



THE SIGNALING VALUE OF COLORATION:  
A ROLE FOR PLEIOTROPY  
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Born in 1968 in Payerne, Switzerland. Studied Biology at the University of Bern. Now full professor at the University of Lausanne. As an evolutionary biologist, my aim is to understand the adaptive function of variation in behaviour, morphology and physiology. Major research interests include the adaptive function, evolution and maintenance of melanin-based coloration and interactions prevailing between family members, using the barn owl, a cosmopolitan bird, as model organism. – Address: University of Lausanne, Department of Ecology and Evolution, Building Biophore, 1015 Lausanne, Switzerland. E-mail: [Alexandre.Roulin@unil.ch](mailto:Alexandre.Roulin@unil.ch).

My three-month stay at the Wissenschaftskolleg (Wiko) in Berlin was very fruitful and pleasant. It was an amazing experience of contact with so many brilliant people working in a full array of fields including historians, musicians, biologists, jurists and philosophers. So many fields that usually do not cross paths. The diversity of viewpoints revealed at lunches, Tuesday talks and Thursday dinners was memorable. Wiko helped me realise that our universities are made of all these disciplines that, in contrast to the old times, do not mix anymore. Since my stay at Wiko, I am trying to implement this approach at my home university.

A second very important aspect of my stay was meeting and interacting with colleagues working in the same field as me but from different perspectives. Although all these colleagues are famous and respected, I had never met most of them, which further emphasises the key federative role of Wiko. I am thus very thankful to Wiko and to Tim Caro, who organized the “colour team”, for having united all these people. This ended up

with a fantastic workshop bringing together 25 researchers and leading to the writing of several papers!

Finally, my stay in Berlin offered me the opportunity to start writing a book. Being away from my home university, I could concentrate on this undertaking.

Last but not least, I have to warmly thank all the personnel of Wiko: secretaries, cooks, people who clean the buildings, librarians, people who organize the Fellows' stay etc. They were all very kind and highly professional! This was totally amazing and I felt I was treated like a king. Thank you all.