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Professor RNDr. Juraj Sevcik,

Dear Professor Sevcik,

I am writing in warm support of the promotion of Dr Tomas Grim to a full professorship. I know Dr. Grim's work well because of our mutual interests in evolutionary and behavioural ecology, in particular the interactions between brood parasitic birds ("cuckoos") and their hosts. Dr. Grim has an international reputation for his innovative contributions to our understanding of cuckoo-host coevolution. He has a distinguished publication list, with many papers in the top international journals. His work is highly cited in the primary literature and is also referred to in recent animal behaviour text books. I particularly admire three of his discoveries.

First, in two fine papers published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society, he has shown that hosts sometimes desert cuckoo nestlings when their period of parental care exceeds the normal length of time that the hosts expect for a brood of their own. He demonstrated this by detailed field observation and elegant experiments, which showed that prolonged care was the key cue for desertion, not the cuckoo chick itself. His reviews have pointed to chick rejection as an unstudied aspect of cuckoo-host interactions and his work is stimulating much of the current interest in this topic worldwide.

Second, he has brought novel insights and rigour to the analysis of host choice by cuckoos, particularly why some seemingly suitable hosts are not parasitized. In a marvellous recent paper in the Journal of Animal Ecology, he shows by clever field experiments that blackbirds are unsuitable because they are reluctant to feed the cuckoo chick, while song thrushes are unsuitable because the cuckoo cannot eject the host eggs from the thrush's deep nest and cannot compete effectively with the host chicks. These studies have revealed a richer complexity to host choice than was realised and are also stimulating much new research.

Finally, in another fine paper in Proceedings of the Royal Society, Dr. Grim and his colleagues have shown that the mimicry of host eggs by cuckoo eggs involves a shared chemical basis of pigmentation. This now opens the way for studies of whether the same genes are involved in cuckoo and host egg colours and patterns.

~~I would rank Dr. Grim as an international leader in his field. He has forged many~~  
international collaborations and promises to make more important discoveries in the future. I also note that his research excellence has been achieved alongside a commitment to teaching and applaud his efforts to explain his work and its broader implications to a wider public. I think he is exceptionally well qualified for promotion to full professor.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Davies

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