Dr. Didone Frigerio

Dr. Frigerio, you were awarded the “Back to Research Grant” in 2016 – what has this grant enabled you to do?

The financial support through the “Back-to-Research-Grant” has enabled me to complete and publish the analysis of scientific data collected last year. These international publications will provide a basis for submitting my own research proposals (especially to the FWF). Together with my teaching activities, this will allow me to achieve my “habilitation”. Moreover, this funding has supported the continuity of my research efforts at the Core Facility KLF für Verhaltens-und Kognitionsbiologie in Grünau in the Almtal, and, importantly, has guaranteed an excellent regional and international network.

What research project are you currently working on?

I am currently the principal investigator of the project “Sozialer Zusammenhalt und Ausflugsgebiet beim Waldrapp”, which is being supported by the Sparkling Science program and integrates 5 different educational institutions in the Almtal region into the research effort. The scientific goals are (1) determining the flight range of the colony using GPS/GMS transmitters; (2) monitoring the physiological condition of the animals through regular blood and fecal sampling; (3) collecting additional data on the hierarchy within the group and its social network based on classical ethological observations. The preliminary results show that the non-breeding birds fly significantly longer stretches than the breeding bald ibises, that socio-positive interactions can reduce the individual’s parasite infestation, and that mated individuals defecate fewer endoparasites than solitary bald ibises.
The initiative “Women in Biology” has recently compiled the latest data on the distribution of men and women along the scientific career ladder (see the above article). Where do you see the crux behind the extreme divergence in the post-PhD phase? Do you have any ideas on how to change this situation? What challenges are you facing in trying to reconcile your scientific career with family life?

In my opinion the greatest challenge is to successfully pursue my own short- and long-term goals while accommodating the expectations of other family members. Moreover, I find that the high expectations regarding mobility in academic life complicate the compatibility of science and family. On the other hand, implementing equality in everyday life is an equally large challenge.