

### **Experiments on migratory birds**

At the University of Oldenburg, Germany, the junior research group Mouritsen et al examined the navigation of night-migratory songbirds. They investigated the bird's ability to use the earth's magnetic field and the night-time starry sky for navigation. The group was sponsored by the Volkswagen Stiftung.

*The Doctors Against Animal Experiments, Germany*, reject this kind of research on ethical and scientific grounds.

The experiments are cruel. Wild-caught garden warblers and European robins were kept in cages to observe their migratory behaviour. European robins were even fitted with light-tight eye caps which were glued to their head. Apart from the wild-caught birds also zebra finches and canaries were used. All birds were killed after the investigation. It is obvious that wild-caught birds suffer immensely in captivity. Handling by humans, keeping in a Plexiglas cage for hours, attaching eye caps to their head – all this is extremely stressful for birds in general, but for wild-caught birds in particular. The horrific suffering of these unfortunate birds can only be imagined. This kind of research is ethically not justified.

Mouritsen et al propose further experiments with electrophysiological recordings. This would involve even more suffering. Because of the expected suffering of the birds any further experiments must not be authorized.

b) The published research results do not provide any benefit for humans. Investigations on the molecular basis of the magnetic-field-receptors in the bird's retina or on the brain structures involved in navigation are not needed for any purpose. The experiments in question are purely curiosity driven research. These investigations are not even beneficial for other birds. Ecological research can be done non-invasively and without harming animals.

*The Doctors Against Animal Experiments, Germany*, are particularly concerned that these cruel and useless experiments were supported by the Volkswagen Foundation, one of the most renowned foundations in Germany which supports good causes in cultural, social and scientific fields. A further concern is the fact that the Vogelwarte Helgoland was involved in both papers in question, by helping catching the birds. This institution, situated on the little island of Helgoland in the Northsea is dedicated to ornithological research. By catching birds for lethal experiments, it violates its own purpose, the understanding of the multifaceted relationships between birds and their environment.

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