The role of disease risk and life history in the immune function of larks in different environments
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Acknowledgements
If you approach a new thesis book like me, then you will have probably reached this point by flicking through the pages to quickly look at the pictures. Maybe you checked how many chapters there are, or how many manuscripts I have already managed to get published. Perhaps, if you are close to the end of your own thesis, you actually bothered to read the introduction. Forget the science though; in all likelihood this is probably the first place that you have actually started reading in any detail. Well, so be it. In a world where most of the copies that I print will never be looked at again (let’s be honest), my first acknowledgement is to say thanks for sticking with it even this far. Now let’s get on with thanking the really important people.

In almost all acknowledgements people thank their partners last. I want to change that. After all, if I get this one wrong, I’ll never be allowed to forget it! Sarah, thank you for all your support and help, both emotional and practical, throughout our time in Groningen. Thank you for moving to the Netherlands and for being understanding when I disappeared to Saudi Arabia for six weeks as soon as you arrived. Thank you for your help with designing assays and for listening to my complaints. Our Dutch adventure may have come to an end, but I anticipate many more exciting adventures together in the future, although perhaps with fewer bicycles and not so many bitterballen. Thanks also to my family and friends back in the UK, for putting up with the flying visits, and for your continual love and support.

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My second supervisor was Kevin Matson. Almost from day one we worked together, and it seems to have stayed that way throughout my entire time in Groningen, much to my benefit. Working so closely with someone whom I consider a real friend has been an added bonus and always made things more enjoyable, particularly when times were tough. This thesis owes much to the support and supervision that you provided and I am very grateful to you for that.

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As someone who collected samples for their PhD in Europe, Africa and Arabia, I can appreciate the value of good collaborators. Fortunately I was lucky enough to find such people in all the places I visited. In Saudi Arabia, Mohammed Shobrak and the staff at the National Wildlife Research Center and at Mahazat as-Sayd were unfailing in their welcome and assistance. Joe Williams taught me about the practicalities of conducting research in Saudi Arabia and the usefulness of phrases such as ‘Ma fi mushkila’. Shukran to you and Irene for sharing your patch of desert with me.

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tion, however indirect, to this work. Now, flip back to the first page and start
reading this thesis from the beginning, like a book should be read. You never
know, you might just learn something and maybe all those printed copies won’t
be a complete waste…

Nicholas Horrocks, Cambridge, 22nd December 2011.