



February 5, 2016

Dr. Gary Ritchison, Editor  
Journal of Field Ornithology  
Department of Biological Sciences  
Eastern Kentucky University  
Richmond, KY 40475

Dear Dr. Ritchison:

As previously stated, we object to the retraction of our publication, "Density influences accuracy of model-based estimates for a forest songbird." The retraction is based solely upon your interpretation that "co-ownership" of the Model 2 dataset requires permission from the Mathewson et al. (2012) coauthors to use their estimates of male Golden-cheeked Warbler densities within the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve. No issues have been raised regarding the datasets used for either of the other two models we analyzed, nor the validity of our findings or conclusions. No mention is made in the draft retraction notice that allowing for replication and independent analyses following publication of Mathewson et al. (2012) is expected, to ensure transparency and quality of science, a point that we raised in our 4 November 2015 response to the Mathewson et al. coauthors' request for the retraction. Given that Mathewson et al. (2012) was published over three years ago, and our publication has been peer-reviewed and is scientifically sound, we believe allowing for a rebuttal to discuss the scientific merits of our analyses is a more appropriate course of action than a retraction and suppression of scientific debate. It was my understanding that the Mathewson et al. (2012) coauthors were amenable to providing a rebuttal to our publication as an alternative to a retraction, so we would like to know why this alternative is not being considered.

Further, the draft retraction notice refers to the Mathewson et al. (2012) coauthors as "other investigators" and "other co-owners." Withholding their identity gives the impression that there are issues with the other models we analyzed, which is not the case. The Mathewson et al. (2012) coauthors should be clearly identified as the only ones objecting to our paper, and that their objections are based solely upon data use concerns specific to Model 2.

The draft retraction notice concludes that our publication is being retracted because "the other co-owners [Mathewson et al. (2012) coauthors] also believe that such permission was required." This statement is disingenuous, since the Mathewson et al. coauthors did not request permission from the City of Austin to publish their own manuscript. Regardless, the Mathewson et al. study has been published, so their density estimates for the Balcones Canyonlands Preserve should be public. As such, we object to the accusation that we used unpublished data. Not only is this

claim invalid, it is not one of the six claims to which we were asked to respond, nor was it the justification we were given for the retraction.

We are disappointed in the Journal of Field Ornithology's handling of this issue, including the lack of communication and unwillingness to follow the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) guidelines (or provide another set of guidelines), thereby ignoring your own dispute resolution process. Allowing two of the Mathewson et al. coauthors to weigh in on the language of the retraction notice, while at the same time protecting their anonymity in the notice, is also inappropriate. JFO does not appear to be acting in a fair, unbiased manner, or to be following proper procedures in our case. If you proceed with the retraction, we will evaluate our remedies for your actions accordingly.

Sincerely,



Lisa O'Donnell  
Senior Biologist

Cc: O'Donnell et al. (2015) coauthors (Craig Farquhar, Jason Hunt, Kelly Nesvacil, Jennifer Reidy, William Reiner, Jonathan Scalise, Christopher Warren)  
Daryl Slusher, Assistant Director, Austin Water Utility, City of Austin  
Sherri Kuhl, Acting BCCP Coordinating Committee Secretary, City of Austin  
Mitzi Cotton, Acting Division Chief, Law Department, City of Austin  
Chad Shaw, Attorney Senior, Law Department, City of Austin  
Reed Bowman, President, Association of Field Ornithologists  
Robert Aldredge, Chair of Publications Committee, Journal of Field Ornithology