

# The Wim Dings “De Wielewaal” Ornithology Prize – Edition 2026

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## Scope

It is the goal of this prize to immortalize the memory of ornithologist Wim Dings (1927-2012) by providing financial support and visibility to either academic or advanced non-academic scientific research in the field of avian biology. The prize is awarded by the University of Antwerp and is worth 2500 Euro. The organization of the prize is done in collaboration with Natuurpunt, de “Vogeldag”, and the Nederlandse Ornithologische Unie (NOU).

## Procedure

1. Candidates can submit a Master’s thesis or any other published paper of at least 3000 words, documenting the results of their research activity.
2. Candidates submit their paper in Word or PDF format to the chair of the selection committee: Prof. Erik Matthysen, Department of Biology, University of Antwerp ([erik.matthysen@uantwerpen.be](mailto:erik.matthysen@uantwerpen.be)), by 1 July 2026
3. The paper must be written in English or Dutch, including an abstract or summary.
4. The submission is accompanied by a 1-page biography of the candidate, and a statement (one page maximum) on (a) the societal relevance, (b) the link with field ornithology and (c) in case of multi-author studies, the candidate’s contribution to collection and analysis of the data..
5. Candidates must be individual rather than teams
6. Candidates cannot have won the prize in the past, and can in no way be involved with its organisation.
7. Any correspondence related to the prize will be limited to an acknowledgement of receipt for each submission. There will be no correspondence on the decisions taken by the scientific committee appointed to evaluate and rank the submitted papers.

## Criteria

1. The paper submitted for the prize must report on research with an explicit focus on field ornithology, defended or published maximum 2 years before the call (i.e. after 1 June 2024). For publications, the first publication date (online or print) counts.
2. Papers can be part of a PhD thesis, but a PhD thesis as such is not eligible.
3. The paper shall display a sufficient scientific professionalism and relevance
4. Preference will be given to research carried out in Belgium or the Netherlands; or if carried out elsewhere, in association with a Belgian or Dutch research organization.
5. Preference will also be given to young researchers (pre-doctoral or at most 2 years post-doctoral) and/or non-academic ornithologists with research of high scientific quality.
6. An international academic jury will evaluate the quality of the various contributions. In addition to the previous, these four criteria will be used:
  - a) Scientific value and impact of the research
  - b) Innovation in the scientific approach
  - c) Societal relevance (e.g. increasing the understanding of mechanisms affecting ecosystems relevant for birds, as well as our knowledge of corrective or preventive actions related to such ecosystems).

d) Relationship with field ornithology

*Obligations for the winner*

1. The prize shall be awarded at the Belgian field ornithology symposium (“Vogeldag”) in October 2026
2. The winner of the prize shall give a presentation of his/her research for a general audience with a non-academic exposure to ornithology; this can be at the occasion of the award ceremony, or another suitable occasion in the same year. In the latter case, the winner shall mention the name of the prize and the University of Antwerp.
3. The winner of the prize shall strive to have the newly acquired knowledge published in scientific journals and/or proceedings of scientific conferences, including at least one publication for a more general audience.