Singing through the noise: How chickadees compensate for effects of noise on communication

Dr. Steffi LaZerte, Independent consulting biologist and R programmer

Date: Thursday, October 19th, 2017
Time: 1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Place: Klaus Hocheim Theatre (5th floor Wallace Building)

Abstract: Songs and calls are forms of communication used by many bird species to defend territories and attract mates. However, urbanization and the accompanying urban noise can interfere with this communication. Birds can compensate for these changes by changing how or when they sing, but not all species react to the same degree. Predicting which species are capable of adjusting their vocalizations in noisy conditions and how they do so, will help identify which species may suffer communication challenges from increasing world-wide urbanization. Mountain chickadees and black-capped chickadees are closely related species with similar vocalizations, but they differ in their vocalizing behaviour. In this talk I will discuss experimental work from my PhD on how these behavioural differences correspond to differences in how vocalizations are adjusted in noisy conditions.

Biography: Steffi LaZerte is an independent consulting biologist and R programmer in Brandon, Manitoba. Steffi received a B.Sc. specializing in animal behaviour from the University of Toronto (2007), an M.Sc. in behavioural ecology from McGill University (2010) and an interdisciplinary Ph.D. in natural resources and environmental studies from the University of Northern British Columbia (2015). Her research interests focus on how humans influence the behaviour of animals, particularly through urbanization. Steffi is also interested in the use of citizen science and R programming as tools to increase the quantity and quality of data in the field of behavioural ecology.

12:00 p.m. Free pizza lunch for graduate students in the Dean’s Office Boardroom - 440 Wallace Bldg.