



AFRL-AFOSR-UK-TR-2019-0019

Optics and information processes of horsefly polarization vision that underlie visual searching

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04/15/2019
Final Report

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE					Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 15-04-2019		2. REPORT TYPE Final		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) 15 Dec 2014 to 14 Jan 2019		
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Optics and information processes of horsefly polarization vision that underlie visual searching				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
				5b. GRANT NUMBER FA9550-15-1-0068		
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 61102F		
6. AUTHOR(S) Doekele Stavenga				5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
				5e. TASK NUMBER		
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) RIJKSUNIVERSITEIT GRONINGEN BROERSTRAAT 5 GRONINGEN, 9712 CP NL				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) EOARD Unit 4515 APO AE 09421-4515				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S) AFRL/AFOSR IOE		
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S) AFRL-AFOSR-UK-TR-2019-0019		
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT A DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED; PB Public Release						
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES						
14. ABSTRACT The collaborative efforts have greatly expanded our knowledge and understanding of polarization vision, specifically concerning the architecture of the compound eye of horseflies. The photoreceptor anatomy and spectral characteristics of the Ljubljana work-horse fly <i>Tabanus bromius</i> are now unravelled into exquisite detail. The study of the higher order processing in the neural network will be the challenge of the coming years. And how this results in the polarization-dependent behavior will be the next level. Present hypotheses concerning the involvement of the central photoreceptors in specific eye areas can now be well tested. Two further themes of high interest are understanding when polarization provides an information benefit for task specific behaviours and whether or not polarization vision in different arthropods follows the same rules. This last topic will be intensely pursued in the new grant, provided to the same team joined by the Wernet-group in Berlin.						
15. SUBJECT TERMS EOARD, polarization vision						
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON	
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			IYER, NANDINI	
Unclassified	Unclassified	Unclassified	SAR		19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code) 44 1895 616161	

**[FA9550-15-1-0068] – Optics and information processes of horsefly polarization vision
that underlie visual searching**

**Final Performance Report
15 December 2014 - 14 December 2018)**

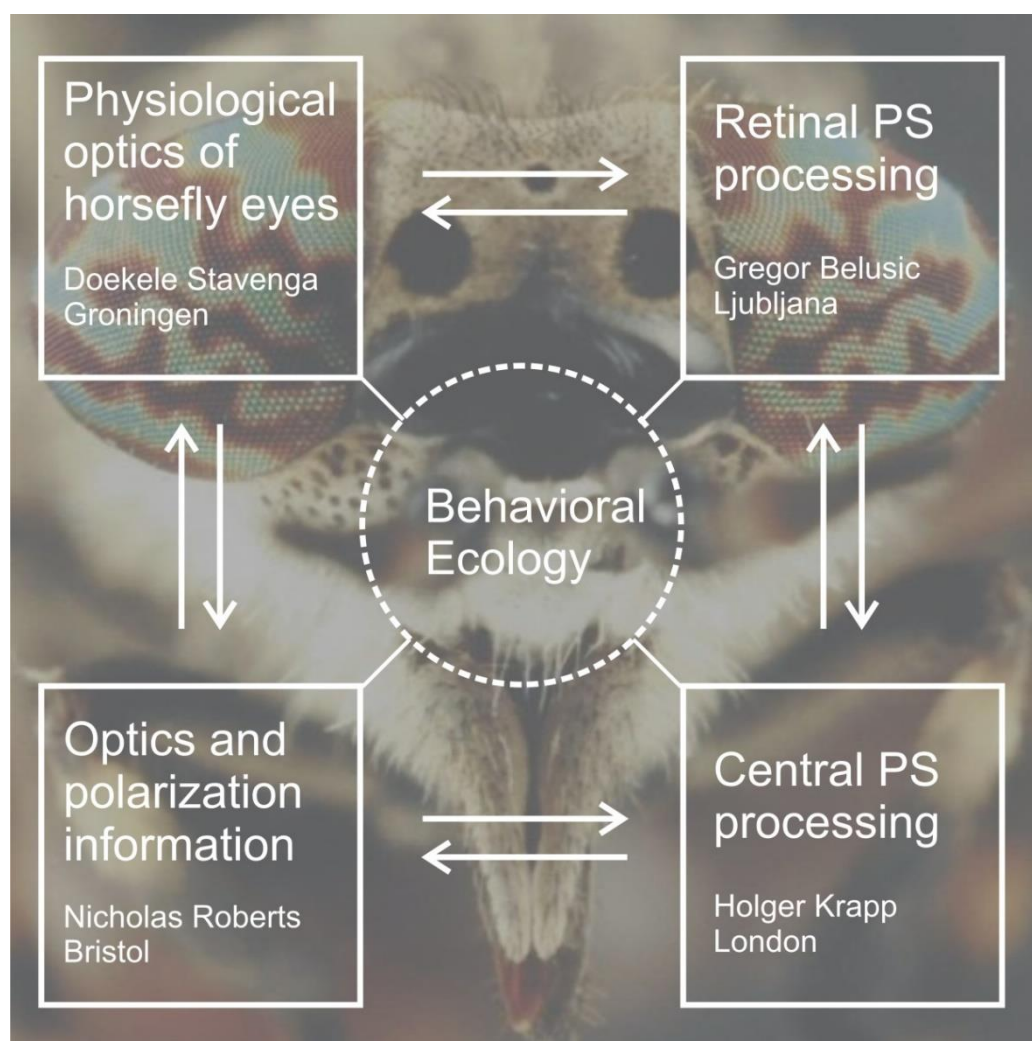
Participants:

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Dr Holger G. Krapp, Dept Bioengineering, Imperial College, London, UK

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Dr Doekele G. Stavenga, Computational Physics, Groningen University, the
Netherlands (coordinator)



Historical background and scientific questions

The central theme of the grant project has been polarization vision. Generally, vision is a crucial sensory modality of most animals. Research of the last century has yielded a profound insight into motion vision, colour vision and pattern recognition. However, polarization vision, possessed by many arthropods, has been studied much less extensively, presumably due to human bias, as polarization vision is absent, or at least poor, in vertebrates.

Behavioral and electrophysiological work in ants, crickets, butterflies and locusts suggested that these animals use celestial cues for navigation. Polarization detection capabilities located in the so-called dorsal rim area of the compound eyes of insects have been documented in several insect species, and butterflies have been shown to possess well-developed polarization vision in non-dorsal eye areas, presumably for egg deposition on leaves and interspecific recognition. Polarization vision is also well-developed in marine arthropods, including stomatopods and decapods. These animals use the polarization of light for numerous tasks such as intraspecific signalling and visual contrast enhancement.

Amongst flying insects, horseflies present a special case. Female horseflies are severe pests, because they prey on horses and cattle by biting and sucking blood, thus obtaining the essential food supply for producing eggs. As sunlight is reflected from the coats of the animals at oblique directions it becomes polarized and this has been proposed to act as a visual cue for the flies. In the grant project, we have chosen to investigate horsefly polarization vision on multiple levels of the visual system, from the first level of compound eye optics, to its anatomy, the spectral and polarization properties of the photoreceptors, polarization sensitive neurons, and the behavior towards various polarized light stimuli. Our efforts concern the following aims, themes, and collaborative initiatives.

General aims of the program

1. What are the stimulus parameters related to polarized light that horseflies exploit for target (cattle, water) detection and approach?
2. What are the structural adaptations in the compound eyes enabling behavior based on polarization vision?
3. What are the neuronal adaptations supporting the integration of signals induced by polarized light?
4. At which neural stage are signals mediated by the polarization vision and motion vision pathways integrated to enable coherent guidance and control signals?

Specific themes within the main objectives were:

- Ecology of vision: exploitation of polarization vision for target detection.
- The enigmatic interference reflectors of the corneal facet lenses.
- The spectral and polarization sensitivities of the retinal photoreceptors.
- Structural adaptations in the compound-eye visual system mediating polarization vision.
- The coding of visual information by the higher neural ganglia, specifically concerning motion and polarization detection.
- Behavioral integration of outer-loop (navigation/guidance) polarized light information with inner-loop (control) motion vision information.
- Neuronal integration of outer-loop (navigation and guidance) polarized light signals with inner loop-(control) motion vision signals.

Overview of activities

Each of the participating teams performed experiments in its laboratories as well as in the field when appropriate. In addition to frequent contact via email, phone and skype, we had yearly review meetings, where we visited the labs to get intimate knowledge of the ongoing research, and we discussed our scientific progress, with each of the participating groups presenting their work in detailed lectures. Our key person, Ric Wehling (Eglin AFB), always added his guiding views in a presentation. Next to the scientific sessions, we had a field day where we continued discussions and exchanged emerging ideas.

We convened in London (December 2015), Ljubljana (June 2016), Groningen (May 2017), Bristol (May 2018). The meetings were also well attended by the program officers of the EOARD (i.e. Greg Abate, Lee Poepelmann, Jason Foley, Nandini Iyer). Several members of the AFOSR Eglin AFB also intensely participated (e.g. Nick Rummelt, Jennifer Talley, John Douglass).

In June 2017, Ric Wehling and John Douglass, stayed in the Ljubljana lab, collaborating in experiments, followed in August 2017 by four researchers from the Bristol and London labs. The Bristol group performed behavioral experiments, and together with the London duo, lobula plate tangential cells were recorded.

The scientific achievements have been reported in quarterly reports (QRs; 14 in total) and in yearly reports. The highlights are summarized below (for details, see the QRs).

Technical developments enabling novel research

During the past research period, we developed a number of new, mainly optical systems and methods.

- Imaging polarimetry systems, for visualizing and analyzing polarization signals, were developed in Ljubljana and Bristol (QR9, QR10).
- The LED 'organ', a spectral device enabling extremely rapid measurements of the spectral sensitivity as well as polarization sensitivity of photoreceptors was conceived, built and perfected in Ljubljana. This device, consisting of an array of leds focused via a grating at an optical fiber, thus delivers a set of narrow-band stimuli. It is becoming a 'must-have' for many labs working on visual sensory systems (QR6).
- A simple automated and portable method for calibrating polarization monitors was developed in Bristol (QR8).
- High speed DLP-systems suitable for polarization pattern stimuli were developed and applied in the London, Bristol and Ljubljana labs, where the London system enables the electrophysiological characterization of neurons for both intensity- and polarization-contrast sensitivities across the entire compound eye (QR4, QR6, QR8, QR11, QR14).
- A versatile goniometric apparatus combined with a so-called telemicroscopic imaging system in the Groningen lab has recently reached the state of perfection for rapid mapping of the spatial distribution of the ommatidial axes of insect eyes (QR14).

Scientific results and achievements

The colorful cornea of horsefly eyes

The long-standing enigma of the colored facatlenses of horseflies has, to our annoyance, not yet been fully resolved. The optical basis of the phenomenon is the same as in dolichopodids, which have eyes with brightly reflecting, colorful facets. In the latter case, we could demonstrate (and report in a scientific paper) that the facets act as optical filters, although with moderate effect. Studies on horsefly eye facets showed that the facet coloration also is due to optical multilayer effects, but the spectral filtering function is so minor that the importance for polarization vision seems unlikely. The prominent facet coloration, which is very characteristic for the different horsefly species, clearly needs further study.

The horsefly retina

The study of the anatomy of the compound eyes of the horsefly *Tabanus bromius* offered many

surprises. Compared to other dipteran species, the compound eyes are full of air. Presumably the function is twofold, namely supplying ample oxygen serving the high energy demand of the photoreceptors and creating a large, lightweight eye that has high spatial resolution.

The organization of the microvilli in the rhabdomeres appeared to crucially differ between the various types of photoreceptor cells. This important finding allowed the interpretation of the measured polarization characteristics of the photoreceptors. The processing of spectral and polarization signals by the central photoreceptors R7 and R8 is now understood. The anatomy of the male and female horseflies is highly sex-specific (QR5, QR7, QR8, QR9, QR10, QR12, QR13; Ljubljana lab). The eye anatomy was also investigated by synchrotron X-ray microtomography (Bristol lab).

The role of the screening pigments for the photochemistry of the visual pigments of fly eyes was elucidated in a comparative analysis of dipteran rhodopsins (QR6, QR10, QR14; collaboration Groningen, Ljubljana.)

Recordings of neurons in the horsefly visual system

Lobula plate neurons in eyes subjected to polarized light stimuli, supplied by gratings and moving patterns, were recorded and characterized in a number of different fly species. The highly tasking studies, including electrophysiological recordings from neurons in tethered animals and behavioral experiments on gaze stabilization in animals with or without halteres, demonstrated the distinctly species-dependent properties of visuomotor control systems. Successful recordings of horsefly neurons can now be routinely made, which is an essential achievement for advancing our understanding of polarization signal processing (QR7, QR10, QR11, QR12; London and Ljubljana labs).

Behavioral experiments

Horseflies are attracted by polarized visual signals. This has been extensively investigated in field studies. Horseflies appear to become very excited by polarized blues (QR7, QR10; Ljubljana lab). Studies of flying flies performing a landing response to polarization or only looming stimuli demonstrated pronounced dependencies on intensity contrast. The role of polarization in gaze stabilization was tested in the horsefly *Haematopota fluvialis*, showing strong motion dependent responses.

The role of noise in polarization artefacts has been extensively studied, proving the incorrect assumption of black objects being intrinsically more polarized even though they may

appear so to an observer. A new de-noising algorithm has also been developed for visualizing the correct polarization information in a visual scene (QR8, QR10, QR12; Bristol lab).

Summary, outlook and perspectives

Our collaborative efforts have greatly expanded our knowledge and understanding of polarization vision, specifically concerning the architecture of the compound eye of horseflies. The photoreceptor anatomy and spectral characteristics of the Ljubljana work-horse fly *Tabanus bromius* are now unravelled into exquisite detail. The study of the higher order processing in the neural network will be the challenge of the coming years. And how this results in the polarization-dependent behavior will be the next level. Present hypotheses concerning the involvement of the central photoreceptors in specific eye areas can now be well tested. Two further themes of high interest are understanding when polarization provides an information benefit for task specific behaviours and whether or not polarization vision in different arthropods follows the same rules. This last topic will be intensely pursued in the new grant, provided to the same team joined by the Wernet-group in Berlin.

Publications (since 2015)

London group

Papers in peer-reviewed journals

Yue X., Huang J.V., Krapp H.G., Drakakis E.M.: An implantable mixed-signal CMOS die for battery-powered in vivo blowfly neural recordings. *Microelectronics Journal* 74, 34-42, (2018).

Longden K.D. Wicklein M., Hardcastle B.J., Huston S.J. and Krapp H.G.: Spike interval coding of translatory optic flow and depth from motion in the fly visual system. *Current Biology* 27(21), 3225-3236.e3 (2017).

Swart P., Wicklein M., Sykes D., Ahmed F., and Krapp H.G.: A quantitative comparison of micro-CT presentations in Dipteran flies. *Scientific Reports* 6: 39380, doi: 10.1038/srep39380 (2016).

Hardcastle B.J. and Krapp H.G.: Evolution of gaze stabilization. *Current Biology* 26(20), R1010-1021 (2016).

Krapp H.G.: How a fly escapes the reflex trap. *Nat Neuroscience* 18:1192-1194 (2015)

Mokso R., Schwyn D.A., Walker S.M., Doube M., Wicklein M., Müller T., Stampanoni M.,

Taylor G.K., Krapp H.G.: Four-dimensional in vivo X-ray microscopy with projection-guided gating. *Scientific Reports* 5, doi: 10.1038/srep08727, (2015).

Peer-reviewed conference publications

Huang J.V., Wei Y., and Krapp H.G.: Active collision free closed-loop control of a biohybrid fly-robot interface. In: Biomimetic and Biohybrid Systems, *Living Machines*, Springer, pp. 213-222 (2018).

Huang J.V. Krapp H.G.: Neuronal distance estimation by a fly-robotic interface. In: Biomimetic and Biohybrid Systems, *Living Machines*, Springer, pp. 204-215 (2017).

Huang J.V., Wang Y., and Krapp H.G.: Wall-following in a semi-closed-loop fly-robotic interface. In: Biomimetic and Biohybrid Systems, *Living Machines* 2016, Lecture Notes in Computer Science, vol 9793. Springer, pp. 85-96 (2016).

Huang J.V. and Krapp H.G.: Closed-loop control in an autonomous bio-hybrid robot system based on binocular neuronal input. In: Biomimetic and Biohybrid Systems, *Living Machines* 2015, Springer, ISBN: 978-3-319-22978-2 (Print) 978-3-319-22979-9 (Online), pp. 164-174 (2015).

Book chapter

Krapp H.G.: Optic flow processing. In: Encyclopedia of Computational Neuroscience. Jaeger D. and Jung R (eds.), Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg, DOI. 10.1007/978-1-4614-7320-6_332-1 (2015).

Manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed Journals

Varennnes, L. P., Krapp, H.G. and Viollet, S.: A novel setup for 3D chasing behavior analysis in free flying flies. *Journal of Neuroscience Methods* (under review).

Huang, J.V., Wei, Y. and Krapp H.G.: Biohybrid Fly-Robot Interface system performs active collision avoidance in corners. *Journal of Bioinspirations and Biomimetics*, Special issue on 'Active Perception and Bioinspired Sensing' (under review).

Ljubljana group

Papers in peer-reviewed journals

Ilić M., Meglič A., Kreft M., Belušič G.: The fly sensitizing pigment enhances UV spectral sensitivity while preventing polarization-induced artifacts. *Frontiers in Cellular Neuroscience*, 12, 34 (2018).

Belušič G., Šporar K., Meglič A.: Extreme polarisation sensitivity in the retina of the corn borer moth *Ostrinia*. *Journal of Experimental Biology* 220, 2047-2056 (2017).

Belušič G., Ilić M., Meglič A., Pirih, P.: A fast multispectral light synthesiser based on LEDs and a diffraction grating. *Scientific Reports* 6, 32012 (2016).

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Chen P-J., Belušič G., Matsushita A., Arikawa K.: Examination of the histamine hypothesis for a mechanism underlying photoreceptor spectral opponency in the *Papilio* butterfly. In: ICN 2018: conference abstracts, International Congress of Neuroethology, 15-20 July 2018, Brisbane., p. 20.

Belušič G., Meglič A., Ilić M.: Spectral tuning of polarization vision in the retina of female horseflies. In: Phototransduction, UK Workshop 2016, Firth Hall, 31st August - 2nd September 2016, p. 25.

Pirih P., Ilić M., Meglič A., Arikawa K., Belušič G.: A fast multispectral light synthesiser based on LEDs and a diffraction grating. In: Phototransduction, UK Workshop 2016, Firth Hall, 31st August - 2nd September 2016, pp. 53-54.

Belušič G., Ilić M., Horvat K., Pirih P.: LED-based tunable light source for visual electrophysiology. *Documenta ophthalmologica*, ISSN 0012-4486, 2015, vol. 130, suppl. 1, p. 31.

Invited lecture at a conference

Belušič G., Ilić M., Wehling M.F., Pirih P., Kreft M., Meglič A.: Horsefly polarotaxis is mediated by a segregated ommatidial subtype with spectrally imbalanced photoreceptors, leading to colour-induced polarization artifacts. In: ICN 2018: conference abstracts, International Congress of Neuroethology, 15-20 July 2018, Brisbane, p. 20. <http://www.icn2018.com/downloads/ICN2018-Abstract-Book.pdf>.

Manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed journals:

Šporar K., Ketkar D.M., Gür B., Ramos-Traslosheros G., Seifert M., Santiago I.J., Ilić M., Belušič G., Pecot M.Y., Silies M.: A luminance sensitive pathway in *Drosophila* facilitates motion detection in low light conditions. *Cell* (under review)

Groningen group

Papers in peer-reviewed journals

Kooi CJ van der, Dyer AG, Stavenga DG (2015) Is floral iridescence a biologically relevant cue in plant-pollinator signaling? *New Phytol* 201:18-20

Stavenga DG, Leertouwer HL, Osorio DC, Wilts BD (2015) High refractive index of melanin in shiny occipital feathers of a bird of paradise. *Light Sci Appl* 4, e243

Balmakou A, Podalov M, Khakhomov S, Stavenga D, Semchenko I (2015) Ground-plane-less bidirectional terahertz absorber based on omega resonators. *Optics Lett* 40:2084-2087

Stavenga DG, Matsushita A, Arikawa K (2015) Combined pigmentary and structural effects tune wing scale coloration to color vision in the swallowtail butterfly *Papilio xuthus*. *Zool Lett* 1:14

Wilts BD, Matsushita A, Arikawa K, Stavenga DG (2015). Spectrally tuned structural and pigmentary coloration of birdwing butterfly wing scales. *J Roy Soc Interface* 111:20150717.

Kooi CJ van der, Pen I, Staal M, Stavenga DG, Elzenga JTM (2016) Competition for pollinators and intra-communal spectral dissimilarity of flowers. *Plant Biol* 18:56-62

Stavenga DG, van der Kooi CJ (2016) Coloration of the Chilean Bellflower, *Nolana paradoxa*, interpreted with a scattering and absorbing layer stack model. *Planta* 243: 171-181

Giraldo MA, Stavenga DG (2016) Brilliant iridescence of *Morpho* butterfly wing scales is due to both a thin film lower lamina and a multilayered upper lamina. *J Comp Physiol A* 202:381-388

Kooi CJ van der, Elzenga JTM, Staal M, Stavenga DG (2016) How to colour a flower: on the optical principles of flower coloration. *Proc R Soc B* 283:20160429.

Stavenga, DG, Otto JC, Wilts, BD (2016). Splendid coloration of the peacock spider *Maratus splendens*. *J Roy Soc Interface* 13:20160437.

Wilts, BD, Giraldo MA, Stavenga, DG (2016). Unique wing scale photonics of male Rajah Brooke's birdwing butterflies. *Front Zool* 13:36

Giraldo MA, Yoshioka S, Liu C, Stavenga DG (2016). Coloration mechanisms and phylogeny of *Morpho* butterflies. *J Exp Biol* 219:3936-3944

Wardill TJ, Fabian AT, Pettigrew AC, Stavenga DG, Nordström K, Gonzalez-Bellido PT (2017) A novel interception strategy in a miniature robber fly with extreme visual acuity. *Current Biol* 27:854-859

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Kooi CJ van der, Elzenga JTM, Dijksterhuis J, Stavenga DG (2017) Functional optics of glossy buttercup flowers. *J Roy Soc Interface* 14:20160933.

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Wilts, BD, Vey AJ, Briscoe AD, Stavenga DG (2017). Longwing (*Heliconius*) butterflies combine a restricted set of pigmentary and structural coloration mechanisms. *BMC Evol Biol* 17: 226.

Hsiung B-K, Siddique RH, Stavenga DG, Otto JC, Allen MC, Liu Y, Lu Y-F, Deheyn DD, Shawkey MD, Blackledge TA (2017) Rainbow peacock spiders inspire miniature superiridescent optics. *Nature Communications* 8: 2278

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Freyer P, Wilts BD, Stavenga DG (2018). Reflections on iridescent neck and breast feathers of the peacock, *Pavo cristatus*. *J Roy Soc Interface Focus*, 9:20180043

Kooi CJ van der, Elzenga JTM, Staal M, Stavenga DG (2019) Vividly coloured poppy flowers due to dense pigmentation and strong scattering in thin petals. *J Comp Physiol A* (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00359-018-01313-1>

Bristol group

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Temple, S.E., Roberts, N. W. and Misson, G. P. 2019 Haidinger's brushes elicited at varying degrees of polarization rapidly and easily assesses total macular pigmentation. *Journal of the Optical Society of America A* 36: B123-B131

Marshall, N.J., Powell, S.B., Cronin, T.W., Caldwell, R.L., Johnsen, S., Gruev, V., Chiou, T.H.S., Roberts, N.W. and How, M.J., 2019. Polarisation signals: a new currency for communication. *Journal of Experimental Biology* 222, jeb134213

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Tibbs, A.B., Daly, I.M., Roberts, N.W. and Bull, D.R., 2018. Denoising Imaging Polarimetry by Adapted BM3D Method. *Journal of the Optical Society of America A* 35, 690-701

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Innes C. Cuthill, William L. Allen, Kevin Arbuckle, Barbara Caspers, George Chaplin, Mark Hauber, Geoffrey E. Hill, Nina Jablonski, Chris D. Jiggins, Almut Kelber, Johanna Mappes, Justin Marshall, Richard Merrill, Daniel Osorio, Richard Prum, Nicholas W. Roberts, Alexandre Roulin, Hannah Rowland, Thomas Sherratt, John Skelhorn, Michael P. Speed, Martin Stevens, Mary Caswell Stoddard, Devi Stuart-Fox, Laszlo Talas, Elizabeth Tibbetts and Tim Caro. 2017 The biology of color. *Science* 357: eaan0221

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Wang, X., Gao, J., Fan, Z., Roberts, N.W. 2016 An analytical model for the celestial distribution of polarized light, accounting for polarization singularities, wavelength and atmospheric turbidity. *Journal of Optics* 18:065601

Jordan, T.M., Wilby, D., Chiou, T-H., Feller, K.D., Caldwell, R.L., Cronin, T.W., Roberts, N.W. 2016 A shape-anisotropic reflective polarizer in a stomatopod crustacean. *Scientific Reports* 6:21774

Iwasaka, M., Mizukawa, Y., Roberts, N.W. 2016 Magnetic control of the light reflection anisotropy in a biogenic micro-guanine crystal platelet. *Langmuir* 32: 180-187

How, M.J., Christy, J., Temple, S.E., Hemmi, J.M., Marshall, N.J., Roberts, N.W. 2015 Target detection is enhanced by polarization vision in a fiddler crab. *Current Biology*. 25, 3069–3073

Temple, S.E., McGregor, J.E., Miles, C., Graham, L., Miller, J., Buck, J., Scott-Samuel, N.E., Roberts, N.W. 2015 Perceiving polarization with the naked eye: characterization of human polarization sensitivity. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 282, 20150338

Organization of an invited International Symposium on Processing the Polarization of Light at the 2018 International Congress of Neuroethology, Brisbane, Aus.

Invited talks were:

Gregor Belusic Horsefly polarotaxis is mediated by a segregated ommatidial subtype with spectrally imbalanced photoreceptors, leading to colour-induced polarization artifacts (see above)

Basil El Jundi Integration of Celestial and Wind information in the Dung Beetle's Compass.

Jan Hemmi Characterizing the sensitivity of polarization vision in invertebrates using ERGs.

Nicholas Roberts New directions for studies of how animals use the polarization of light.

Manuscripts submitted to peer-reviewed journals:

Daly I.M., Meah, R.J. and Roberts N.W. How 2019 *Haematopota pluvialis* perceive the polarization of light (*under review*)

Daly I.M., Meah, R.J. and Roberts N.W. 2019 The mild benefit of stripes as protection against biting flies is due to limited visual acuity (*under review*)

Daly I.M., How, M.J., Partridge, J.C. and Roberts N.W. 2019 A method for tracking the three-dimensional rotation of a rigid body in the aquatic environment (*under review*)

Smithers, S.P., Roberts N.W. and How, M.J. 2019 Parallel processing of polarization and intensity information in fiddler crab vision (*under review*)

Joint publications

Papers in peer-reviewed journals

Pirih P., Ilić M., Rudolf J., Arikawa K., Stavenga D. G., Belušič G.: The giant butterfly-moth *Paysandisia archon* has spectrally rich apposition eyes with unique light-dependent photoreceptor dynamics. *Journal of Comparative Physiology A*, 204, 639-651 (2018).

Stavenga D. G., Leertouwer H. L., Meglič A., Drašlar K., Wehling M. F., Pirih P., Belušič G. Classical lepidopteran wing scale colouration in the giant butterfly-moth *Paysandisia archon*. *PeerJ*, 6, e4590 (2018)

Stavenga D.G., Meglič A., Pirih P., Koshitaka H., Arikawa K., Wehling M. F., Belušič G.: Photoreceptor spectral tuning by colorful, multilayered facet lenses in long-legged fly eyes (Dolichopodidae). *Journal of Comparative Physiology A*, 203, 23-33, (2017).

Stavenga D. G., Wehling M. F., Belušič G.: Functional interplay of visual, sensitizing and screening pigments in the eyes of *Drosophila* and other red-eyed dipteran flies. *The Journal of Physiology*, 595, 5481-5494 (2017).