Abstract

Behavioral and Morphological Evolution in the New World Blackbirds (Icteridae):  A Research Program in Comparative Phylogenetics

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Abstract: The New World Blackbirds (Icteridae) have been the subject of many exciting studies in evolutionary and behavioral ecology since the early 1900’s.  However, this research has been conducted in the absence of an understanding of the phylogenetic history of the group – that is, an understanding of how modern species are related to one another evolutionarily.  My research has filled this gap by producing a well-resolved phylogeny for blackbirds and their relatives that allows me to capitalize on this tradition of evolutionary and behavioral ecological research. I will provide some examples of the kinds of insights that can be obtained when observations of extant species are interpreted in the context of a phylogeny.   and I will describe how one goes about conducting a research program in comparative phylogenetics.