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Untying the knot

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Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:

2015

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Bijleveld, A. I. (2015). *Untying the knot: Mechanistically understanding the interactions between social foragers and their prey*. University of Groningen.

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Untying the knot

Mechanistically understanding the interactions
between social foragers and their prey



Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research

The research presented in this thesis was carried out at the Department of Marine Ecology (MEE) at NIOZ Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research, Den Burg (Texel), The Netherlands.

The research was funded by NIOZ with additional financial support from NWO (Nederlandse Organisatie voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek; TOP-grant 'Shorebirds in space', and ALW 854.11.004), Waddenfonds (project 'Metawad', WF 209925), and NAM (contributions to SIBES, the Synoptic Intertidal Benthic Mapping of the Wadden Sea). The printing was supported by NIOZ and the University of Groningen (RUG).

The preferred citation for this thesis is:

Bijleveld, A.I. (2015). Untying the knot: mechanistically understanding the interactions between social foragers and their prey. PhD Thesis, University of Groningen, Groningen, The Netherlands.

Lay-out: Dick Visser

Cover art: Foraging red knots, © Bas Teunis 2015. All rights reserved. For further use of this drawing please contact the artist at basteunis@mac.com

Photographs: Jan van de Kam (Chapters 4, 7, 14 and 15), Allert Bijleveld (Chapters 8, 9 and 12), Rosemarie Kentie (Chapters 1 and 6), Emma Penning (Chapters 11 and 16), Kees van de Veen (Chapter 2), Graham Lenton (Chapter 5), John Cluderay (Chapter 3), and Bas Teunis (Chapter 10, © Bas Teunis 2011, all rights reserved).

Printed by: Off Page, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

ISBN: 978-90-367-7866-4

ISBN: 978-90-367-7865-7 (electronic version)

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rijksuniversiteit
groningen

Untying the knot

Mechanistically understanding the interactions
between social foragers and their prey

Proefschrift

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen
op gezag van de
rector magnificus prof. dr. E. Sterken
en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op

vrijdag 19 juni 2015 om 12:45 uur

door

Allert Imre Bijleveld

geboren op 31 mei 1980
te Ouder-Amstel

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The Blind Men and the Elephant: A Hindoo Fable

John Godfrey Saxe (1872)

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind

The *First* approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he:
" 'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen!

