

CHINA CROSSROADS

Tuesday, November 3rd, 2026, 19:30 – 21:00

How Do Human Beings Think?

What Songbirds Teach Us about

How Human Brains Really Work

Khashayar Esmaeilzadeh

Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS)

Institute of Neuroscience

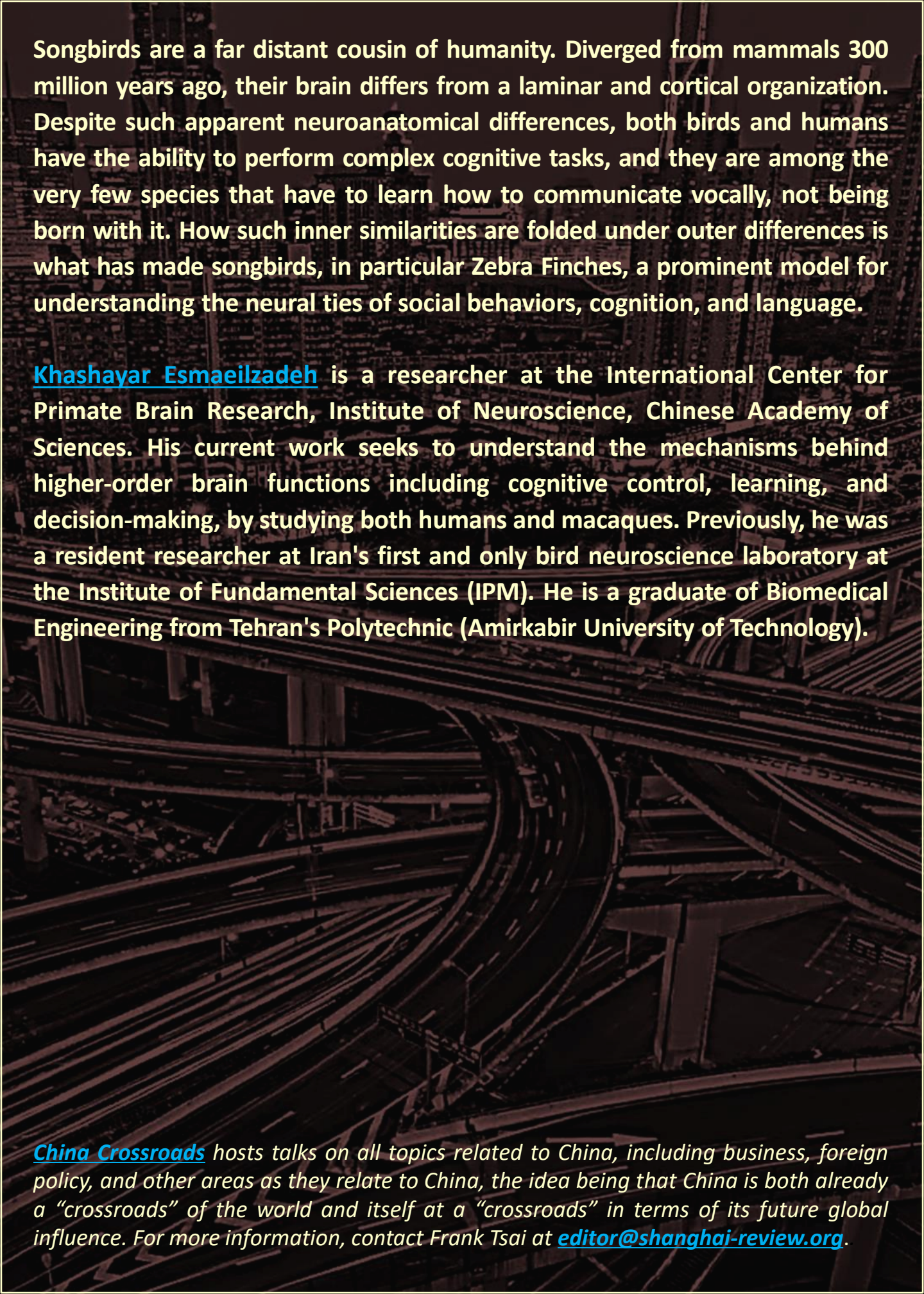
International Center for Primate Brain Research

WhiteSpace | Zhongcai Center 6F | 658 Niuzhuang Lu

150rmb admission with drink | FREE for members

Scan to RSVP or email editor@shanghai-review.org





Songbirds are a far distant cousin of humanity. Diverged from mammals 300 million years ago, their brain differs from a laminar and cortical organization. Despite such apparent neuroanatomical differences, both birds and humans have the ability to perform complex cognitive tasks, and they are among the very few species that have to learn how to communicate vocally, not being born with it. How such inner similarities are folded under outer differences is what has made songbirds, in particular Zebra Finches, a prominent model for understanding the neural ties of social behaviors, cognition, and language.

[Khashayar Esmaeilzadeh](#) is a researcher at the International Center for Primate Brain Research, Institute of Neuroscience, Chinese Academy of Sciences. His current work seeks to understand the mechanisms behind higher-order brain functions including cognitive control, learning, and decision-making, by studying both humans and macaques. Previously, he was a resident researcher at Iran's first and only bird neuroscience laboratory at the Institute of Fundamental Sciences (IPM). He is a graduate of Biomedical Engineering from Tehran's Polytechnic (Amirkabir University of Technology).

[China Crossroads](#) hosts talks on all topics related to China, including business, foreign policy, and other areas as they relate to China, the idea being that China is both already a “crossroads” of the world and itself at a “crossroads” in terms of its future global influence. For more information, contact Frank Tsai at editor@shanghai-review.org.