Acknowledgements
Through the years I realized that most people start with reading the acknowledgements. And quite some don't go any further (although you'll miss something). As I don’t want to discriminate against foreigners, they are the majority in this world after all, I will write this in English.

The Dudes

I’d like to thank Ben ‘Slender-billed’ Sheldon for supervising my second master project which has been an important step to get this PhD. Most likely, initial acceptance was partly based on the fact that I had bins, a scope, driver’s license and was keen to go birding… After this project you continued to supervise me during my PhD; thanks for all your advice, help and great days birding (sorry, about the Blyth’s reed at Faludden). Cheers.

Franjo Weissing was keen to help write a grant proposal and adopt me into his group as a PhD student. The reason was, I guess, you didn’t believe the story I told you about hybridizing flycatchers. Your passion for science and very sharp mind are a great motivation, but most importantly, you are a very caring person. Without this, I would have lost my fun in science as a result of the difficulties encountered. Thanks for assisting an empiricist take his first steps into the World of Theory. In addition, I very much appreciate your relaxed attitude towards my activities outside work and the unplanned extensions of foreign stays resulting from it. Viele Dank!

The theoretical part of this project has a ‘hidden’, but not less important supervisor: Sander van Doorn. Both in Groningen and during my last year (especially at the Santa Fe Institute) you have been an incredible help. Your patience while explaining certain things over and over again is highly appreciated. Your contribution to chapter 7 is very large, as you’ve done all the flashy mathematical stuff. I sincerely hope to be able to continue exploring theory under your guidance in the future. Thanks!

I would like to thank the members of the reading committee, Bart Kempenaers, Trevor Price and Marcel Visser, for taking the time to read through my thesis and comment on it.

The Sweden Connection

The empirical part of this project took mainly place on Gotland (Sweden), in close collaboration with the University of Uppsala.

The field seasons on Gotland have been great fun and I would like to thank the many people who contributed to this. Especially I would like to thank Lars Gustafsson for allowing me to work in his study population. A large part of the
empirical work presented in this thesis is the result of a collaboration with Anna Qvarnström and her two PhD students, Nina Svedin and Chris Wiley. I would like to thank the three of you for the joint fieldwork, the great opportunity to make use of the lab and field facilities and the numerous discussions. The department at the EBC is starting to feel pretty much like my ‘second office’ after so many visits. Without you this thesis would not have looked the same. One thing I also learned was that collaborating in a competitive research environment is not always that easy. As a consequence of overlapping research interests, several of my initial research plans could not be completed. Although this has lead to some frustrating periods which greatly reduced my interest in science, I do think I learned a lot from this experience and hope to have gained a more realistic view on how collaboration works.

Johan Träff deserves a special paragraph. Since 2000 I have worked with you and it has been a great pleasure. You basically saved my painting experiment (chapter 2) by allowing me to work with you in your areas. Your knowledge after so many years of flycatcher work is impressive. Although I might have frequently uttered some doubts regarding your predictions as there might not always have been ‘hard data’, your gut feeling was virtually always proven right. Furthermore you provided some very nice pictures for the thesis. Thank you very much for adopting me. Tack!

Not always directly involved in the work, but of great importance are Mårten Hjernquist and Katherine (Hjernquist since 2005)-Thuman. Your hospitality, great help and GT drinking capabilities are a great example for me. Hannah and Kali: you increased my productivity immensely by waking me up early by sitting on my head or randomly attacking me, respectively. Surely Lou will continue the legacy.

On Gotland, my life would have been miserable (and hungry) without ICA Burgsvik (best frozen pizzas in the world) and Folkeryds. I would like to thank the Englund family for renting out their house at Faludden to me, it is one of the most beautiful places on earth. Several people and situations have provided ever lasting memories and scars. Juha, thanks for introducing me to the finer details of Misommar night pole-burning, Simon for warning me not to eat snuss (indeed, tastes like shit) and Annika for making me believe that my lab alcohol-ginger ale mix was weak.

The Dutch colleagues

The Nerds
The Theoretical Biology group in Groningen hosts a superb bunch of people. Thanks all! Of special importance through the years have been Max, the ‘Monkies’: Wouter & Tim, Thomas, Serinde, Paul, Ido & the Honesty Pig. Richèl
helped me to get not too lost in programming for which I am very grateful. Cluster Jedi Master Martin maintains the computer cluster: may the power source be with you.

**Biological Centre**
At the Biological Centre there have been many persons who have helped me and given advice at various times throughout my undergraduate and graduate period. I would especially like to thank Simon Verhulst, Jan Komdeur, Joost Tinbergen & Ton Groothuis.

**NIOO**
Besides being part of the reading committee, Marcel Visser has guided me into the beautiful world of caterpillar shit (although faeces sounds much more important) which resulted in chapter 4. Marcel Klaassen was very excited about the hybrid migration ideas and conducted the isotope analysis which resulted in chapter 5. The enthusiasm of both Marcels have kept my love for empirical work alive; thanks.

**Foreign Affairs**
During my PhD I have had the great possibility to travel around a lot and spend some time at different universities and institutes. The most important being:

**Oxford**
In Oxford, the EGI crew has always provided a second home to come back to. Thanks a lot, you’re a fun bunch! I’d like to especially thank Jo for the help in the lab, without you I surely would have gone totally bonkers at the field station.

**Oslo**
During my 5 months Marie Curie internship in Oslo at the CEES, I was kindly hosted and supervised by Glenn-Peter Sætre; cheers Glenn. Mid winter survival up north heavily depends on various factors, most vital are friends and alcohol. Paramount to my survival were Thomas, Øistein, Glenn, Jens, Kjetil, Lee, Torbjørn, Silje, Maria, Adine, Gry and surely other people I forgot (blame it on the beers). Norway has some fantastic features but also some flaws, noticeable their love for massive concrete buildings and having incredibly annoying pub quizzes. Stop that. Stein-Are is somehow never far away, thanks for the scientific and non-scientific fun.

**Santa Fe**
Although I was properly intimidated by the reputation of the institute, the people and atmosphere at the institute turned out to be fantastic. The interest in science, in all its facets and the openness of the discussions were a real eye opener. I would like to thank the people of SFI for giving me the possibility to visit and Sander for the invitation; a truly great experience. Thank you Max for the fun time and being a great house mate (not only because you have a different definition of ‘dirty house’ and take action accordingly).

The very important ‘rest’ group

Several other people outside work have been vital in keeping me alive. My special thanks go to a group of fantastic bastards at Greenpeace. Thanks for giving me the possibility to help raise awareness for environmental problems which threaten our planet. Together with you I have experienced some of the most intense moments of my life. Erik ‘Birki’, El, Leander, Jacob, Anne, Theo, Lisette, Eric ‘#12’ & Steve, Arne and many others. Thanks. Abroad I met some equally impressive figures; Rachel, Watty, Jim, Celeste, Stan, Anne Marie, Jens, Huw, Mel, the ‘Koeberg 12’ and so many more.

In Groningen I’ve lived with a nice group of people for many years. Angela, Jeroen, Lenze, Michel, Jan’n Azamit, Jan & Irma, Martijn; thanks. Arjën (unofficial world champion ‘Koffie koppen’) has been beyond helpful with sorting out all kinds of problems, besides being a superb friend. ‘The Dirty Three’, Cas, Eelke and Dries are great friends. A big thank you to Dick Visser for taking care of the lay-out of this thesis. René Pop very kindly provided several pictures of flycatchers and prepared all pictures for publications; cheers!

Liz deserves a mega thanks for being such a cool girl and managing to deal with my slightly erratic presence/absence life-style and my disability to be at one place for a long period of time.

Jan, Hanneke and Jort have always been very supportive. You know how much I appreciate it. I would like to thank Jan for designing the cover and for giving corrections on almost all chapters (over and over again).

Thor