# David Alexander Marques (1984-2026)

It is with immeasurable sadness that we announce that David Marques passed on January 7th at the age of 41 after a long and very courageous battle with cancer. David was a PhD student of Ole, Laurent and Katie Wagner from 2012 to 2016 at IEE and Eawag. Later he was a Postdoc with Ole and Laurent and then an assistant with Ole until 2021. More recently, David was the curator of vertebrates at the Natural History Museum of Basel and led a research group on speciation in birds.

David was a visionary scientist, a gifted natural historian and a passionate ornithologist who travelled the world for birds. He was a caring husband, father and friend, a committed teacher and a dedicated mentor and he loved the music of jazz giants Miles Davis and John Coltrane, having himself played the trombone for three decades.

The overarching theme of David's research was the origin of species and the genetics of adaptive radiation. Deep in his heart, David was a naturalist who spent much of his leisure time in the outdoors observing birds. He had received numerous awards for his exceptional ability to identify birds by sight and sound and he served as an expert bird identifier on the Swiss Rarities Committee verifying sightings of rare birds. In his academic research, David had worked with several vertebrate groups, starting with orangutans, then focusing for many years on radiations of stickleback and African cichlid fish and lastly seagulls.

David was a gifted scientific writer and illustrator. Each of his papers is like a piece of creative art, like a symphony in which very different elements are combined, each cutting edge and each being harmonized with all the others to create a consistent and meaningful new whole. David was generous with his time and with his ideas and shared both freely. His brilliance went hand and hand with a gift for mentoring, and his cheerful demeanor and clear explanations made him a go-to resource for peers and students alike.

David started his PhD with Ole, Laurent and Katie Wagner on the evolutionary genomics of adaptive radiation in stickleback and cichlid fishes in 2012. These were the days when speciation genomics was just about to begin. Together with his "PhD sister" Joana Meier they pushed the boundaries of what was known about hybridization between species and its importance in the evolution of new species and the process of adaptive radiation. David received several awards for his work, including the Volz prize of the IEE in 2016. After his PhD, David moved to Victoria in British Columbia where he joined Tom Reimchen to work on the radiation of stickleback in the Haida Gwaii archipelago. Several amazing publications came from this.

In 2017, David returned to the University of Bern and Eawag where we continued our collaboration on cichlid and stickleback evolution. In those years, David also taught many classes at IEE and mentored undergraduate and graduate students. In 2021 he accepted a position of curator of vertebrates at the Natural History Museum Basel which enabled him to implement his long-held dream to build a research group on bird speciation genomics. As David realized his time was running out, he worked relentlessly to organize everything necessary for his students and collaborators to successfully continue and complete the project after his passing. David worked until very shortly before his death. Just in December he published detailed trip reports and a legacy collection of nearly 1,000 incredible photos of 362 different species of birds of Australia that he had taken during last summer's family vacation with his wife and son. David gave two remarkable interviews about his illness and what it means to the Swiss TV here and here.

With David, we have lost a friend, a brilliant scientist and a warm, patient and generous teacher and colleague. David leaves a lasting legacy at IEE and Eawag, and he is a source of inspiration for all of us. David is survived by his wife Gaby and their son Robin.

Ole Seehausen and Laurent Excoffier