



**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev**  
**Jacob Blaustein Institutes for Desert Research**  
The Swiss Institute for Dryland Environmental and Energy Research  
**Mitrani Department of Desert Ecology**

## Seminar

### **Yitzchak Ben Mocha**

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Tuesday, December 5, 2017, 12:00

Seminar Room, Old Administration Building

Participants are invited to meet the seminar speaker at the MDDE meeting room immediately after the seminar (~ 13:00). Please bring your lunch; snacks will be provided.

### **Why do humans and nonhuman animals have sex in privacy? The 'Cooperation-Maintenance hypothesis'**

Striking uniformity exists in humans' preference to conceal sexual activity from conspecifics' view. Yet little is known about the selective pressures acting upon its evolution. To investigate this question we studied the only non-human species that was suggested to conceal sex regularly - the cooperative breeding Arabian babbler (*Turdoides squamiceps*). We examined the following questions: Do the birds conceal sex? And is concealed sex used to avoid predation, to avoid social interference or to signal dominance? Results showed that dominants and subordinates concealed 100% of mating solicitations and copulations from adult conspecifics. Pairs did not prefer to copulate under shelters. Dominants chased subordinates who courted females; but also terminated their own courting when subordinates appeared. Our results support the Social Interference Hypothesis as an explanation for subordinates only. We therefore suggest that dominants conceal sex to maintain cooperation with those helpers they prevent from mating. The main prediction of our hypothesis is that concealed sex has evolved also in other social systems (i) where mating is, to a large extent exclusive; and (ii) which heavily rely on cooperation. Preliminary results from humans cross-cultural analysis will be presented. Further empirical desiderata for testing this 'Cooperation-Maintenance hypothesis' in other species and human cultures will be discussed.