

The talented women
of the MacGillavry Fellowship

2010 & 2013

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Introduction

Our Faculty of Science constantly strives to increase diversity in its research institutes. For this reason, we introduced a recruitment programme in 2010 for top-level female talent, named after the groundbreaking crystallographer Carolina MacGillavry, an alumnus of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). In 1950, when MacGillavry was inaugurated as the first female member of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, she addressed her unique status as follows: ‘Crystallography is an attractive research field – also for women – because of the required creativity and flexibility of mind, and the need for intuitive thinking. In contrast to other scientific fields, we work in small teams without the typical chaos of male-dominated laboratories.’*

Her speech was widely reported by national media, where the young chemist was applauded for her fresh and honest approach to science. It was one of the few occasions where MacGillavry addressed her sex in relation to her position. The passionate researcher wanted to be recognised for her work, not for being a woman.

More than 60 years later, the same still applies to the women who are currently part of the MacGillavry Fellowship. The nine talented academics featured in this booklet prefer not to dwell on their female status. They all excel in one of the faculty’s disciplines, possess leadership potential and aspire to become a professor at the UvA. Just like MacGillavry, these women prefer

to focus on the relevance of their work and their plans for the future. However, when asked, they aren’t afraid to articulate their opinion on diversity in science. One thing all nine agree on is the fact that the academic world needs more female researchers. Diversity is beneficial to the research process and possibly leads to better results. Moreover, there’s a serious lack of female role models. These pioneering women can set an important precedent. Or, as one researcher articulates: ‘I think this Fellowship is an appealing option for women looking to pursue their career and have a rewarding family life at the same time. If I can be a role model for female students, that would be great. I would like them to see me and think: “If she can do it, maybe I can do it as well”.’

*Source: Marjan Bruinvels-Bakker, Gewina Belgisch Nederland Genootschap voor Wetenschaps- en Universiteitsgeschiedenis



dr. Astrid Groot

MacGillavry Fellow since 2010

at the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED)

‘Watching a population of moths fly around at night is still a magical experience for me.’



I was a slow starter when it comes to science. Only after I had finished secondary school and had all kinds of jobs did I realise that I missed learning. As I had moved from a little village to Amsterdam at the same time, I also missed nature. For those two reasons, I went back to evening school to get the necessary degree to enter university. At that school I had a great biology teacher who stirred my enthusiasm to the extent that I decided to study biology at the UvA. During my Master's degree, I did a research project in the jungle of Colombia, which was an amazing project, but quite overwhelming. There is just so much to see and explore there, and hypotheses cannot really be tested in controlled experiments, which made me realise that I prefer doing experimental research in a more controlled environment.

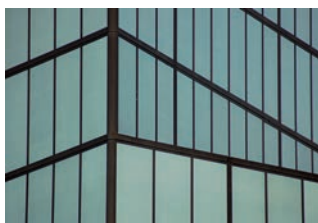
During my PhD in Wageningen, I focused on the sexual behaviour of green capsid bugs, a pest species in apple orchards that

re-emerged after broad-spectrum insecticides were replaced by insecticides that target specific species only. The idea was to fight this pest by using the insect's own sex pheromone, which was a challenging research project, because we knew very little about the capsid bugs' sexual behaviour. We had to conduct all kinds of experiments to answer basic questions, which frustrated me because this meant we couldn't do in-depth research on fundamental questions. When I got the chance to research moths as a postdoc at North Carolina State University (NCSU), I jumped at this opportunity, because these are ideal study objects to learn how variation in sexual communication contributes to speciation. This is a fundamental evolutionary question, which has turned into the main focus of my research. Many moth species are important agricultural pests and the sex pheromone of thousands of species has been identified. So now we can investigate when and how

the sex pheromone varies within species, and when such variation leads to the attraction of different kinds of males in the field. Watching a population of moths fly around at night is still a magical experience for me. I go back to North Carolina every year to do field work, which is possible because I am still adjunct research assistant professor at NCSU.

In 2007, I was invited to continue my research at the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology in Jena, Germany. The entomology department of that institute is also working with moths and they were looking for a group leader, a great position that still takes up 20 per cent of my time. My decision to apply for the MacGillavry Fellowship was kind of a coincidence. I wasn't looking for a new job, but the opportunity to run my own lab at the UvA, and combine it with my work in Germany, made it a great career move for me. The fact that this fellowship is meant for women

only held me back at first. I don't want to be recognised because I'm a woman. I want to be acknowledged for my work! On the other hand, we definitely need more women in science. Twenty years ago, I was already shocked by the fact that most faculty members at the university were white males. Unfortunately, little has changed two decades later. I see part of the problem as a difference in attitude between men and women. Men tend to say they know it all, while women tend to be more insecure. I recently asked a female PhD student of mine to present some of her work at a mini-symposium. Her first response was that she thought she didn't have enough to present yet. I recognised her insecurity, because I tend to underestimate myself as well. Of course she gave a presentation and did great. Both men and women should recognise this difference, especially at job interviews. I think such awareness can really cause a change.



dr. Tatjana Eisner

MacGillavry Fellow since 2010

at the Korteweg-de Vries Institute for Mathematics (KdVI)

‘In mathematics, a female scientist or professor is definitely the exception. I don’t see anything shocking about it.’



At the age of 21, I emigrated from the Ukraine to Germany. I already had a degree in mathematics and continued my studies in Germany. I come from a family of mathematicians: both my parents and my grandfather are mathematicians, although my parents switched to computer science. Mathematics has always been present in my life and it was natural for me to study it.

Since my PhD studies, I have been interested in functional analyses and dynamical systems, which are systems that depend on time. I work at the intersection of several research fields. It fascinates me that different areas, while using different language and methods, still have a lot in common and can interact with and enrich each other. After finishing my habilitation in Germany I was looking for a job and saw an announcement of the MacGillavry Fellowship. It looked really appealing, especially the tenure-track option and the great start-up conditions like reduced teaching

and, of course, I liked the idea of living in Amsterdam.

My current research focuses on the asymptotic behavior of dynamical systems, in which I try to answer the question of what happens with a system over a long period of time. This sounds a bit theoretical, so an example might help. Assume you pump gas into a room. How long should you wait until the gas fills the room? When will the system take on the state you wish? Will it return to this state later, and if so, when and how many times? In other words, one wants to predict the future of the system as accurately as possible. Another oversimplified example: You want to mix two liquids. How long will it take? How can you check whether the liquids are mixed well? These and similar questions are studied in the so-called ergodic theory, an area of mathematics which originally came from physics and has surprising connections to other areas. I plan to continue my

research and collaboration with other scientists/research groups and to build my own research group. So far, working at the University of Amsterdam has been a great experience for me. Apart from excellent research facilities, I am grateful to the KdV Institute for the friendly, inspiring atmosphere and cooperativeness, and would like to express special thanks to the director, Professor Jan Wiergerinck, for his engagement and support.

I find it great that the MacGillavry programme exists, and I’m grateful to be part of it. I do think that women should be supported. In my experience, it is harder for women to pursue an academic career, in large part due to moving from one place to another – often from one country to another – which is nowadays expected of a scientist. In mathematics, a female scientist or professor is definitely the exception. I personally have never felt discrimination, but people are still surprised when they

hear that I am a mathematician. I don’t see anything shocking about it. In Ukraine, the division between men and women is almost 50/50. I also had a great female thesis supervisor there. I was surprised to find out that in the Netherlands and Germany most mathematics departments have very few, or even no, women. I’m convinced that the atmosphere at the department is healthy and more harmonious if the faculty contains both men and women. And, of course, a role model is important for students, both male and female. It shows that there is nothing wrong with a woman being good at maths and encourages the girls to develop their talents. Even motivated women need support and in that sense the MacGillavry Fellowship is a great push.



dr. Yelena Budovskaya

MacGillavry Fellow since 2010
at the Swammerdam Institute for Life Sciences (SILS)

‘I wanted to be 100 per cent independent, set up my own goals and decide on what I wanted to focus on.’

After I finished my studies focusing on protein engineering at the National University in the Ukraine, I followed my husband to the US, where he was studying. I got a PhD there at Ohio State University, where we did a lot of crazy experiments on yeast. I got more and more interested in genomics and the process of aging. It's a natural process every living creature goes through, but we don't really know how it works. Why do we age? Is it simply an accumulation of damage or is it a genetic programme? My research is not finished yet, but it looks like aging is largely based on genetics. This is interesting, because for the last 25 years scientists have tended to see the aging process as only a matter of damage accumulation. After all, why would nature specifically select something bad in the gene structure, like the aging process?

Our hypothesis now is that nature doesn't really care. If you look at the different species in nature, they generally don't care

about their elderly. They don't benefit from having the elderly in their group. They don't have a function, except for humans and maybe some whale species.

My long-term goal is to explore the molecular basis for aging in worms, by first characterising the differences between young and old animals and then determining how these changes cause young lively animals to become old and frail. Worms are good to work with, because they have a relatively short life span and share 70 per cent of the human gene structure. They are also a great genetic tool, because we can manipulate them quite easily. I have to stress that I don't really care about extending life. For humans, I'm more interested in delaying the development of certain age-related diseases, like cancer and diabetes. I think it would be beneficial for everyone if we could delay or shorten people's illness from let's say 20 years to only two or three years. That would make it

a lot more bearable for patients and would be good for the health system too.

I was doing this research at Stanford, when I saw the MacGillavry Fellowship in Amsterdam. I decided to apply and see what happened. It was a great opportunity to start my own group and conduct my own research. I wanted to be 100 per cent independent, set up my own goals and decide on what I wanted to focus on. It would be great to expand my research from worms to mice and maybe even human trials. I want to set up a system where a new PhD student can be part of innovative therapeutics development. It would be great to see if by delaying the aging process, we can delay the process of age-related diseases. We're a young research department, but we have a lot of potential. Our approach to aging is still quite out-of-the-box and not highly recognised yet. If you think about it, seeing aging as damage accumulation is kind of a safety net. People

feel they can 'undo' certain damage by other actions, like drinking green tea for their anti-oxidants. Our theory in that sense is less popular. If our story of the genetic programme of aging holds up and gains more recognition, it might even mean a breakthrough in the genomics research field.





dr. Selma de Mink

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013
at the Astronomical Institute Anton Pannekoek

‘After years of competing with my male class mates to see who could finish their calculations first, I was bored and wanted to do something more substantial.’

When I was 7 years old, I was fascinated by space. I read books about it, had huge astronomy posters in my room and gave school presentations on planets and stars. During my teenage years, my passion for space diminished slightly, but it was reignited while studying physics and mathematics at university. After two years mainly spent doing maths and competing with my male class mates to see who could finish their calculations first, I was bored and wanted to do something more substantial. I started taking courses in Spanish and musicology, but astronomy also caught my attention. It seemed a more applied and tangible field of physics and my childhood passion was rekindled. I got a fellowship to do research on the Spanish island Tenerife, which was an amazing experience. Parts of the volcanic island resemble a moon-like landscape and for a space lover like me this was a dream research field.

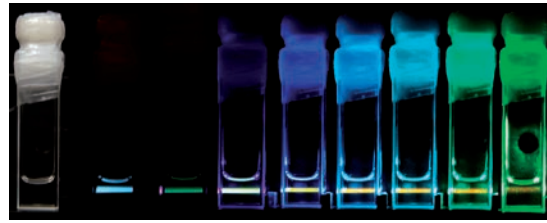
After a PhD in the Astrophysics department at Utrecht University, I got accepted as a Hubble Fellow at NASA's Space Science Telescope Institute and the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. This was a pretty big deal, something I didn't actually realise until I got introduced at the Institute as "our brilliant new Hubble Fellow". I know it's a cultural difference, but this introduction made me feel very self-conscious. Dutch people in general are not used to presenting themselves in that way. I also felt stressed that I may not be able to live up to the expectations. It worked out very well in the end. I got multiple job offers and my research got a lot of attention. Unintentionally, I became an expert on the topic of massive double stars. My main area of expertise is in computational modelling of the evolution of massive stars and, in particular, those that interact with a nearby companion star. My work is primarily theoretical, but I'm also closely involved in observing programmes with international

research institutes. This is great, because this way I can work with talented researchers around the globe. Since massive double stars are a fairly unknown research field, even within astronomy, I often have to explain their significance to fellow researchers. That's not a problem for me. I never tire of talking about it!

When it comes to space research, the top-notch institutes are definitely based in the US. However, the chance to build my own research group at the UvA made me want to apply for the MacGillavry Fellowship. I also see it as a great opportunity to set an example for other female students in the Netherlands pursuing a career in astronomy. In the US, the topic of women in science is a lot more open. It's not seen as positive discrimination, but simply beneficial for science to have as much diversity as possible. I think this makes sense, since different perspectives lead to more interesting results. Personally, I like to

break through certain stereotypes. I used to be more of a tomboy, but now I deliberately wear dresses to conferences or lectures, just to show I can be a woman and a good scientist at the same time.





dr. Katerina Dohnalová

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013
at the Institute of Physics (IoP)

'I'm glad that there's an opportunity like the MacGillavry Fellowship, but I also do feel that such a female-oriented position shouldn't have to exist in modern society.'

Growing up in Prague, my childhood was never boring. Both of my parents are scientists with backgrounds in the arts and mathematics. In their spare time, they like to play music, paint and organise fun events. In this environment I was always encouraged to do the same. I went to an art-oriented secondary school with the plan to become an artist or architect. Later, however, I became attracted to physics and decided to go to Charles University in Prague to attain my Master's degree. I was planning to become a theoretical cosmologist, but I finished my studies as an experimentalist instead, researching quantum optics and opto-electronics. My PhD project proposal was on the development of a silicon laser, a crazy and very attractive project that gained me a French government scholarship for double PhDs at both French and Czech universities. After that, I went back to the Academy of Sciences in Prague, where I obtained funding to lead a small group of researchers

on a project investigating diamond photonic crystals with incorporated silicon nanostructures. During this period I met Professor Tom Gregorkiewicz from the UvA, who invited me to join his group.

Professor Gregorkiewicz was looking for someone with long-term experience of working with silicon nanocrystals and managed to convince me that working some time in The Netherlands would be beneficial for both of us. This was a tough decision for me, since Czech people are typically not willing to travel abroad at all! I expected to be returning home after a year, but our research was successful beyond expectations. We managed to publish some great articles in the scientific journal *Nature* and I was offered an extension of my contract. Currently, I'm finishing up several projects related to light emitting and absorbing semiconductors and their nanostructures. The main focus is in photovoltaic applications. I am assistant

professor in the group of Professor Gregorkiewicz and I'm working on defining my own independent research line.

I'm glad that there's an opportunity like the MacGillavry Fellowship, especially in current times when attaining a tenure track position in academia is a challenge. However, I do feel that such a female-oriented position shouldn't have to exist in modern society. If the intention is to attract more women to academia, then resources could be better spent on allowing women to combine family life and research. By offering accessible on-site childcare and re-entry funding grants, women would be able to rebuild their networks after maternity leave and restart their research work. Personally, I think that creativity, imagination and problem-solving skills need to be stimulated from very early childhood, and parents who are scientists need to spend time with their children. I speak from experience, since I was one

such lucky child with scientists for parents and a mother who decided to bring me up herself. I'm eternally grateful for that, because she could certainly offer something that women who aren't scientists couldn't have, even if that was nothing more than instilling an inquisitive approach to life. Why should we deprive the next generation of this valuable experience?





dr. Ana Lucia Varbanescu

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013
at the Informatics Institute (IVI)

'In 2012, I received a VENI grant from STW and could go to whichever university I wanted. I chose the UvA because of the enthusiasm of the people that invited me.'

I was 12 years old when I got my first computer, a horrible machine. It constantly broke down, but I loved using it nonetheless. I always liked applied science, to do things and see them happening. I used to like mathematics, too, but I now find it dry. It's always been my dream to work in a university, maybe because my father was a professor too. I'm from Romania and I studied Computer Science and Engineering at the Politehnica University of Bucharest. After my studies, I decided to stay in the same university to teach, because I wanted to change the world. Yes, that's quite a big goal to set yourself. In Romania, many talented people leave the country after they graduate to search for a better life. There are very few who stay and try to help develop the country. I wanted to make a difference, but I felt I needed to become much better professionally before I could make a real impact. I tried doing a PhD, but that was not a paid job in Romania and I had too many things on my plate. After two very

difficult years I decided to apply for a PhD abroad and got accepted at the TU Delft.

My PhD was about parallel programming: trying to improve performance of applications using parallel processors. When I started in 2004, this was still a bit of a niche field of research. That quickly changed. Within two years, everyone started working on building and programming parallel processors. I was in the middle of a very hot topic. I think I'm one of the few young people in Dutch academia with a lot of experience in this highly specialised field. I was lucky in that sense. I wouldn't dare to say I'm the expert in the Netherlands or in Europe, but with the current department at UvA, we're definitely competitive in this field. In 2012, I received a VENI grant from STW and could go to whichever university I wanted. I chose the UvA because of the enthusiasm of the people that invited me. Moreover, the MacGillavry Fellowship was a great opportunity. I'm happy this

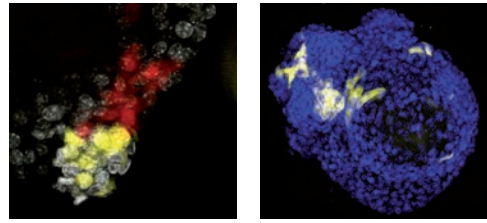
opportunity exists, but the risk of having people think you're in a certain position only because you're a woman is increased. There's definitely a lack of women in computer science, so in that sense we can use an extra stimulant. Personally, I've never felt discriminated for being a woman, although the first question you get after receiving a grant is always: "So, are you going to spend it all on shoes?" In the US, this is a very sensitive topic, but here we can laugh about it. I know what I'm good at, so it doesn't make me insecure.

I'm all for diversity, because I think it leads to better ideas. In my experience – within computer science – one big difference between men and women is the fact that men are more outspoken, more competitive, and want to be first. It rarely happens that a woman is the first to raise her hand in a lecture. I guess we first want to make sure we have thought things through. Eastern European and Asian women are a lot better

represented in computer science than Western Europeans. I've personally never met a Dutch woman working in computer science. I think in Eastern Europe it's often a strategic decision, because this is where the money is.

At the moment Romania is not doing very well. The economy, infrastructure and the welfare system need major changes. There is a lot of corruption at all levels. I think the country has to do a lot of soul searching before it can be welcoming for all the Romanians that left. I would love to go back one day, probably in academia, and enjoy teaching in my own language, but I don't feel computer science is a priority there right now.





dr. Renée van Amerongen

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013
at the Swammerdam Institute for Life Sciences (SILS)

‘It’s just so satisfying to work on something that’s relevant, interesting and beautiful at the same time.’

Even as a young child, I was fascinated by science. I tried to read every book in the library, just because I wanted to know how things worked and why they work the way they do. In secondary school I wanted to study medicine, but unfortunately, in spite of getting straight A’s, I didn’t make the cut. This was a blessing in disguise, because I probably wouldn’t have had great bedside manners! One of my secondary school teachers suggested medical biology and it turned out to be the perfect match. After my studies at the VU University Amsterdam and a PhD at the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI), I obtained a postdoc position at Stanford University. During this postdoc, I became more and more interested in developmental and stem cell biology. While looking for an independent position to continue my research, I applied to universities all around the world. It’s actually a coincidence I ended up here at the UvA in the Netherlands, my home country. The fact that the MacGillavry



Fellowship allows me to set up my own lab and research team makes this a great opportunity.

It’s just so satisfying to work on something that’s relevant, interesting and beautiful at the same time. I don’t mind spending my evenings or weekend on my research, because I genuinely enjoy it and this goes for my colleagues too. The last couple of years I’ve been focusing on cell behaviour in the mammary gland, which is the tissue where breast cancer arises. With the amazing genetic techniques that are now available to us, we can distinguish specific cells in complex tissues by giving them different colours. The result is a kind of stop motion animation with all these bright, beautiful colours. If, at the end of such an experiment, my students are disappointed by a lack of results, I always tell them: “at least you had something beautiful to look at.” In a couple of years, I would like to have established a name for myself as

someone who does good and important science. I personally feel that my research is making a significant contribution to the UvA. The fact that the University recognises the importance of my work is a huge compliment.

At first, I was a bit hesitant about applying for a fellowship specifically aimed at women. I want to be recognised for my good work, not because I’m a woman. However, if you look at the facts, it’s hard for women to reach the higher levels in the scientific world. Most admission and selection committees predominately consist of older men, which makes it hard for women to get certain positions. I feel it would be good for science if there was more diversity, not only in terms of gender, but also in types of scientists. For example, I am not only passionate about my research, but I also love acting. I’m not only a woman staring at her microscope all day, I actually go out and do things as well!



dr. Miranda Cheng

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013

at the Institute of Physics (IoP) and the Korteweg-de Vries Institute for Mathematics (KdVI)

‘There was something so elegant and revolutionary about quantum mechanics and Einstein’s relativity theory. It completely changed my perspective on the world in general.’



For many of my colleagues, working in physics has always been their dream. Not for me though. When I was young I wanted to be a lot of things, but not a scientist. Growing up in Taiwan, I was very passionate about music and played in a band. That was more interesting to me than school. I did like mathematics and I was good at it, but never thought I would make a career out of it. Even when I decided to study physics, I was bored with most courses until I learned about quantum mechanics and Einstein’s relativity theory. There was something so elegant and revolutionary about it. For me, it completely changed my perspective on physics and even the world in general. So I was very excited when I had the opportunity to write my Master’s thesis with Professor Gerard ’t Hooft from Utrecht University exploring the quantum gravity of black holes. Afterwards, I went on to do my PhD at the UvA with Professor Erik Verlinde, which was then followed by a position as a

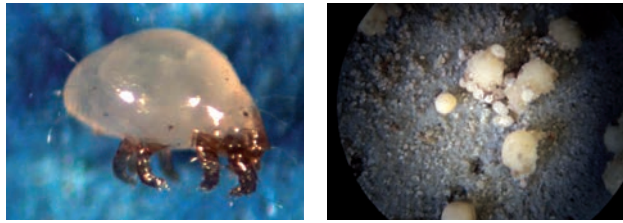
postdoctoral researcher at Harvard University in the United States.

During my PhD, I started to focus on string theory, a small but significant field of research within theoretical physics. Scientists have been looking for a way to combine quantum mechanics and relativity theory for decades, but it has been difficult. String theory provides a framework in which the two concepts can be naturally combined together, although there is still a lot about the theory that we do not understand. In the past two years, I have been working at the mathematics institute of Jussieu in Paris as a permanent researcher of the CNRS, the French national centre for scientific research. I recently focused on a relation between certain different structures in mathematics, also known as ‘Moonshine’. This name comes from the fact that people thought it was ‘moonshine’ to combine these structures, a slang word for crazy ideas. I basically study string theory here in

research projects that are useful to the French government. The position in France is wonderful, but when I came across the opportunity to work at UvA again, it was hard to resist. The CNRS generously agreed to a 4-year leave for me to take up the MacGillavry Fellowship.

When it comes to the necessity of a fellowship aimed specifically at women, I look at it from different perspectives. Politically, I think it’s a good thing. We need more women in science and it takes actions to change certain paradigms. The lack of role models is one of the main reasons for the scarcity of women in the natural sciences, so we need a push. Theoretically however, it’s quite debatable. If men and women are equal, why should we need to develop certain privileges for one or the other? But we don’t live in a theoretical world and obviously we need programmes like this. Lastly, on a personal level, I’m simply very happy with this opportunity.

In the past, I’ve definitely felt insecure about being a female scientist. I remember that a visitor came to my department at Harvard and thought I was the secretary. Or when a colleague commented on my talk at a conference insinuating that “I was probably there to meet the female quota”. Fortunately I’m becoming more confident and can take a different attitude. Let them say what they want to say. I know I’m a good scientist and will be an even better one in the future.



dr. Isabel Smallegange

MacGillavry Fellow since 2013

at the Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics (IBED)

‘There are two types male mites: benign scramblers or competitive fighters that can kill other males. How these two types can co-exist fascinates me.’

I’ve always been fascinated by animal behaviour. When I was walking the dog as a child, all the different bird species in the park intrigued me. I never thought that I could make a living out of studying animals, so after secondary school I decided to study forestry. I eventually switched to biology, because I figured that’s where my true passion lies. After finishing my PhD on the Dutch island of Texel, where I studied the foraging behaviour of shore crabs, I received a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation to continue my research at the Max Planck Institute for Ornithology in Germany. During this period I focused on how changes in our climate affect the abundance of songbirds in Central Europe. Although I found this research very interesting, I was mostly doing deskwork instead of conducting experiments and observations on animals. That’s why I decided to move to Imperial College London and, with the help of a

Rubicon Fellowship from the NWO, I set up a laboratory to use mites as a model system to study population dynamics and the evolution of male dimorphism.

This lab later moved to the University of Oxford, where I continued my research. My focus in this lab was – and still is – on finding out how the environment affects the dynamics of animal populations, their demography and the behaviour of individuals. I continue to use mites as a model system because they are highly suited for this kind of work: populations consisting of many individuals are easy to keep in the lab and their generations shift rapidly. One fascinating aspect of a particular mite species that I study is the fact that males of this species are one of two types: benign scramblers or competitive fighters that can kill other males. How these two types can co-exist fascinates me. The only downside of using mites is the fact that you cannot track individuals within a population. After

all, you can’t ring a mite! In my future research, I am going to study how both ecological and evolutionary change within populations occurs together. The fields of ecology and evolution have been separated for a long time, but more and more studies prove the two are actually interlinked. Take a bird population for example, where both the size of the population and the mean size of the birds’ beaks change over a similar time scale. You cannot really study one aspect without taking the other one into account.

Obviously, working at Imperial College, as well as Oxford, was a great experience for me. However, when the opportunity to continue my work at UvA arose, I couldn’t decline. Not only is the UvA a great university with high-end lab facilities, it’s also better suited as a working environment for a young mother like me. In contrast with the UK, it is easier to combine a working life with a family here in the

Netherlands. Working part-time is simply not an option in the UK, which is possibly the reason why there are even fewer women at more senior levels in academia than here. The great thing about the MacGillavry Fellowship is the fact that they take your family into account too. For example, my partner is British and he was offered a Dutch language course. I think benefits like this make the Fellowship an appealing option for women looking to pursue their career and have a rewarding family life at the same time. If I can be a role model for female students, that would be great. I would like them to see me and think: ‘If she can do it, maybe I can do it as well’.





Colophon

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