the graduate level (\$20000)
2010	National Open Science Scholarship– awarded by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to students who perform exceptionally at the Caribbean Advanced Proficiency Examination (\$70000).

Awards & Honours

2022	American Ornithological Society Brazier Howell Student Presentation Award
2021	Petrie Fellowship—awarded by the Princeton University Graduate School to outstanding students.
2013	Lillian Clarke Prize – Awarded to the most advanced student in the Department of Biology, UCL.
2013	Francis Perch Bedford Prize – Awarded for the best performance in the final year of Zoology, as determined by the Head of Department of Biology, UCL.
2013	Nominated for the ZSL Charles Darwin Award and Marsh Prize 2013 – Awarded for an outstanding zoological research project, carried out and written by an undergraduate attending a university in the UK.
2012, 2013	Dean's List (UCL)

Science Communication

2025	Scarlet Ibis and avian colouration	Trinidad Newsday
2023	Plumage evolution	UCLA Ornithology course
2023	Mechanisms and functions of bird colouration	Princeton birding society (talk)
2021	Mechanisms and functions of bird colouration	Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club (Invited talk)
2020 - 2023	Writer for Princeton Insights	

Service and Outreach

- Mentor: New York University ARISE
 - Applied Research Innovations in Science and Engineering program (research experience program for high school students)

- Assistant Editor: Living World, Journal of the Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club
- Reviewer: Nature Communications, Evolution
- Princeton University EEB Scholars Program: Coordinator (2 years)
 - Each year 2-3 graduate students run a visitation program for students from backgrounds historically underrepresented in STEM. This program aims to demystify the graduate school application process, to help prepare participants to apply to graduate school, and to provide them with an opportunity to network with scientists in their field.
- Princeton University Graduate Scholars Program: Peer Mentor
 - Mentors provide support to a small group of incoming graduate students.
- Princeton University Visual and Performing Arts Gala
 - Coordinator for upcoming project combining art and ornithology for a public audience, in collaboration with the Princeton Council on Science and Technology.
- Committee on Climate for All in EEB: Graduate student representative
 - This committee aims to promote and sustain diversity, inclusivity and transparency across the department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Princeton University. Activities included preparing proposals for departmental initiatives, organising panel discussions and relaying student concerns to faculty via the committee.
- Princeton Prison Teaching Initiative: Syllabus development team member
 - Development of an Environmental Science Syllabus.
- Princeton Ornithological Collection
 - Assisted in design of ornithological displays for a new Princeton EEB building.
- Life in Science seminar series at the University of the West Indies
 - Conceived of and organised a seminar series that focused on research as well as scientist's personal and professional journeys.

Mentorship

- Wynn Webster: Master's student, Colorado State University
- Thuan Cao: Research Assistant, Endangered Primate Rescue Center, Vietnam
- Maysha Chowdhury, Janice Kong: High school students engaged in New York University's ARISE (Applied Research Innovations in Science and Engineering) program
- Catherine Keim: Final year undergraduate thesis, Princeton University
- Daniel de Groot: Final year undergraduate thesis, Princeton University

Work Experience

2017 (January – September)	Research Assistant Ministry of Education, Trinidad and Tobago Appointed as a research assistant in the Department of Life Sciences at the University of the West Indies after completing an MSc program on scholarship.
2014 – 2015 (September – August)	Secondary School Teacher Ministry of Public Administration, Trinidad and Tobago Taught secondary school biology, chemistry, and integrated science.
2011 (February – August)	Social Surveyor Ministry of Housing, Trinidad and Tobago Collected biographical and geographical data relevant to land use and ownership in various areas in Trinidad.
2009	Volunteer Point a Pierre Wildfowl Trust, Trinidad

(June- August)

Worked with conservation and public education staff as part of a wildfowl and wetland conservation program.

Society Memberships

- Society for the Study of Evolution
- Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology
- American Ornithological Society
- British Ornithologists' Union
- Trinidad and Tobago Field Naturalists' Club
- British Ecological Society
- International Society of Behavioural Ecology
- World Parrot Trust
- New Jersey Audubon
- Birds Caribbean