

# Thermoregulation in African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) and a re-analysis of insular effects on basal metabolic rate and heterothermy in columbid birds

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**Abstract** Columbidae birds represent a useful model taxon for examining adaptation in metabolic and thermal traits, including the effects of insularity. To test predictions concerning the role of insularity and low predation risk as factors selecting for the use of torpor, and the evolution of low basal metabolic rate in island species, we examined thermoregulation under laboratory and semi-natural conditions in a mainland species, the African Green Pigeon (*Treron calvus*). Under laboratory conditions, rest-phase body temperature ( $T_b$ ) was significantly and positively correlated with air temperature ( $T_a$ ) between 0 and 35 °C, and the relationship between resting metabolic rate (RMR) and  $T_a$  differed from typical endothermic patterns. The minimum RMR, which we interpret as basal metabolic rate (BMR), was  $0.825 \pm 0.090$  W. Green pigeons responded to food restriction by significantly decreasing rest-phase  $T_b$ , but the reductions were small (at most  $\sim 5$  °C below normothermic values), with a minimum  $T_b$  of 33.1 °C recorded in a food-deprived bird. We found no evidence of the large reductions in  $T_b$  and metabolic rate and the lethargic state characteristic of torpor. The absence of torpor in

*T. calvus* lends support to the idea that species restricted to islands that are free of predators are more likely to use torpor than mainland species that face the risk of predation during the rest-phase. We also analysed interspecific variation in columbid BMR in a phylogenetically informed framework and verified the conclusions of an earlier study which found that BMR is significantly lower in island species compared to those that occur on mainlands.

**Keywords** Columbidae · Evolution · Hypothermia · Islands · Thermoregulation

## Introduction

The evolution of avian metabolic and thermal traits is thought to be influenced by a number of environmental factors. At a global scale, basal metabolic rates (BMR, i.e. minimum maintenance energy demands during normothermy) vary with environmental temperature, both in terms of interspecific variation (Jetz et al. 2008; Weathers 1979; White et al. 2007), and the magnitude and direction of seasonal adjustments within individuals (Smit and McKechnie 2010a). Species in the tropics tend to have lower BMR and maximum resting and active metabolic rates than their temperate-zone counterparts (Wiersma et al. 2007), although the link between latitude and daily energy expenditure is less clear (Anderson and Jetz 2005; Tieleman et al. 2006). In addition, species inhabiting desert environments have significantly lower BMR (by  $\sim 20$  %) and daily energy expenditure (by  $\sim 50$  %) compared to their mesic counterparts (Tieleman and Williams 2000; Tieleman et al. 2003), presumably reflecting the scarcity and unpredictability of food resources in arid habitats. A second broad suite of avian physiological traits which have

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been predicted to be correlated with metabolic variables such as BMR (McKechnie and Lovegrove 2006) is the avian capacity to reduce rest-phase energy demands through facultative reductions in metabolic rate and body temperature ( $T_b$ ; collectively referred to as heterothermy). Reviews of avian heterothermy have not so far revealed any clear links between interspecific variation and climatic variables (Brigham et al. 2012; McKechnie and Lovegrove 2002; Prinzinger et al. 1991; Schleucher 2004). Instead, the occurrence of heterothermy seems to be more closely linked to phylogeny and broad categories of food resources, with the limited available data suggesting that heterothermy is most pronounced in phylogenetically older taxa that feed on spatially and temporally unpredictable diets such as nectar, aerial insects, or fruit (McKechnie and Lovegrove 2002; McKechnie and Mzilikazi 2011; Schleucher 2004).

Compared to environmental variables such as aridity and temperature, the influence of insularity (i.e. distribution restricted to islands) on the evolution of avian metabolic and thermal traits has received relatively little attention. McNab (2009) reported no significant effect of insularity per se on avian BMR, but noted that his analysis was likely confounded by the frequent evolution of flightlessness in island birds, and the close link thought to exist between flightlessness and low BMR (McNab 1994). A mechanistic link between flightlessness and low avian BMR has been suggested to involve the smaller pectoral muscle mass of flightless vs volant species (McNab 1994), although this argument is difficult to reconcile with the observation that the major internal organs, and not flight muscles, seem to be the major determinants of BMR (Daan et al. 1990; Piersma 2002).

One avian taxon that is in many ways ideal for addressing the role of factors such as insularity on the evolution of metabolic and thermal traits is the Columbiformes, the order comprising pigeons, doves and allies. Globally, approximately 300 extant species of columbids (all volant) occur in habitats ranging from hyperarid deserts to tropical rainforests, and the taxon has undergone spectacular evolutionary radiations, most notably in southeast Asia and Oceania (Baptista et al. 1997; Gibbs et al. 2001; Pereira et al. 2007). An analysis of interspecific variation in BMR among 16 columbid species revealed significantly lower values on islands compared to mainlands (McNab 2000). However, the latter analysis did not evaluate phylogenetic signal (Pagel 1999) in body mass ( $M_b$ ) or BMR data, nor in any way account for the potential problem of non-independence of physiological data resulting from hierarchical patterns of descent from common ancestors (Felsenstein 1985).

The evolution of low metabolic rates (in particular, low BMR) may be expected to be functionally linked to the evolution of the capacity for pronounced heterothermy,

since both these traits reduce overall energy requirements and are thus likely to be subject to selection in environments where energy demands regularly exceed supply (McKechnie and Lovegrove 2006). The energetic benefits of heterothermy are fairly well understood (Geiser 1993, 2004; Heldmaier and Ruf 1992), but far less is known about the physiological and ecological costs. Consequently, it remains unclear why many birds that a priori would seem good candidates to use pronounced torpor and/or hibernation on account of their  $M_b$  and phylogenetic position, including barbets (Piciformes: Lybiidae) and small owls (Strigidae), apparently do not do so (McKechnie and Smit 2010; Smit and McKechnie 2010b). Similarly, the absence of pronounced torpor in passerines [with the possible exception of swallows (Hirundinidae; Prinzinger and Siedle 1988) and sunbirds (Nectariniidae; Downs and Brown 2002)] is difficult to explain, given that most species are small and some are year-round residents in temperate regions with long, severe winters (McKechnie and Lovegrove 2003; Reinertsen 1983; Reinertsen and Haftorn 1986).

Schleucher (2001) examined heterothermy in three columbids and found that two small granivorous species, the African Namaqua Dove (*Oena capensis*) and Australasian Diamond Dove (*Geopelia cuneata*), exhibited shallow rest-phase hypothermia similar to that previously documented in several other columbid species (Jensen and Bech 1992b; Laurila and Hohtola 2005; MacMillen and Trost 1967; Phillips and Berger 1991; Rashotte et al. 1988; Rashotte et al. 1991; Walker et al. 1983). In all these species, the depth of heterothermy increased with a continuation of fasting, but none reduced their  $T_b$  by more than 10 °C below normothermic levels. However, Schleucher (2001) found that a third species, the Cloven-feathered Dove (*Drepanoptila holosericea*), did indeed use torpor. Both captive-bred individuals that the author studied entered a non-responsive lethargic state at air temperatures ( $T_a$ ) < 15 °C, and drastically reduced their rest-phase  $T_b$  to a minimum of 24.8 °C and metabolic rate to 33 % of normothermic values (Schleucher 2001). Schleucher's findings prompted McKechnie and Lovegrove (2006) to suggest that the presence of torpor in *D. holosericea* but apparent absence thereof in *O. capensis* and *G. cuneata* may have evolved through selection associated with predation risk and the consequences of continental vs insular distributions for variation in energy supply. Whereas *O. capensis* and *G. cuneata* are granivores that occur on continents and are presumably buffered from large fluctuations in energy availability by being able to avoid areas with scarce food, *D. holosericea* is a strictly frugivorous species restricted to the oceanic islands of New Caledonia, an area of just ~19,000 km<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, New Caledonia has no native mammalian or reptilian predators that could

pose a nocturnal threat to *D. holosericea* (Bauer and Vin-dum 1990; Rouys and Theuerkauf 2003), unlike the situation for *O. capensis* and *G. cuneata* (Skinner and Chimimba 2005; Strahan 1991).

To further examine interspecific variation in the metabolic and thermal physiology of columbid birds, we investigated patterns of thermoregulation in a frugivorous species that occurs on mainland Africa, namely the African Green Pigeon (*Treron calvus*). Our goals were twofold. First, we tested the prediction that *T. calvus* would use shallow heterothermy but not daily torpor comparable to that of *D. holosericea*. The genus *Treron* is in the same subfamily (Treroninae) as *Drepanoptila* and is also almost entirely frugivorous (Baptista et al. 1997; Dean 2005). However, whereas during the recent evolutionary history of *D. holosericea*, it would presumably have been safe to enter a lethargic state due to the absence of predators, there are several mammalian species in the Afrotropics that are likely to prey on roosting *T. calvus* (Skinner and Chimimba 2005). Second, we measured BMR in *T. calvus*, and combined this datum with previously published values for other columbid species to test the prediction that the BMR of columbids with insular distributions is lower than that of mainland species (McNab 2000). Although McNab's analysis supported this prediction, the lack of phylogenetically informed approaches in his study means that these findings need to be verified using appropriate statistical techniques.

## Materials and methods

### Study site and species

African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) are diurnal birds, widespread across southern and east Africa (Dean 2005). Wild green pigeons were captured with mist nets on the University of Pretoria (UP) Hatfield campus (25°45'S, 28°14'E) and were housed in individual cages (~1.5 m<sup>3</sup>) within outdoor aviaries on the UP experimental farm (25°45'S, 28°15'E). The green pigeons were provided with water ad libitum, and a mixture of chopped fruits (pear, apple, banana and papaya) and soft-bill pellets (Avi-Products, Linkhills, KZN, South Africa). A daily ration of 70 g of food (well-fed treatment) was associated with the maintenance of approximately constant  $M_b$ , with a mean  $\pm$  SD of 218.2  $\pm$  15.1 g ( $n = 12$ ) for well-fed birds. To test the thermoregulatory responses of *T. calvus* to restricted feeding, we used a 2-day food restriction protocol, where the green pigeons received 20 g of food on the first day and no food on the second day. Body mass was measured using a model ALC-810.2 scale (ACCULAB Sartorius Group, Arvada, Colorado, USA).

Laboratory measurements of metabolic rate and body temperature

Metabolic rates, evaporative water loss (EWL) rates,  $T_b$  and  $T_a$  within metabolic chambers were measured in the Zoology Building, UP, using the experimental setup described by Cory Toussaint and McKechnie (2012), with modifications as listed below. Green pigeons were placed individually inside 9-L plastic containers. A layer of mineral oil (~1 cm) at the bottom of each chamber prevented the evaporation of faeces and urine, with plastic mesh used to elevate the birds approximately 10 cm above the oil layer. The metabolic chambers were placed in a darkened, soundproof, temperature-controlled cabinet (Model KMF 720, Binder, Tuttlingen, Germany).

Signals from temperature-sensitive passive-integrated transponder (PIT) tags (Destron Fearing, South St Paul, MN, USA), injected subcutaneously between the scapulae of each pigeon after calibration, were detected using an antenna (Racket Antenna, Biomark, Boise, Idaho, USA) positioned on top of each metabolic chamber and connected to a PIT tag reader (Model FS2001F-ISO, Biomark, Boise, Idaho, USA). A thermistor probe (Sable Systems, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA) was secured into the lid of each metabolic chamber to monitor  $T_a$ .

For most metabolic rate and EWL measurements, we used the same setup of atmospheric air dried with silica gel columns in series as Cory Toussaint and McKechnie (2012). However, for a small subset of measurements, an adsorption dryer (Ecodyr K-MT 3, Parker Zander, Charlotte, North Carolina, USA) was used to scrub water vapour and carbon dioxide from incurrent air provided by a compressor. Flow rates of approximately 2,500 mL min<sup>-1</sup> through the chambers were maintained during measurements, so that oxygen depletion between incurrent and excurrent air was less than 0.5 %. Maximum partial pressure of water vapour in the chamber was 1.17 kPa, but was maintained below 0.7 kPa (equivalent to dew point  $\approx -6.5$  °C) for the vast majority of runs. The 99 % equilibrium time (Lasiewski et al. 1966) for this setup was approximately 16.5 min. The flow rate for each channel was regulated using a mass flow controller (Model FMA5520, Omega Engineering, Bridgeport, New Jersey, USA) regularly calibrated against a soap bubble flow meter (Baker and Pouchot 1983). The water vapour, carbon dioxide and oxygen analysers were the same as those used by Cory Toussaint and McKechnie (2012), with the only difference in calibration procedures from the latter study being that we spanned the water vapour analyser using the oxygen dilution method of Lighton (2008). Water vapour pressure and fractional [O<sub>2</sub>] and [CO<sub>2</sub>] were recorded every 5 s. Two green pigeons were measured

simultaneously, with each cycle lasting for 1 h: baseline air for 8.3 min, followed by air from the chambers in sequence for 23.3 min each, and finally baseline air for the last 5 min. This cycle was repeated all night and birds spent 13–15 h in the chambers.

#### Laboratory experimental protocol

To investigate relationships among resting metabolic rate (RMR), EWL and  $T_b$  in *T. calvus*, we initially measured RMR and  $T_b$  over  $T_a$ s ranging from 0–35 in 5 °C increments in random order. All birds were maintained on the well-fed treatment during these measurements, and the sample size at each of the different  $T_a$ s varied from 6 to 10. Some of these initial runs involved green pigeons maintained at a constant  $T_a$  over the entire rest-phase period, whereas others involved a change in  $T_a$  approximately halfway through the rest-phase, with a minimum of 6 h spent at each  $T_a$ .

We then measured RMR and  $T_b$  in the green pigeons under well-fed and restricted-feeding regimes at three  $T_a$  values:  $5.5 \pm 0.5$ ,  $15.7 \pm 0.3$ , and  $25.4 \pm 0.3$  °C, respectively (hereafter, 5, 15 and 25 °C, respectively). For runs at 25 and 15 °C, the temperature cabinet was programmed to remain at a single temperature all night, but for runs at 5 °C it was programmed to gradually decrease from 20 to 5 °C between 18:00 and 21:00, remain at 5 °C for 8 h until 05:00, and then gradually increase to 20 °C at 07:00. Measurements at each  $T_a$  were first done using well-fed green pigeons, and then repeated 3–15 days later after the same birds had been food-restricted ( $n = 10$ ). During well-fed measurements, food was removed at approximately 15:00 in the afternoon prior to an experimental run, about 150 min before the birds were placed in the chambers. This allowed for the assumption that metabolic measurements are representative of post-absorptive metabolism, as the mean digesta retention time for a 220-g bird is estimated to be 93.6 min (Karasov 1990).

Rates of oxygen consumption ( $\dot{V}_{O_2}$ ) and carbon dioxide production ( $\dot{V}_{CO_2}$ ) were calculated as per Cory Toussaint and McKechnie (2012), and converted to metabolic rate (W) using the thermal equivalence data in Table 4.2 in Withers (1992). For each metabolic rate datum, the mean  $T_b$  value was calculated for a corresponding 30-min interval that included the time at which  $\dot{V}_{O_2}$  and  $\dot{V}_{CO_2}$  were measured. We calculated total thermal conductance ( $C_{total}$ ;  $mW\ ^\circ C^{-1}\ cm^{-2}$ ) as

$$C_{total} = \frac{RMR}{(T_b - T_a)A_b}$$

and dry heat transfer coefficient ( $C$ ) as

$$C = \frac{RMR - EHL}{(T_b - T_a)A_b}$$

where EHL is evaporative heat loss (W) and  $A_b$  is surface area in  $cm^2$ , predicted using the equation provided by Walsberg and King (1978). Occasional intermittent PIT tag reception resulted in incomplete  $T_b$  data records for some birds, and consequently sample sizes for  $T_b$ ,  $C_{total}$  and  $C$  were sometimes smaller than those for RMR and EWL.

#### Measurements of body and air temperature in outdoor aviaries

Subsequent to the laboratory component of this study, Thermochron iButtons (model 1922L, Maxim Dallas Semiconductors, Sunnyvale, CA, USA) were surgically implanted into the abdominal cavities of the green pigeons ( $n = 9$ ; same individuals as those used for laboratory measurements) by a veterinarian. The iButtons were coated with surgical wax prior to implantation and were programmed to record  $T_b$  (resolution 0.0625 °C) every 10 min. Before implantation, the iButtons were calibrated against a mercury thermometer in a temperature-controlled circulating water bath (Model F34-ME, Julabo, Seelbach, Germany), over a temperature range of 20–45 °C. The  $T_a$  at the aviary was recorded every 10 min for the duration of the study period by a weather station (Vantage Pro2, Davis Instruments, Haywood, CA, USA) calibrated against a mercury thermometer.

Body temperature data collected within 8 days of surgery were discarded, resulting in a  $T_b$  dataset for each pigeon over a 20-day period. Each individual was subjected to a restricted-feeding protocol once during this period. We recorded the  $M_b$  of the green pigeons every 3 days when they were well-fed, and daily during restricted feeding. The iButtons were surgically removed at the end of the study, and a 14-day recovery period was allowed before releasing the birds.

The amplitudes of circadian  $T_b$  cycles ( $R_T$ ) were calculated for each bird, by determining the difference between the respective means of the five highest and five lowest  $T_b$  values recorded each day. The daily heterothermy index (HI) was also calculated for each pigeon, thus quantifying the temporal variation of  $T_b$  from the optimal  $T_b$  (considered to be the modal  $T_b$ ;  $T_{mod}$ ) on a daily basis (Boyles et al. 2011). The HI was calculated as

$$HI = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (T_{b-mod} - T_{b-i})^2}{n - 1}}$$

where  $T_{b-mod}$  is the modal active-phase  $T_b$  of an individual,  $T_{b-i}$  the  $T_b$  at time  $i$ , and  $n$  is the number of times  $T_b$  is sampled per 24-h period (Boyles et al. 2011).

## Data analyses

Values are presented as mean  $\pm$  SD. To compare thermo-regulation between well-fed and food-restricted treatments, we analysed relationships between response variables (RMR,  $T_b$ ,  $R_T$  and HI) and predictor variables ( $T_a$ , feeding regime and %  $M_b$  loss) with generalised linear mixed models (GLMM) in R 2.13.1 (R Development Core Team 2011) using *nlme* (Pinheiro et al. 2009). Post hoc tests of multiple comparisons of means were also conducted (Tukey Contrasts for mixed-effects models), where appropriate, using *multcomp* (Hothorn et al. 2008) and *mvtnorm* (Genz et al. 2011). There were no interactions between predictor variables that had a significant effect on the response values, and thus interaction effects were excluded.

We also included a comparative analysis of BMR in columbids (see Electronic Supplementary Material) to verify conclusions of McNab (2000) regarding the lower BMR of island species compared to their mainland counterparts. We used the  $M_b$  and BMR data from Table 1 in McNab (2000) and converted the rates of oxygen consumption in the latter source to W using a conversion of 20.083 J mL  $O_2^{-1}$ . We added data for *Drepanoptila holosericea* (Schleucher 2002) and *Oena capensis* (Schleucher 2001). We used the BMR and  $M_b$  values for *Ptilinopus melanospilus* reported by Schleucher (2002) in preference to those reported by McNab (2000), since the former author examined seven birds whereas the latter examined only one. For the same reason, we used data for *Streptopelia senegalensis* from McKechnie et al. (2007;  $n = 30$ ) instead of those reported by Kendeigh et al. (1977), in which no sample sizes were provided. In the case of *Ducula pinon*, McNab (2000) and Schleucher (2002) reported very similar BMR values each based on two birds, and we averaged the BMR and  $M_b$  values from these two studies. For all analyses we used  $\log_{10}$ -transformed  $M_b$  and BMR data. We used island vs mainland categorisations as per McNab (2000), but did not distinguish between small and intermediate islands. Additional species added to the analysis were categorised using the same criteria as McNab (2000). We did not include climatic variables such as temperature, primary productivity or mean annual precipitation in the analysis, since the data for many species are from captive-bred birds in zoos (McNab 2000).

To test for phylogenetic signal and conduct phylogenetically independent analyses, we sampled 100 phylogenies for the 30 species in our data set from <http://www.birdtree.org> (Jetz et al. 2012) and used the majority rules consensus tree identified using the programme Mesquite (Maddison and Maddison 2011) for our analyses. We used the MatLab programme PHYSIG\_LL.m to test for phylogenetic signals in  $M_b$  and BMR using randomisation tests for mean-squared error and by

calculating the  $K$ -statistic (Blomberg et al. 2003). Both  $M_b$  ( $K = 0.704$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) and BMR ( $K = 0.673$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ) exhibited significant phylogenetic signal, and so we tested for a difference between mainland and island species using both ordinary least squares (OLS) and phylogenetically informed least squares (PGLS) regressions using the MatLab programme REGRESSIONv2.m (Lavin et al. 2008). Log-transformed  $M_b$  was included as a continuous predictor variable and distribution (island vs mainland) as a categorical predictor variable.

## Results

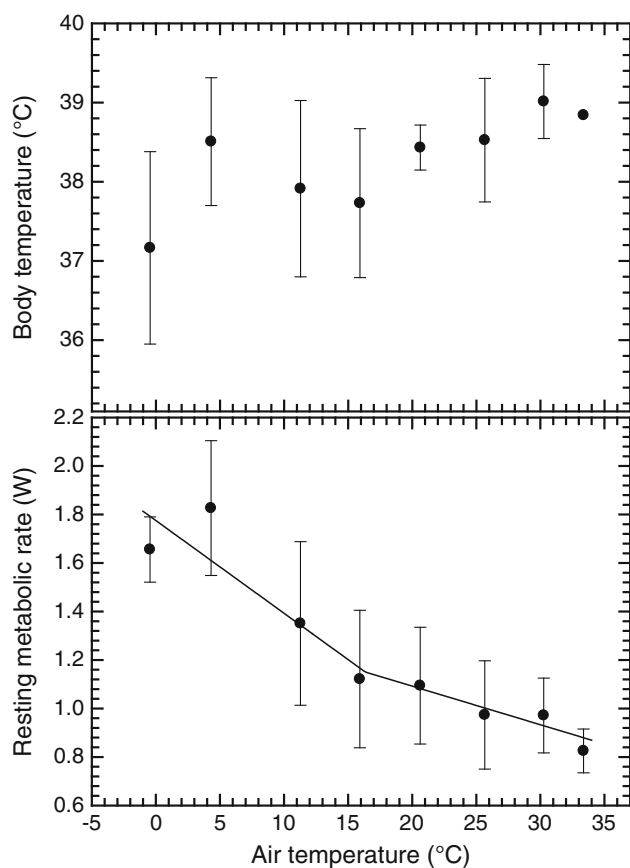
## Relationships among metabolic rate, body temperature and air temperature

Interactions among metabolic heat production, evaporative heat loss and  $T_b$  in African Green Pigeons did not match the classic model of endothermic homeothermy. Over the range of  $T_a$  we investigated ( $\sim 0$ – $35$  °C), mean  $T_b$  varied between approximately 37 and 39 °C, and was significantly positively correlated with  $T_a$  (Pearson product moment  $r = 0.508$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ; Fig. 1). Patterns of RMR were similarly variable; no obvious thermoneutral zone (TNZ) was evident, and both  $T_b$ , RMR and EWL were lower at  $T_a \approx 0$  °C than  $T_a \approx 5$  °C (Figs. 1, 2). Visual inspection of the RMR, EWL and conductance data suggested inflection points for all these variables around  $T_a \approx 15$  °C; to more rigorously evaluate this possibility we fitted two-segment linear (“broken-stick”) regression models to the data. In all cases these models provided significant fits, and identified inflection points between  $T_a \approx 15$  and 20 °C (RMR, EWL) or between  $T_a \approx 20$  and 25 °C ( $C_{total}$  and  $C$ ; Figs. 1, 2). The minimum mean RMR ( $0.825 \pm 0.090$  W) was measured at  $T_a \approx 33$  °C, and we consider this as the BMR for *T. calvus*.

## Heterothermy under laboratory conditions

The RMR increased significantly as  $T_a$  decreased (GLMM,  $F_{1,46} = 7.396$ ,  $p = 0.009$ ; Fig. 3a). In contrast,  $T_b$  decreased significantly as  $T_a$  decreased (GLMM,  $F_{1,37} = 13.316$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 3b). These patterns in  $T_b$  variation occurred regardless of whether birds were food-restricted or well-fed (Fig. 3).

After restricted feeding, green pigeons had a significantly lower  $M_b$  compared to well-fed birds (GLMM,  $F_{1,57} = 67.016$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), but showed no evidence of torpor. The mean minimum  $T_b$  during food restriction was  $35.4 \pm 1.1$  °C ( $n = 9$ ), with a single lowest value of 33.2 °C. Green pigeons lost  $4.0 \pm 1.9$  % of their initial  $M_b$  from the morning of the onset of restricted feeding, until the following afternoon just prior to the experimental run.

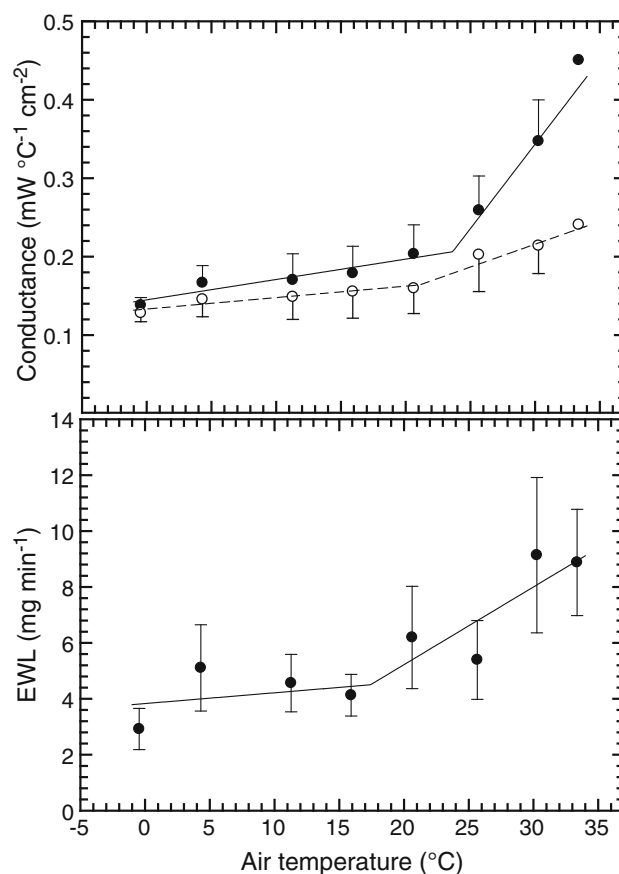


**Fig. 1** Relationships among body temperature ( $T_b$ ; *top panel*) and resting metabolic rate (RMR; *bottom panel*) and air temperature ( $T_a$ ) in African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) measured under laboratory conditions. *Error bars* indicate standard deviations. The *solid line* in the *lower panel* represents a broken-stick regression model fitted to the raw data, not the mean values plotted here. Samples sizes for RMR varied from 6 to 10 per  $T_a$ , but intermittent PIT tag reception resulted in incomplete  $T_b$  records for some birds, and thus sample sizes of  $T_b$  varied from 1 to 7

Despite showing the same trends in RMR and  $T_b$  with  $T_a$  as well-fed birds, food-restricted birds showed significant reduction in RMR by  $20.8 \pm 10.3\%$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,46} = 9.526$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ; Fig. 3a) and  $T_b$  by  $1.2 \pm 0.8\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,37} = 30.059$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 3b). The green pigeons'  $T_b$  decreased significantly with increasing %  $M_b$  loss (GLMM,  $F_{1,14} = 8.908$ ,  $p = 0.010$ ); but %  $M_b$  loss had no significant effect on RMR (GLMM,  $F_{1,16} = 0.700$ ,  $p = 0.415$ ). One of the food-restricted green pigeons died during measurements at  $T_a = 5\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ . The  $T_b$  of this bird slowly but steadily declined from  $39.5\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  on entering the chamber at 17:20, with no indication of the defence of a  $T_b$  setpoint.

#### Heterothermy in outdoor aviaries

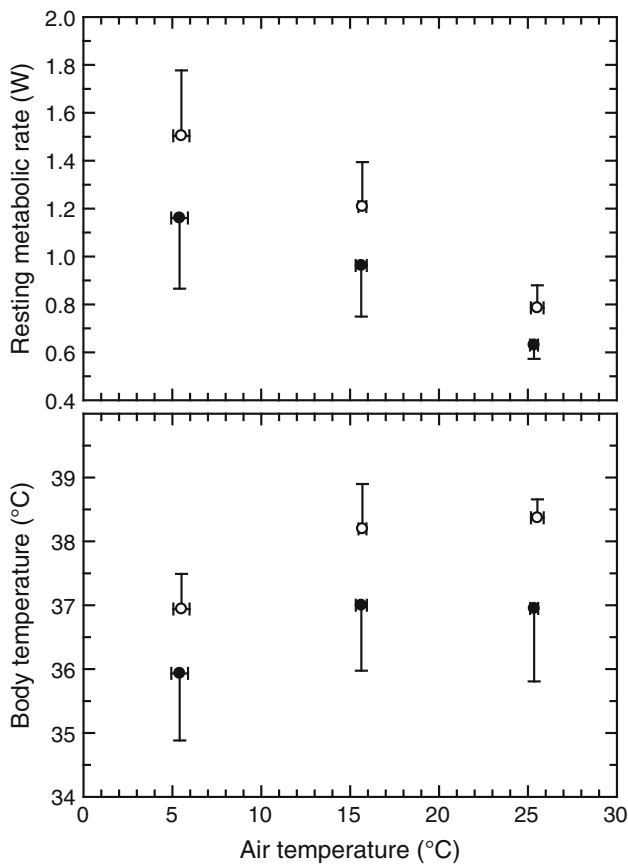
Under semi-natural conditions in outdoor aviaries, the  $T_b$  of *T. calvus* showed a typical avian circadian cycle (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 2** Relationships among total thermal conductance (*top panel*; *filled symbols*), dry heat transfer coefficient (*top panel*; *clear symbols*) and evaporative water loss (EWL; *bottom panel*) and air temperature ( $T_a$ ) in African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) measured under laboratory conditions. *Error bars* indicate standard deviations. The *solid and dashed lines* represent broken-stick regression models fitted to the raw data, not the mean values plotted here. Samples sizes for EWL varied from 6 to 10 per  $T_a$ , but intermittent PIT tag reception resulted in incomplete body temperature records for some birds, and sample sizes of conductance values thus varied from 1 to 7

The  $R_T$  of well-fed green pigeons was  $4.7 \pm 1.1\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ , and significantly increased with decreasing mean daily  $T_a$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,168} = 26.849$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 5a) and minimum daily  $T_a$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,168} = 19.960$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) regardless of whether birds were food-restricted or well-fed.

A transient increase in  $T_b$  was often observed during the active phase, generally at similar times in different birds (Fig. 4). These increases did not occur at the same time every day, but were more common in the late morning. They do not appear to be directly related to the daily peak in  $T_a$  and generally occurred over a brief period of approximately 30–40 min, with  $T_b$  rapidly increasing about 2–3  $^\circ\text{C}$  above normothermic active-phase values and then decreasing again (Fig. 4b). A period of colder weather occurred from 5–7 September, during which the maximum daily  $T_a$  was never above  $17.8\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  (Fig. 4). In the days



**Fig. 3** Resting metabolic rate (RMR) of African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) significantly increased with air temperature ( $T_a$ ) under laboratory conditions (upper panel), whereas body temperature ( $T_b$ ) significantly decreased as  $T_a$  decreased (lower panel). These trends were observed in both well-fed (clear symbols) and food-restricted (filled symbols) green pigeons kept overnight within metabolic chambers in a temperature-controlled cabinet. Both RMR and  $T_b$  were significantly lower in food-restricted compared to well-fed birds, regardless of  $T_a$ . Error bars indicate standard deviations. Sample sizes for RMR were constant at 10 per  $T_a$ , but intermittent PIT tag reception resulted in incomplete  $T_b$  records for some birds, and thus sample sizes of  $T_b$  varied from 7 to 9

following (but not during) this colder period, some birds decreased their rest-phase  $T_b$  (Fig. 4).

There was no evidence of torpor, but a number of individuals significantly decreased their rest-phase  $T_b$  during nights subsequent to restricted feeding (GLMM,  $F_{2,24} = 26.219$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 4d, f). The mean minimum  $T_b$  was  $35.2 \pm 1.3$  °C ( $n = 9$ ), with a single lowest value of 33.1 °C. Post hoc analyses showed that individuals had significantly lower rest-phase  $T_b$  after each consecutive day of restricted feeding (Tukey,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 4d, f). The  $R_T$  significantly increased with a continuation of restricted feeding (GLMM,  $F_{2,24} = 46.058$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 5b) and a reduction in  $M_b$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,7} = 23.331$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ), indicating the use of shallow rest-phase hypothermia. Post hoc analyses also indicated that green pigeons significantly

and progressively increased their  $R_T$  on each consecutive day of restricted feeding, and  $R_T$  was  $1.3 \pm 0.5$  °C higher compared to well-fed birds on the second day of restricted feeding (Tukey,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 5b). In contrast to  $R_T$ , daily HI values did not vary significantly with mean  $T_a$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,168} = 0.177$ ,  $p = 0.675$ ; Fig. 4c), minimum  $T_a$  (GLMM,  $F_{1,168} = 0.052$ ,  $p = 0.819$ ), restricted feeding (GLMM,  $F_{2,24} = 0.355$ ,  $p = 0.705$ ; Fig. 5d), or  $M_b$  loss (GLMM,  $F_{1,7} = 0.130$ ,  $p = 0.729$ ).

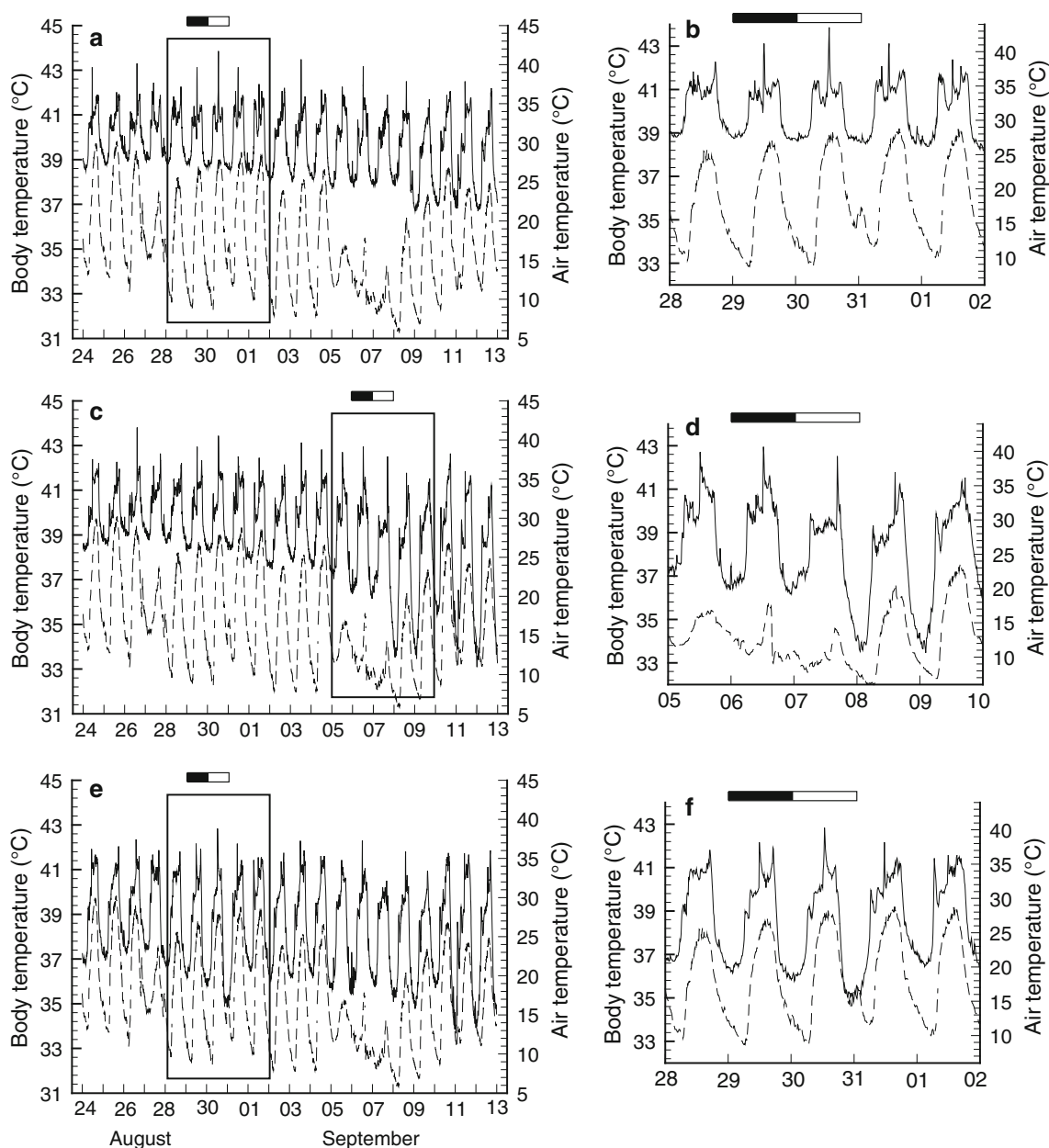
#### Columbid BMR: effect of island vs mainland distributions

A PGLS regression model with Pagel's  $\lambda$ -transformation provided the best fit to the BMR data (Table 1). In this model, and in all other models fitted, the BMR of island species was significantly lower than that of mainland species (Table 2; Fig. 6). The predicted BMR for a 200-g species is approximately 12 % lower for islands than mainlands, and the corresponding difference for a 500-g species is approximately 19 %.

#### Discussion

Patterns of normothermic rest-phase thermoregulation in African Green Pigeons differed in several respects from the classical endothermic thermogenic defence of a well-defined  $T_b$  setpoint (Dawson and Whittow 2000; Scholander et al. 1950). In addition to the comparatively variable  $T_b$ , the relationship between RMR and  $T_a$  was not characterised by a clear TNZ in which RMR is independent of  $T_a$ . Instead, an inflection point was evident in the RMR– $T_a$  relationship, above which RMR continued to gradually decrease with increasing  $T_a$ . Similarly, EWL began increasing at  $T_a \approx 18$  °C, a far lower value than expected for a bird of this size (McKechnie and Wolf 2010). Collectively, the relationships among RMR, EWL, conductance and  $T_b$  in *T. calvus* suggest an atypical pattern of avian thermoregulation (Scholander et al. 1950). Although Weathers (1981) noted that avian  $T_b$  is often comparatively labile on account of birds' typically small size and low thermal inertia, a comparison of  $T_b$  variation in *T. calvus* to that of a typical small passerine illustrates our point. Normothermic  $T_b$  in the 22-g red-headed finch (*Amadina erythrocephala*) varied by  $\sim 1$  °C over  $T_a = 0$ –35 °C (Fig. 1a in McKechnie and Lovegrove 2003). In contrast, the corresponding range of normothermic  $T_b$  in *T. calvus* is approximately twice as wide (Fig. 1), despite this species being  $\sim$ tenfold larger. Moreover,  $T_b$  in *A. erythrocephala* was not significantly correlated with  $T_a$ .

A cursory comparison of our RMR and  $T_b$  data reveals an apparent discrepancy in that the values during the



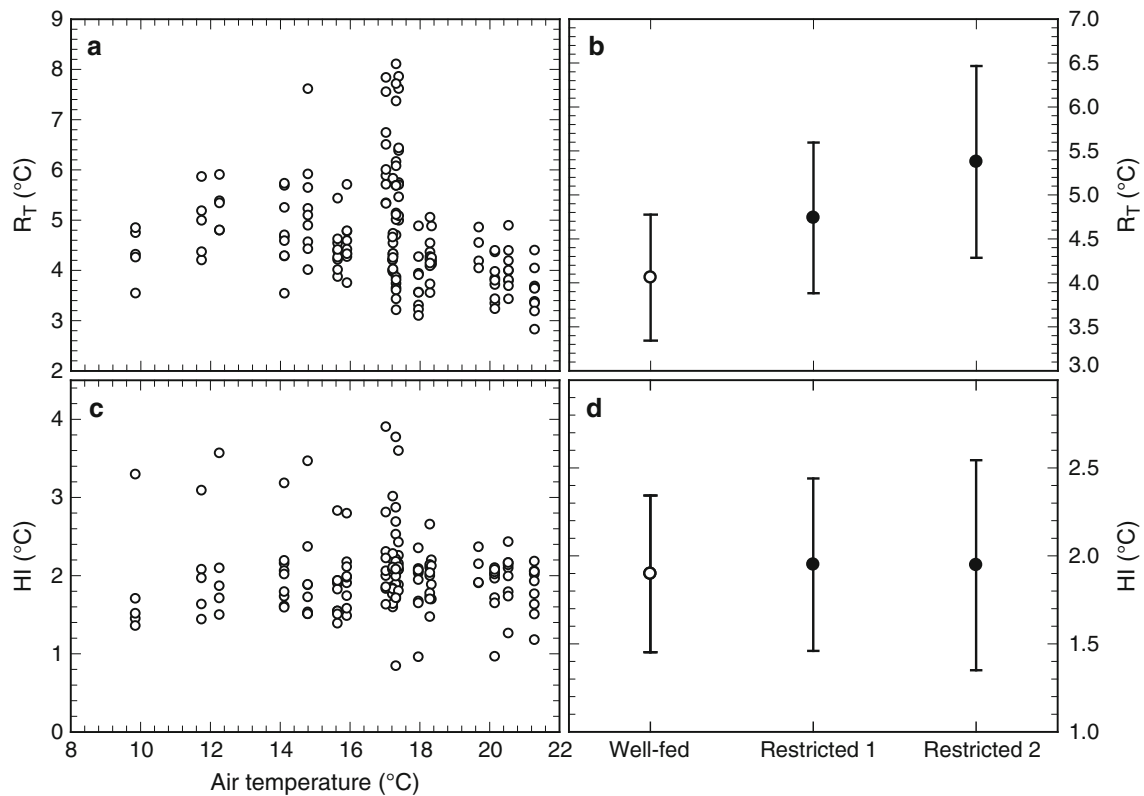
**Fig. 4** Body temperature ( $T_b$ ; solid lines) cycles of African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*) showed typical avian circadian rhythms over a 20-day period (24 August–12 September 2012) in outdoor aviaries. The amplitude of circadian  $T_b$  rhythms ( $R_T$ ) significantly increased as air temperature (dashed lines) decreased. Restricted feeding, during which green pigeons received 20 g of food on the first day (filled

block) and no food on the second (clear block), resulted in significantly higher  $R_T$  values. These three  $T_b$  traces are representative of common patterns observed in individuals, and boxes in the full traces (a, c, e) indicate sections that have been enlarged in b, d and f, respectively

well-fed measurements (Fig. 3) at  $T_a = 5^\circ\text{C}$  were substantially lower than the corresponding values observed earlier when the overall patterns of thermoregulation were investigated (Fig. 1). We cannot identify any obvious reason for this discrepancy, but we do not believe that it could change our conclusions. If the  $T_b$  and RMR data for well-fed birds at  $T_a = 5^\circ\text{C}$  presented in Fig. 1 are replaced with those plotted in Fig. 3, then the correlation between  $T_b$  and  $T_a$  is strengthened, not weakened.

Although all the columbids investigated by McNab (2000) showed patterns of  $T_b$  and RMR that approximately matched typical endothermic homeothermy, Schleucher's (2002) data for three species, namely *Ptilinopus melanospilus*, *Drepanoptila holosericea* and *Ducula pinon* reveal variation in rest-phase  $T_b$  quantitatively similar to that we have documented in *T. calvus*, with significant positive correlations between  $T_b$  and  $T_a$  in the three former species. Regression models fitted to RMR vs  $T_a$  for these species





**Fig. 5** Amplitudes of circadian body temperature cycles ( $R_T$ ) of African Green Pigeons (*Treron calvus*;  $n = 9$ ) in outdoor aviaries significantly increased with a decrease in mean daily air temperature ( $T_a$ ; **a**) and a continuation of restricted feeding (**b**; filled symbols). However, the daily heterothermy index (HI), an integrated metric of

the magnitude of heterothermy, did not significantly change with mean daily  $T_a$  (**c**) or a continuation of fasting (**d**). Error bars indicate standard deviations. Only well-fed birds (clear symbols) are presented in comparison to mean daily  $T_a$  (**a**, **c**)

**Table 1** Regression models fitted to  $\log_{10}M_b$  (body mass; g) and  $\log_{10}BMR$  (basal metabolic rate; W) data for 30 species of columbids (see Electronic Supplementary Material) using ordinary least squares (OLS) or phylogenetically informed approaches

Model	Intercept	SE	Slope	SE	Distrib.	SE	Ln max. likelihood	Transform parameter	$R^{2a}$	AIC	AICc	$w_i$
OLS	-1.618	0.114	0.662	0.043	0.079	0.038	32.069	-	0.903	-56.139	-54.539	0.030
PGLS	-1.555	0.139	0.626	0.052	0.077	0.029	28.344	-	0.849	-48.688	-47.088	<0.001
Reg OU	-1.612	0.112	0.661	0.045	0.070	0.033	33.224	$d = 0.262$	0.890	-56.448	-53.948	0.035
Reg $\rho$	-1.642	0.104	0.671	0.041	0.076	0.031	35.337	$\rho = 0.227$	0.909	-60.674	-58.174	0.291
<b>Reg <math>\lambda</math></b>	<b>-1.651</b>	<b>0.101</b>	<b>0.673</b>	<b>0.040</b>	<b>0.080</b>	<b>0.030</b>	<b>36.130</b>	$\lambda = 0.483$	<b>0.915</b>	<b>-62.260</b>	<b>-59.760</b>	<b>0.643</b>

“Distrib”. is a categorical variable indicating whether species are distributed on mainlands or islands. For phylogenetically informed models, we applied various branch length transformations available in the MatLab programme REGRESSIONv2.m, namely phylogenetic generalised least squares (PGLS; Brownian motion, i.e. no transformation), Ornstein–Uhlenbeck (Reg OU), Grafen’s  $\rho$  (Reg  $\rho$ ), and Pagel’s  $\lambda$  (Reg  $\lambda$ ; Lavin et al. 2008). The model with the lowest Akaike Information Criterion (AIC) and corrected AIC (AICc) values, indicating best fit, is indicated in bold. Akaike weights ( $w_i$ ) are also provided

<sup>a</sup> Not comparable between conventional and phylogenetically informed regressions (Lavin et al. 2008)

did not intercept the  $x$ -axes at  $T_a = T_b$ , a central prediction of classic endothermic homeothermy (Scholander et al. 1950). Moreover,  $C_{total}$  (designated  $C_{wet}$  by the latter author) in *P. melanospilus* and *D. holosericea* began to increase at  $T_a$  values around 20 °C (see Fig. 1 of Schleichner 2002), similar to the pattern in *T. calvus*. Collectively,

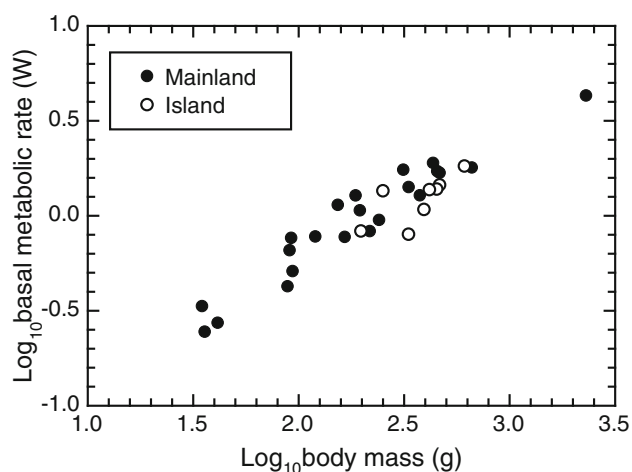
these observations suggest that thermoregulation in the subfamily Treroninae may differ in several respects from typical avian patterns.

Our results support the prediction that *T. calvus* uses shallow rest-phase hypothermia but not daily torpor, and at no time did wild-caught green pigeons show the lethargic

**Table 2**  $F$ -ratios and probabilities for various regression models (see Table 1 legend for explanations) comparing basal metabolic rate (BMR) between columbids occurring on islands and mainlands

Model	Distribution	
	$F_{1,27}$	$p$
OLS	4.318	0.047
PGLS	6.876	0.014
Reg OU	4.594	0.041
Reg $\rho$	6.013	0.021
<b>Reg <math>\lambda</math></b>	<b>7.138</b>	<b>0.013</b>

The best-fit model is indicated in bold (see Table 1)

**Fig. 6** The basal metabolic rate (BMR) of island columbid species (clear symbols) and mainland species (filled symbols). Data and sources are provided in the Electronic Supplementary Material

state characteristic of daily torpor as observed in *D. holosericea* (Schleucher 2001). Instead, green pigeons responded to restricted feeding using shallow rest-phase hypothermia, a response observed in several other columbids (Jensen and Bech 1992a; Laurila and Hohtola 2005; MacMillen and Trost 1967; Phillips and Berger 1991; Schleucher 2001). The reduction in RMR of  $\sim 21\%$  observed under laboratory conditions is similar to those observed by Schleucher (2001) in *O. capensis* and *G. cuneata* after 24-h fasting periods, although these species showed more pronounced hypothermia than *T. calvus* (Schleucher 2001). The fractionally greater heterothermic responses in these species compared to *T. calvus* could reflect their substantially lower  $M_b$  (both  $\sim 35$  g).

In the outdoor aviaries, *T. calvus* increased the depth of rest-phase hypothermia with a continuation of fasting and loss of  $M_b$ , as  $R_T$  was significantly and progressively increased over the two consecutive days of restricted feeding. An increase in  $R_T$  with fasting also occurred in *Columba livia* and *S. roseogrisea*, although these species elevated  $R_T$  by substantially higher values (Laurila and

Hohtola 2005; Walker et al. 1983). However, this was under more extreme conditions than in our study, with lower  $T_a$  and/or longer periods of fasting (Laurila and Hohtola 2005; Walker et al. 1983). Although our restricted-feeding protocol was less intense than in some other thermoregulatory studies on columbids (Jensen and Bech 1992a; MacMillen and Trost 1967; Walker et al. 1983), the fact that one of our food-restricted birds died during a laboratory experimental run suggests that these green pigeons were energy-stressed and close to their thermoregulatory limits.

In contrast to  $R_T$ , daily HI values did not change significantly with  $T_a$ , restricted feeding or  $M_b$  loss in *T. calvus*. The  $R_T$  value only considers the difference between the daily extremes of  $T_b$ , and it could be argued that HI provides a better representation of heterothermic responses as it integrates the depth and duration of decreases in  $T_b$  by an individual (Boyles et al. 2011). The lack of significant increases in HI during restricted feeding may be a result of the transient increases in day-time  $T_b$  which would have been incorporated in the calculation of HI values and may have influenced the results obtained when comparing this metric across different  $T_a$ s and feeding regimes.

Captive birds and mammals are generally less likely to use torpor and/or hibernation compared to free-ranging populations (Geiser et al. 2000), and recordings of  $T_b$  in free-ranging *T. calvus* individuals would be necessary to completely rule out the possibility of this species using torpor. However, we are satisfied that our comparison of *T. calvus* and *D. holosericea* is valid because (a) the two individuals of the latter species examined by Schleucher (2001) were captive-bred birds held in a zoo, whereas we examined wild-caught birds and (b) the torpor bouts reported by Schleucher (2001) occurred under conditions of ad libitum feeding at  $T_a < 15$  °C. In the present study, we exposed green pigeons to  $T_a \approx 5$  °C combined with restricted feeding, and thus consider it very unlikely that the absence of daily torpor is merely an artefact of our study involving birds temporarily held in captivity.

The lack of torpor in *T. calvus* provides support, albeit very preliminary, for the hypothesis that nocturnal predation risk and a continental distribution select against the use of torpor in columbids, whereas pronounced heterothermy is more likely to evolve in island species not threatened by nocturnal predators. *D. holosericea* is confined to the islands of New Caledonia, and likely experiences periodic fruit shortages due to variable rainfall caused by the El Niño Southern Oscillation phenomenon (ENSO; McKechnie and Lovegrove 2006; Philander 1983; Stone et al. 1996). Furthermore, it would presumably have been safe for these doves to enter a non-responsive lethargic state at night due to the absence of native nocturnal, arboreal predators on this island (Bauer and Vindum 1990; Rouys

and Theuerkauf 2003), although rats (*Rattus* spp.) and feral cats (*Felis catus*) have been introduced in recent millennia (Rouys and Theuerkauf 2003). In contrast, *T. calvus* occurs in southern and east Africa, and although it also experiences variable rainfall on account of ENSO (Nicholson and Kim 1997; Stone et al. 1996), it can potentially evade food shortages via nomadic movements. Moreover, the use of torpor and the associated lethargic state would impose a substantial predation risk on roosting *T. calvus*, due to the presence of nocturnal, arboreal predators (Nowak and Paradiso 1999; Skinner and Chimimba 2005).

Another factor potentially involved in the variation between *D. holosericea* and *T. calvus* in their use of torpor concerns their gut morphology. Gibb and Penny (2010) placed *Drepanoptila* within *Ptilinopus* (fruit-doves), which have thin-walled gizzards and short, wide intestines, and digest fruit pulp but defaecate seeds intact (Gibbs et al. 2001; Goodwin 1983; Lambert 1989). In contrast, *Treron* spp. grind and digest small seeds because of their muscular, grit-containing gizzards and long, narrow intestines (Cowles and Goodwin 1959; Goodwin 1983; Lambert 1989). This difference raises the possibility that the overall digestive efficiency of *Treron* is higher than that of fruit-doves, potentially reducing selection for energy conservation via torpor. However, the degree to which seeds contribute to the energy balance of *Treron* green pigeons remains unclear. Moreover, at a broader scale the avian taxa in which the capacity for torpor is most pronounced feed on diverse diets ranging from dilute nectar (e.g. hummingbirds) to aerial insects (e.g. caprimulgids) and fruit (e.g. mousebirds). The latter observation suggests that the temporal and spatial predictability of food resources may be more important than their nutritional properties in driving the evolution of torpor. Nevertheless, the potential importance of variation in gut morphology among columbids in terms of energy balance and factors selecting for energy conservation deserves further investigation.

The near-global distribution of columbids, combined with their rapid evolutionary radiation on islands (Gibbs et al. 2001; Pereira et al. 2007) and the fact that the occurrence of torpor has been confirmed in one species (Schleucher 2001), makes them a potentially useful model for testing hypotheses regarding the ecological determinants of avian heterothermy. Moreover, the influential recent phylogenetic study of Hackett et al. (2008) placed the Columbidae in the same phylogenetically ancient clade that includes the caprimulgids (nightjars and allies), Apodidae (swifts) and Trochilidae (hummingbirds), all groups well known for pronounced heterothermy, suggesting that the physiological capacity for torpor may be greater in this group than currently thought.

Our analysis of interspecific variation in columbid BMR supports the idea that species that occur on islands have

evolved lower BMR than their mainland counterparts, verifying the conclusion reached by McNab (2000). This analysis has several limitations. First, the sample sizes for several species are small (in some cases  $n = 1$ ; see McNab 2000). Few studies have examined the influence of data based on small sample sizes in comparative analyses, but Jetz et al. (2008) found that this did not affect the patterns in their interspecific analysis of avian BMR in any meaningful way. Second, our analysis implicitly assumes that BMR is a fixed, species-specific parameter. In reality, avian BMR is a variable trait constantly adjusted in response to environmental conditions (reviewed by McKechnie 2008), including in tropical and subtropical species (Maldonado et al. 2009; Smit and McKechnie 2010a; van de Ven et al. 2013). Finally, as already mentioned we could not account for fine-scale variation in climatic conditions across the ranges of the species included in the analysis because many of the data were obtained from captive-bred birds, whereas others were from wild-caught individuals.

Most investigations of island adaptations in birds have focused on morphology (Blondel et al. 1999; Clegg et al. 2002; Grant 1968; Wright and Steadman 2012) or immune function (Matson 2006), but the lower BMR of island columbids suggests that avian maintenance metabolic rates are also subject to selection associated with insularity. Lovegrove (2000) predicted that low BMR should evolve in island mammals on account of unpredictable ENSO-driven patterns of rainfall on many islands, combined with the inability of most mammals to migrate away from islands during periods of food shortage. These arguments may be expected to apply equally to birds that are sedentary and which do not leave islands through nomadic movements or migration during periods of food shortage, and we suggest that the comparatively low BMR of island species reflects sources of selection similar to those proposed by Lovegrove (2000) for insular mammals.

In summary, our results reveal that an Afrotropical frugivorous columbid shows patterns of thermoregulation that differ in several respects from typical endothermic patterns, uses shallow heterothermy under conditions of low  $T_a$  and restricted feeding, but apparently does not have the capacity for daily torpor. The marked contrast between heterothermy in *T. calvus* and *D. holosericea* supports the notion that predation risk and insular vs continental distributions are two key determinants of torpor in birds. Furthermore, the lower BMR of columbid birds on islands compared to mainland species supports the idea that insularity is associated with more pronounced selection for energy conservation. Taken together, these patterns raise the possibility of an insular metabolic syndrome in columbids involving both reduced maintenance metabolic costs and the capacity for torpor, although we predict the latter is correlated with degree of predation risk and is more

pronounced in species on predator-free islands. The Columbidae, in particular those species restricted to islands, potentially represent a useful model system for elucidating the selective forces acting on both metabolic rates and heterothermic responses in birds.

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