Why study an exotic animal?

or

What can we learn from studying the barn owl?

Yoram Gutfreund
The Technion, Haifa, Israel

Which model system?

While humans are good for generating hypotheses, animals are good for testing them.

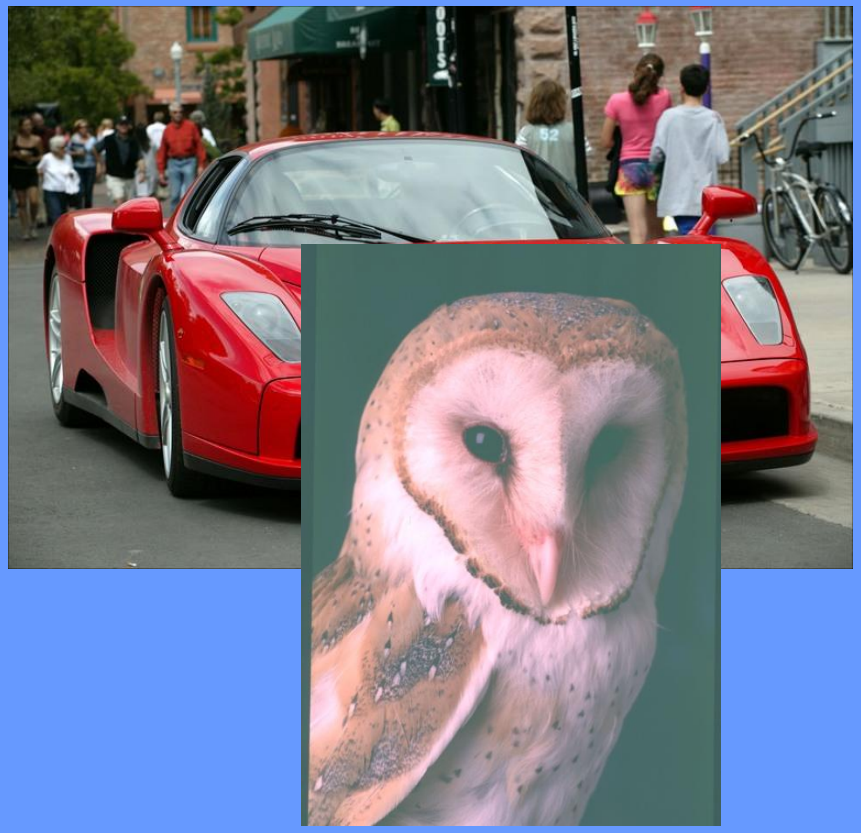
Which animals?

Animals that lend themselves to combined behavioral and neurophysiological work.

Specialists or Generalists?

- Sound localization
- Sensory maps plasticity and development
- Spatial attention
- Multisensory integration


120 ACA



Barn owls as model system for sound localization

- Facial ruff serves as a sound amplifier

Barn owls as model system for sound localization

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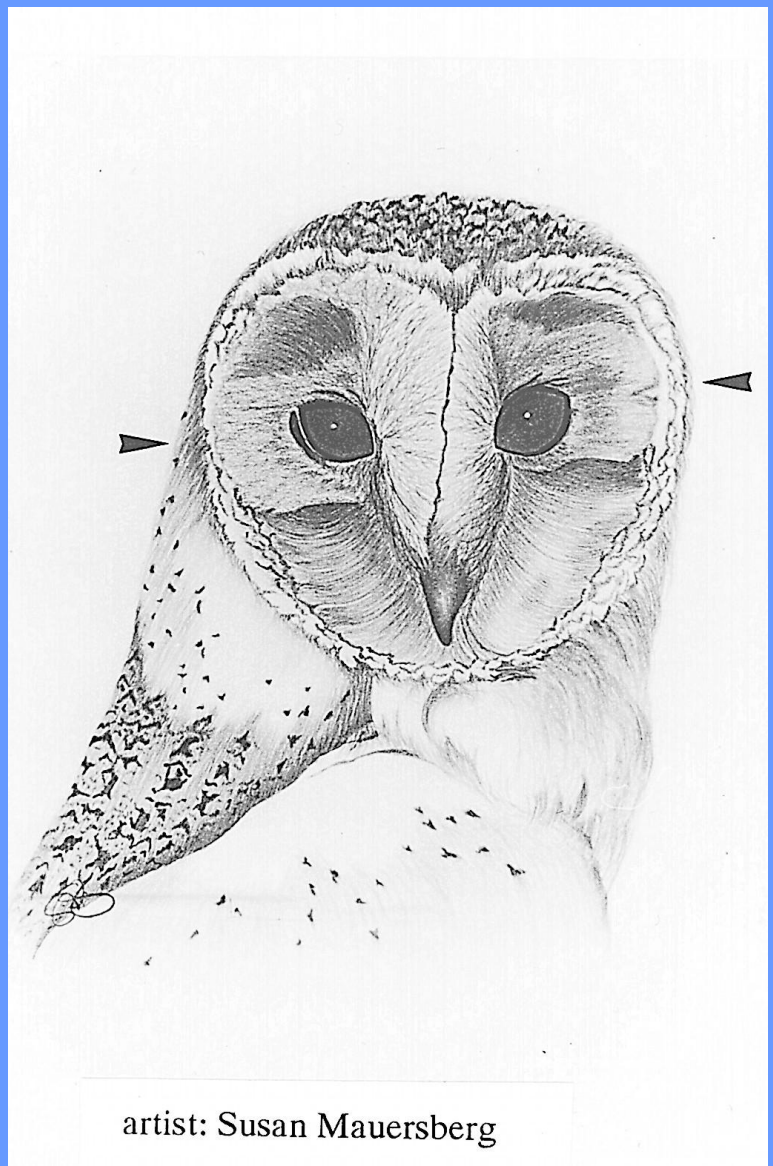
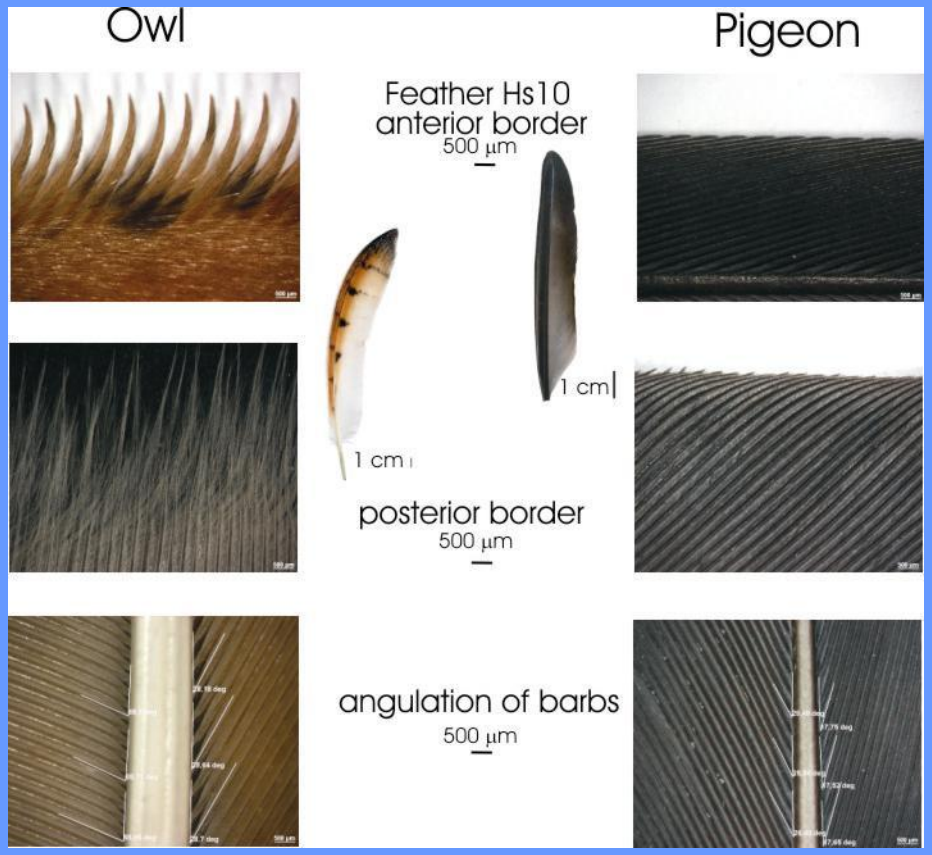
- Asymmetric ears allow for an increased spatial resolution in the vertical plane



artist: Susan Mauersberg

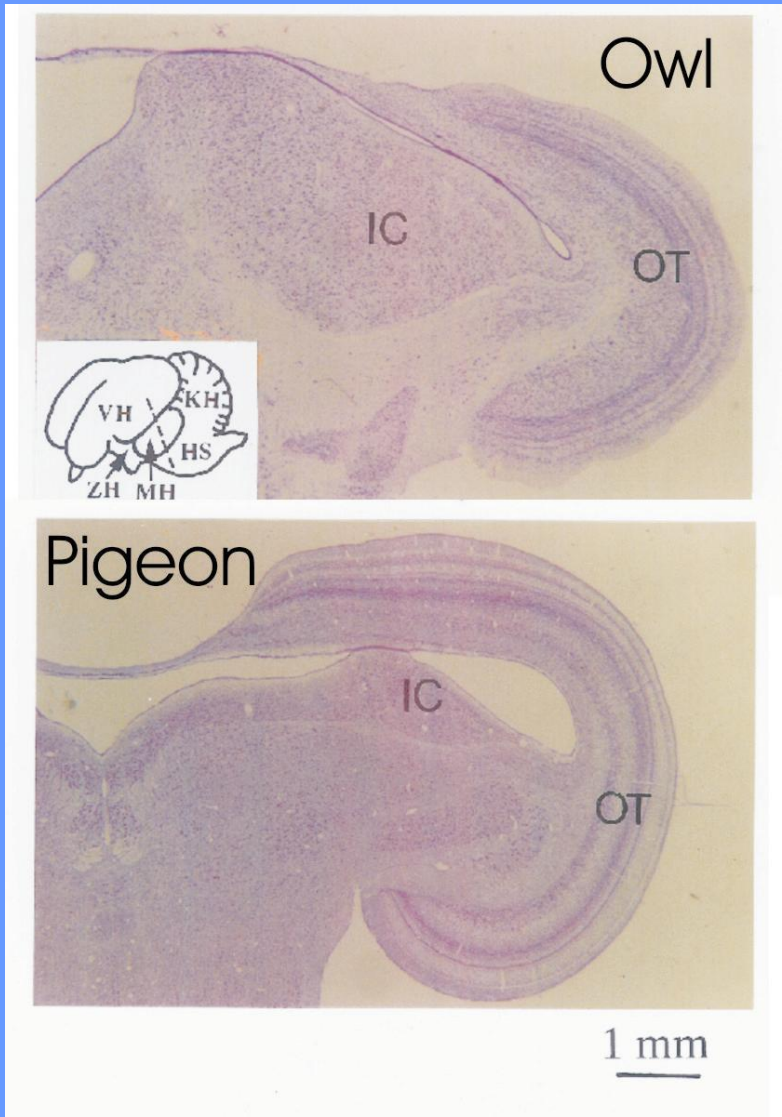
Barn owls as model system for sound localization

- Facial ruff serves as a sound amplifier
- Asymmetric ears allow for an increased spatial resolution in the vertical plane
- Comb-like structures at the leading edge of the wing reduce noise during flight

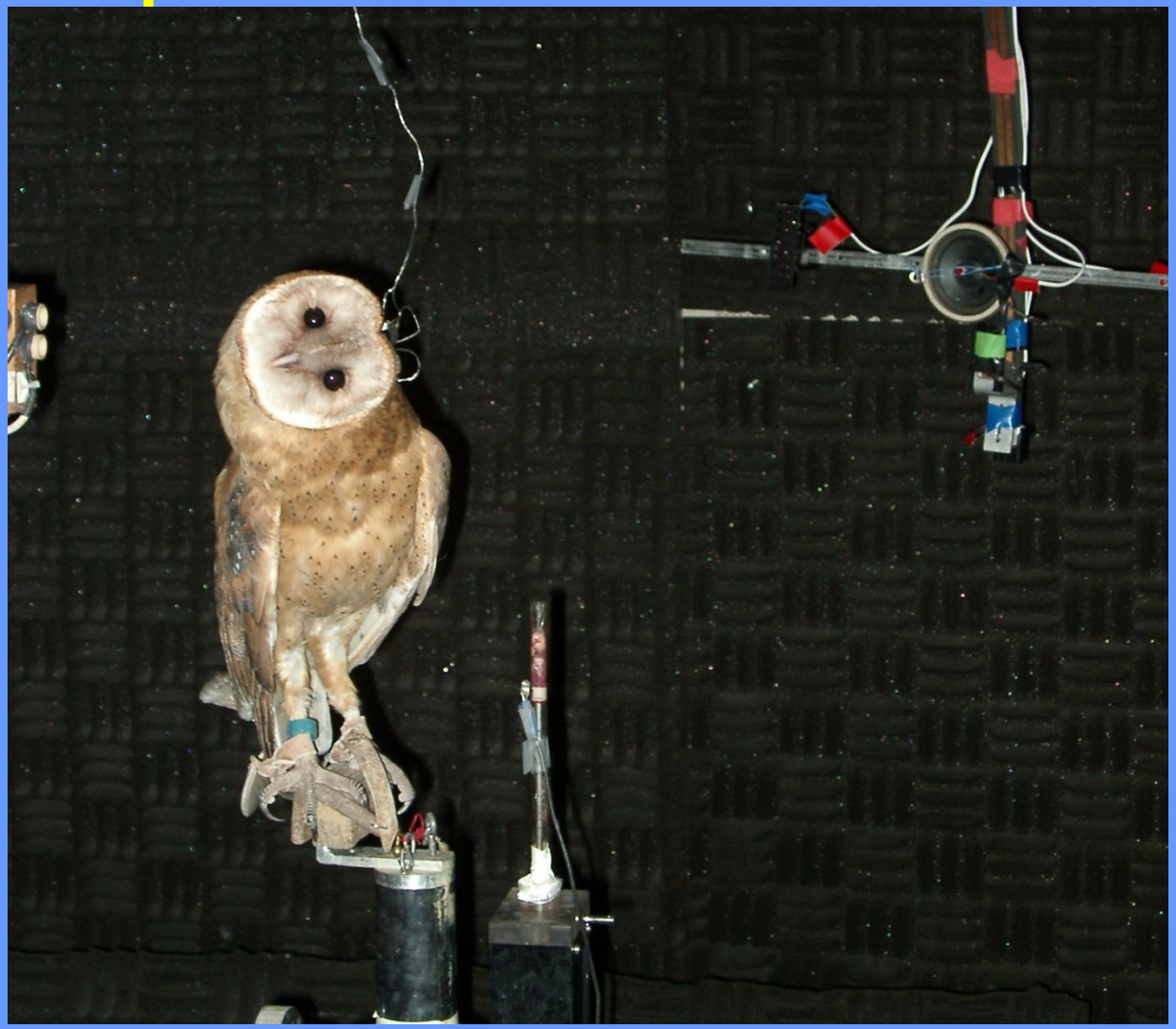


Barn owls as model system for sound localization

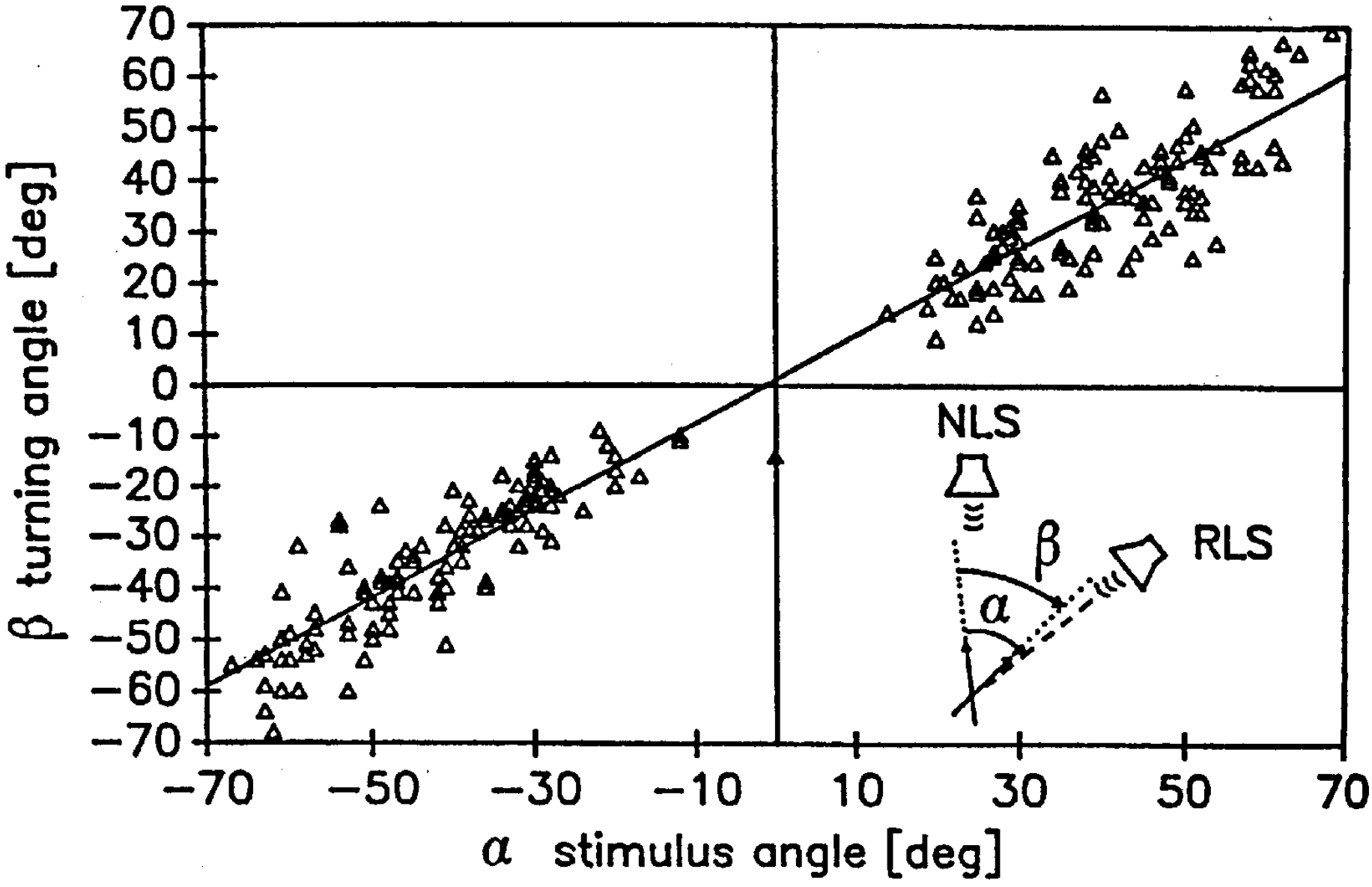
- Facial ruff serves as a sound amplifier
- Asymmetric ears allow for an increased spatial resolution in the vertical plane
- Comb-like structures at the leading edge of the wing reduce noise during flight
- Brain structures involved in the analysis of sound are enlarged



Performing a psychoacoustic experiment with an owl



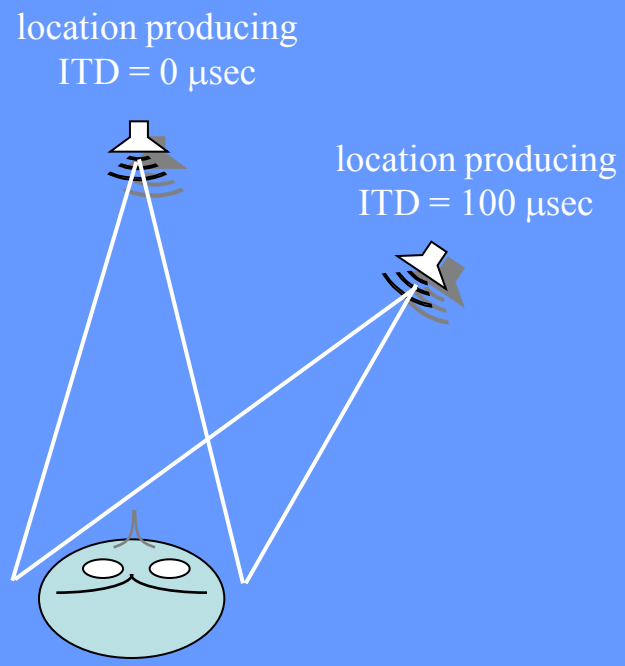
Sound-localization with free-field stimuli

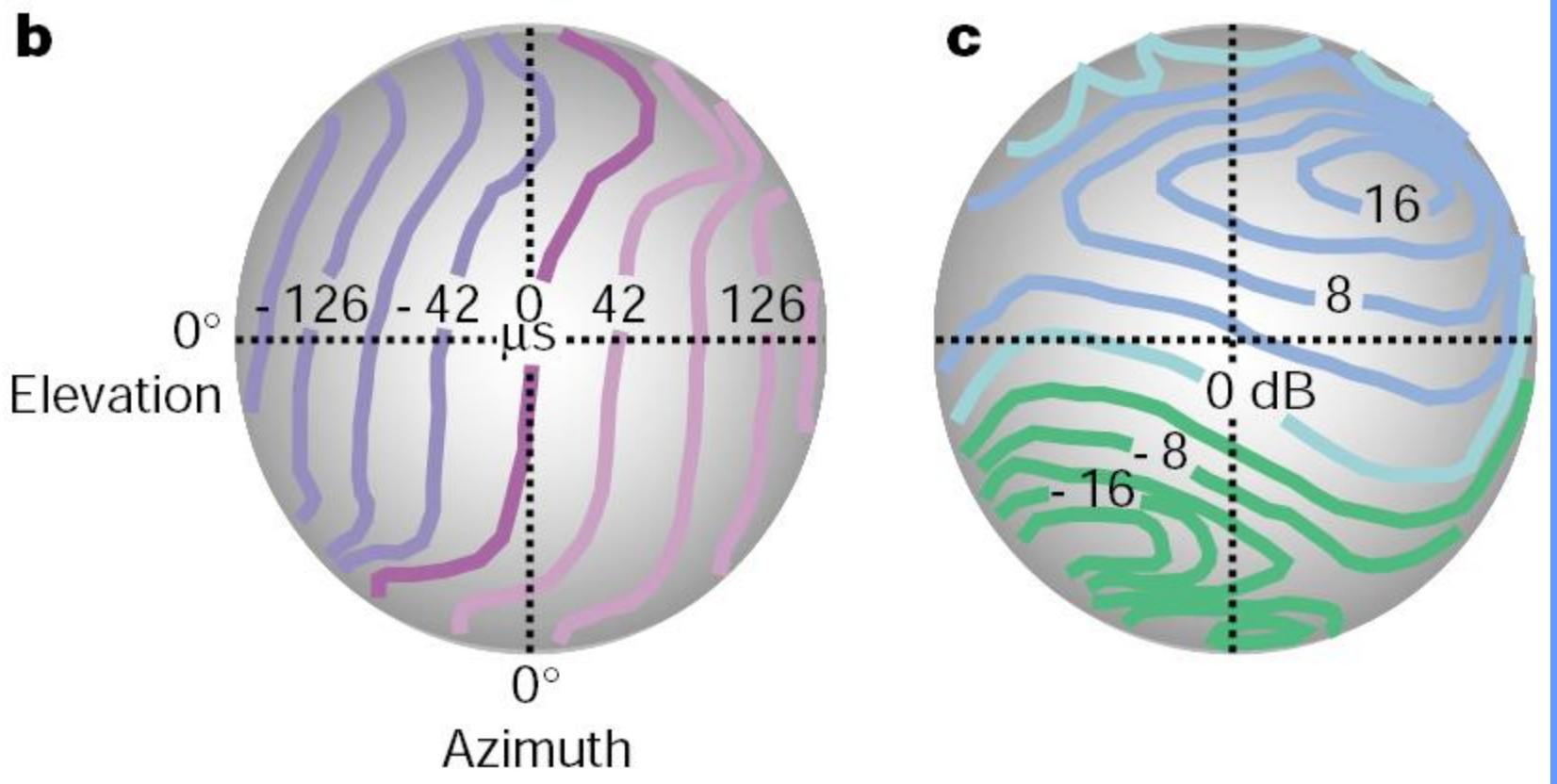


- The auditory localization cues:

- ITD - horizontal

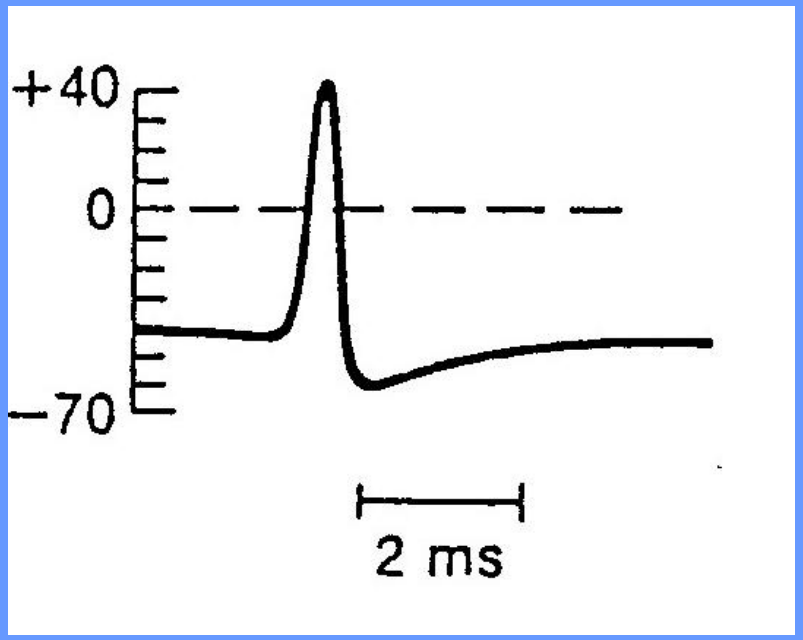
ILD - vertical



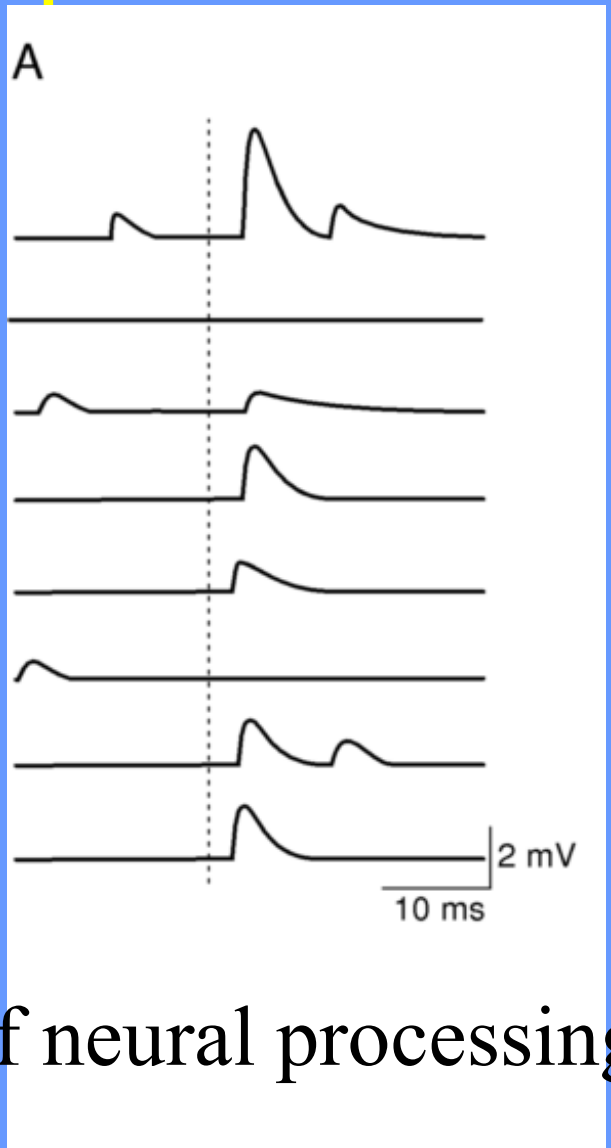

b
- 126
- 42
0
42
126
μs
0°
Elevation
0°
Azimuth
c
16
8
0 dB
- 8
- 16

Precision of sound localization in barn owls may be as good as 3 deg which corresponds to 6-10 μs.

Action potential



Postsynaptic potentials



These signals are the “language" of neural processing.

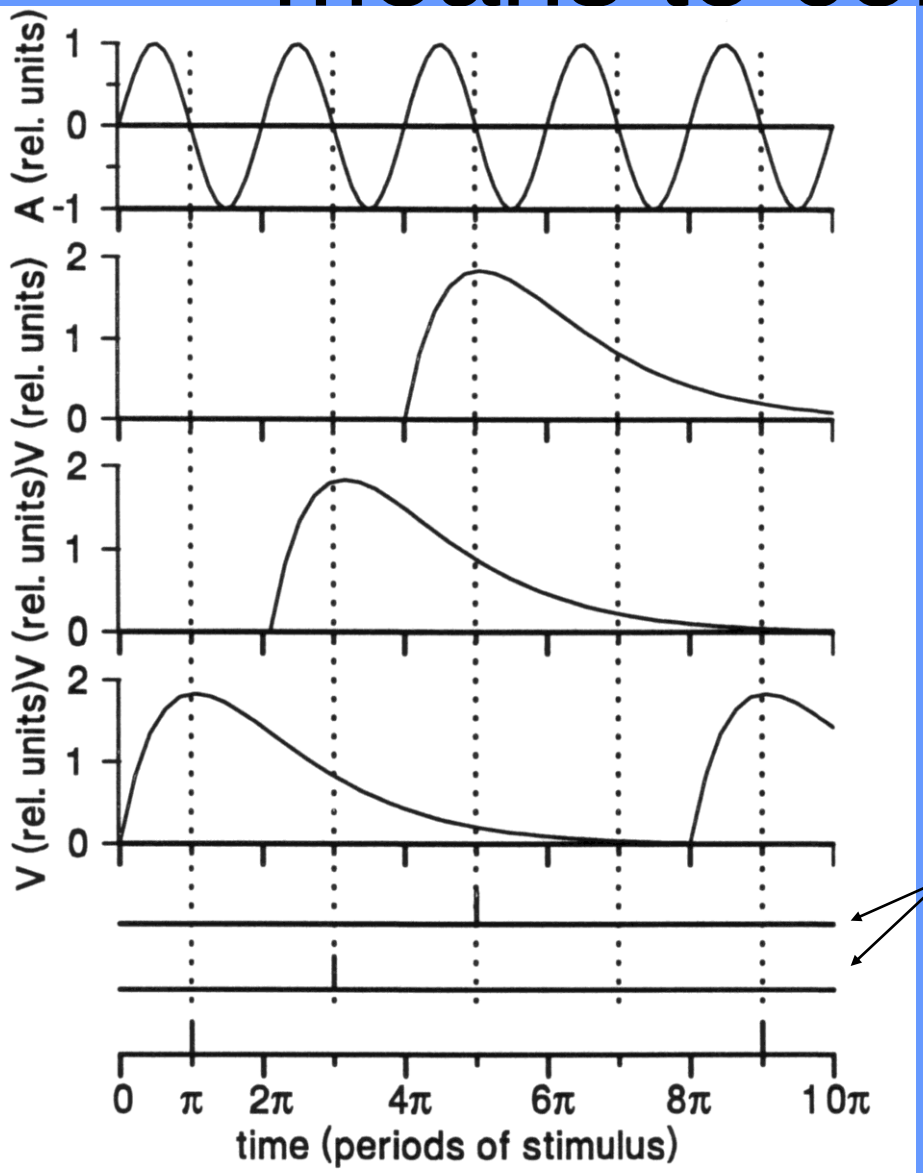
Durations of events

- Typical duration of action potential: 1ms
- Typical duration of post-synaptic potentials: 5-10 ms
- Precision of sound localization by interaural time difference: 6-10 μs

What has to be explained is

Factor of 500-1000

The principle of phase locking as a means to conserve time



Sinusoidal signal

Presumed resulting post-synaptic potential

Registered signal in computer

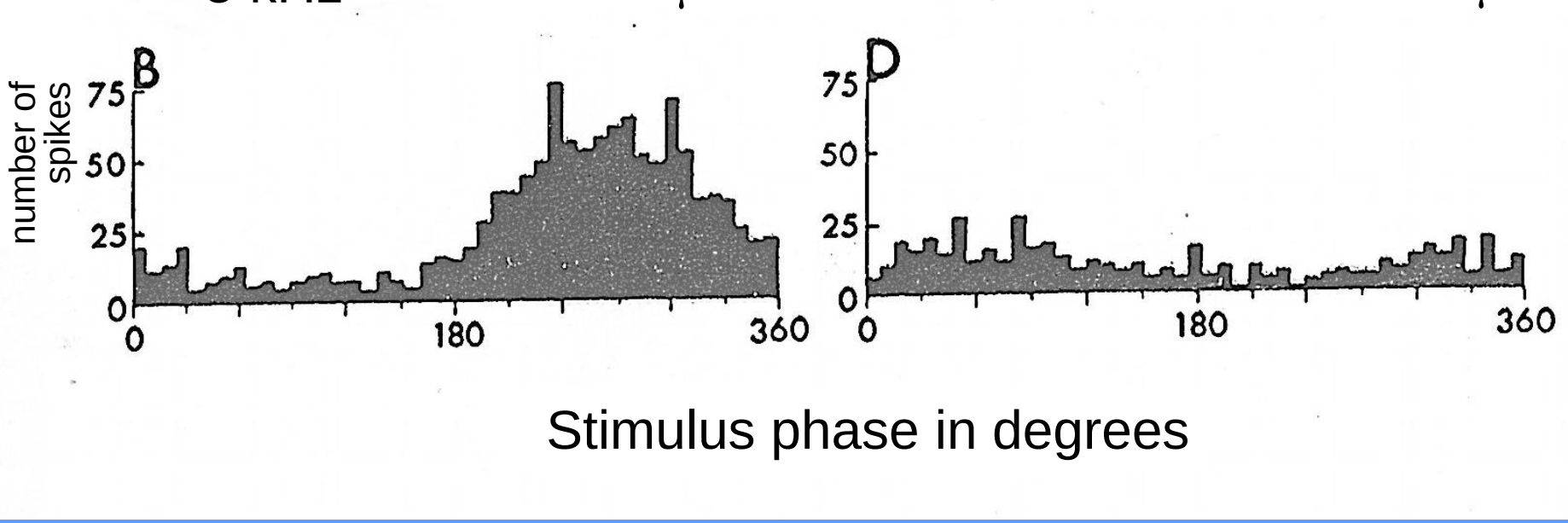
Note that in this example the response always occurs at a phase of 180 degrees.

Phase locking in the barn owl

Phase locking can be measured by plotting spike arrival times with respect to the period of the stimulus tone.

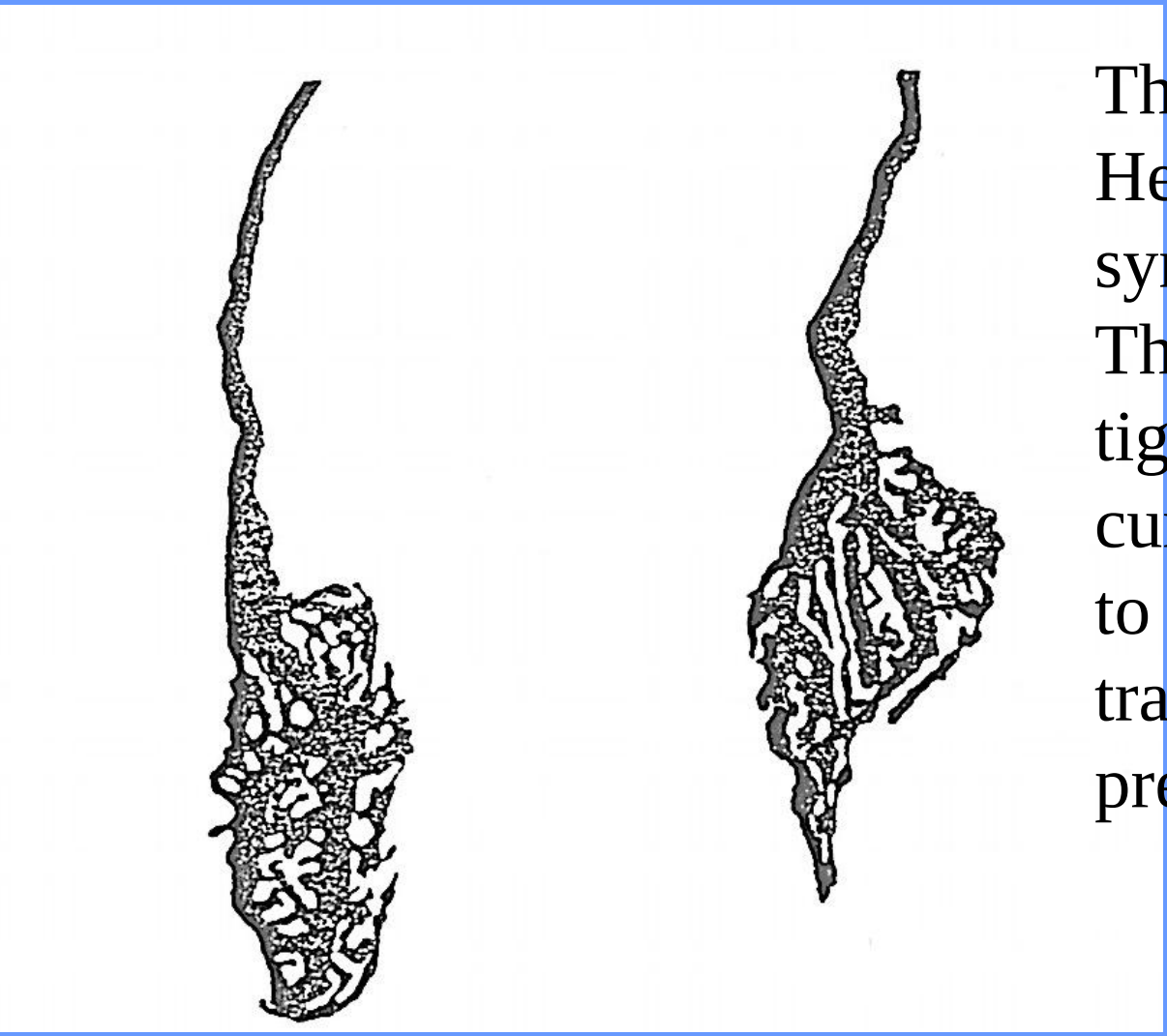
5 kHz Period 200 μs

9 kHz Period 111 μs



Precision of phase locking is 35 μs at 5 kHz (Koeppl (1997)).

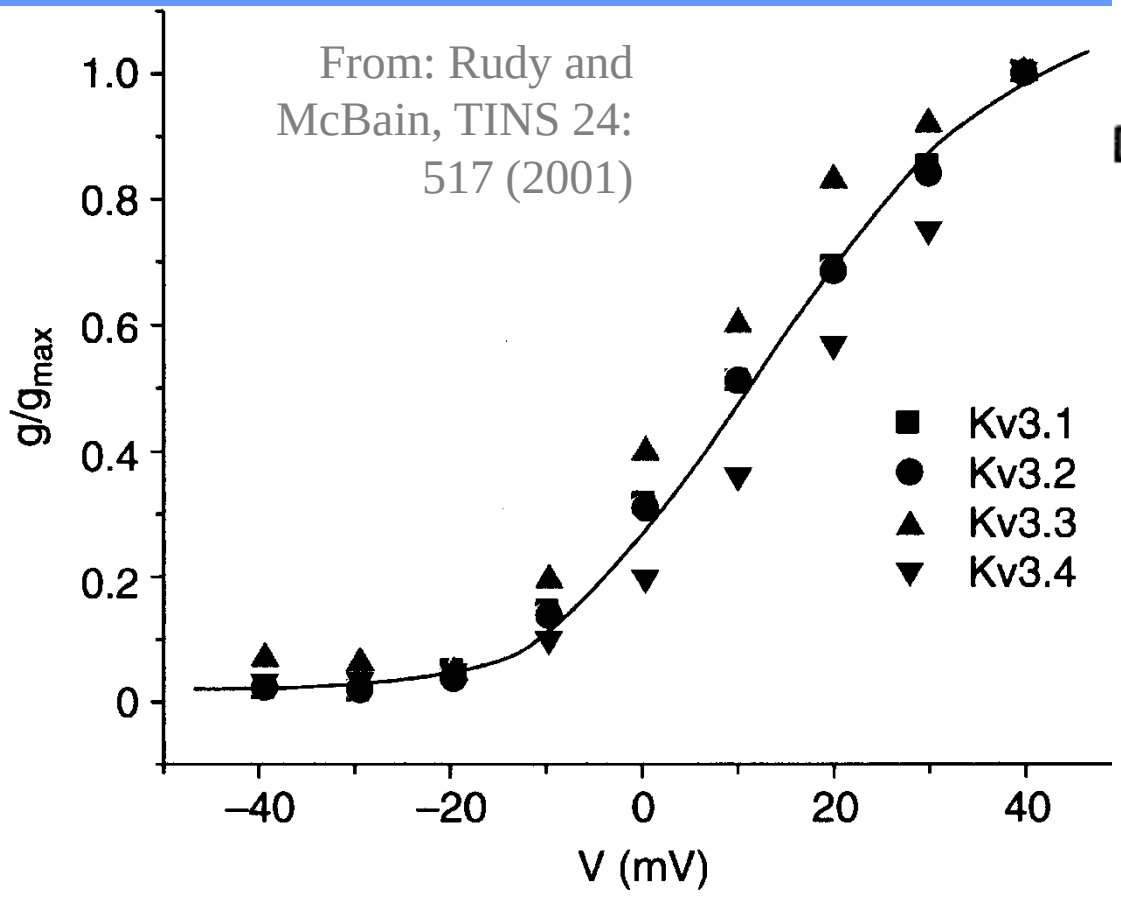
Specialized synapses in the cochlear nucleus



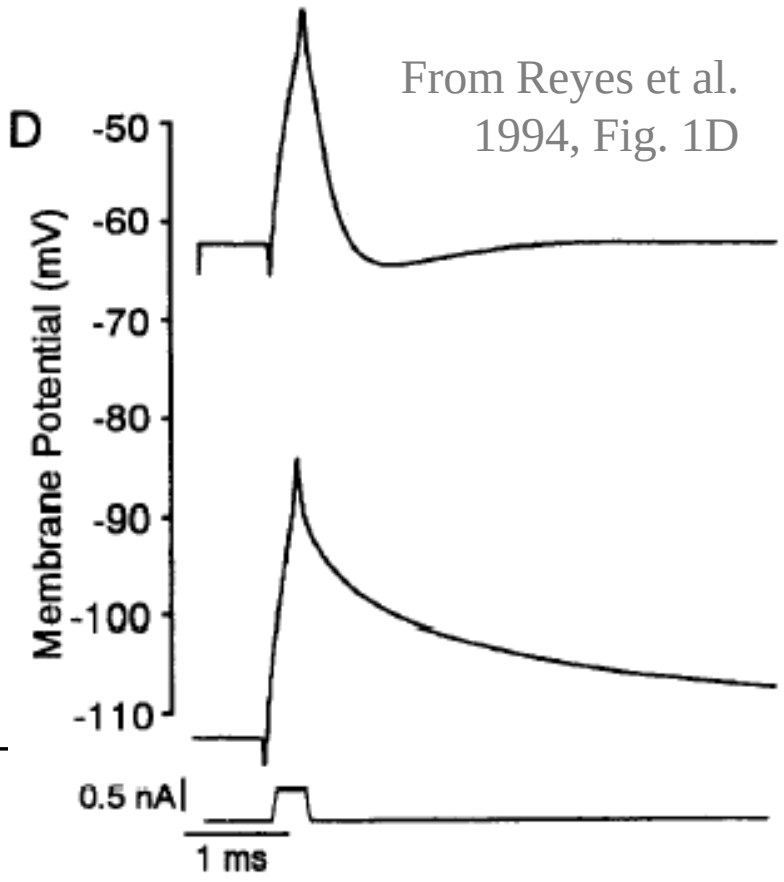
The so-called Calyces of Held are specialized synaptic structures. These synapses are very tight and carry a high current. They are thought to reduce noise in the transmission from the pre- to the postsynapse.

Specialized potassium channels: Kv1, Kv3

From: Rudy and McBain, TINS 24: 517 (2001)

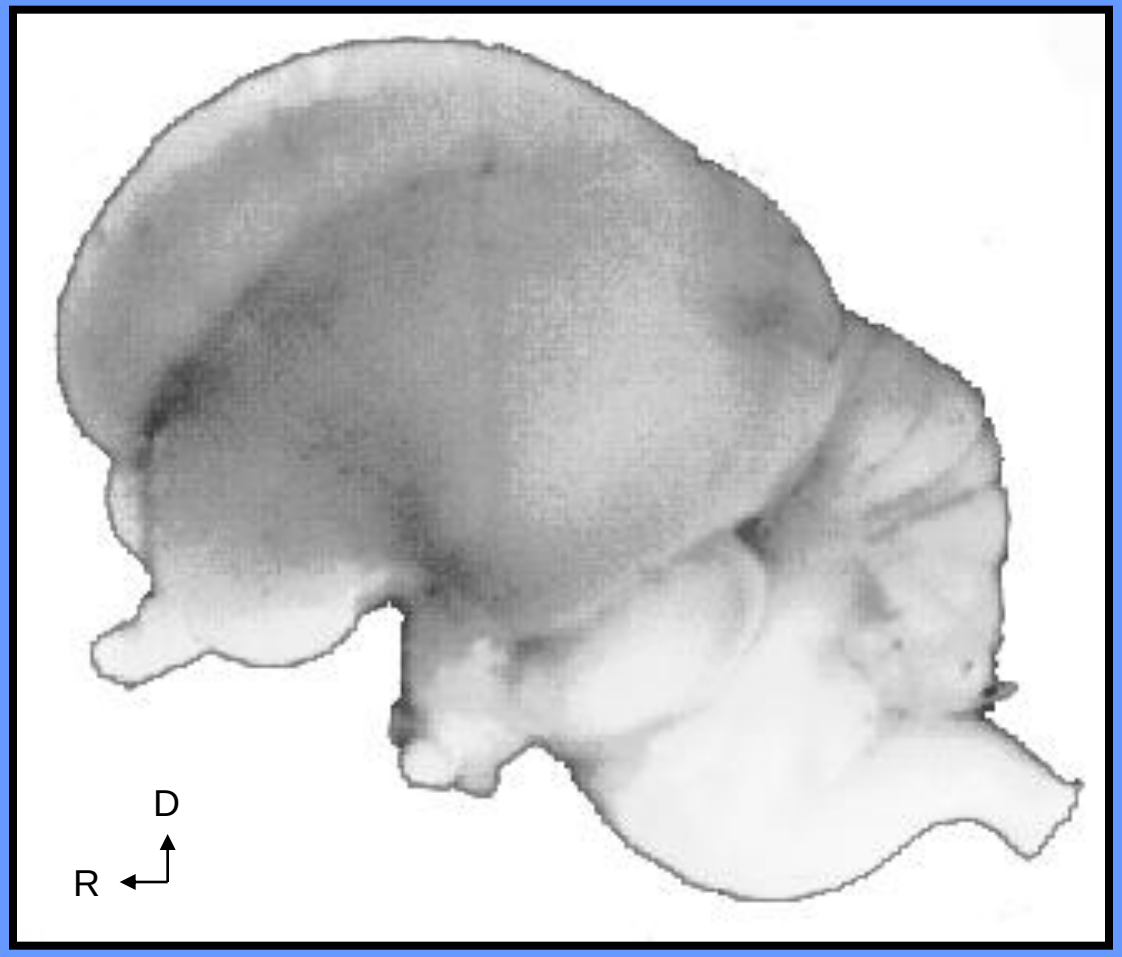


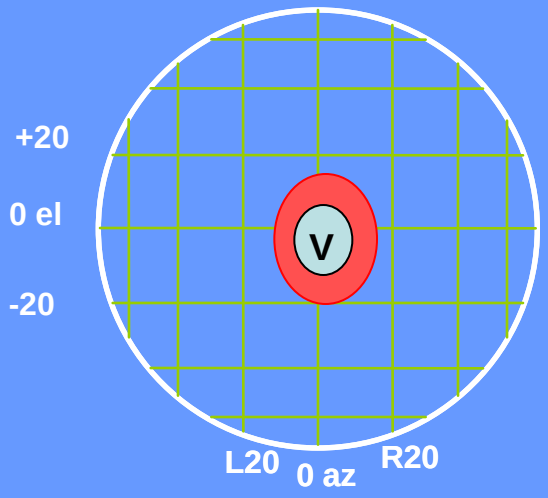
From Reyes et al. 1994, Fig. 1D

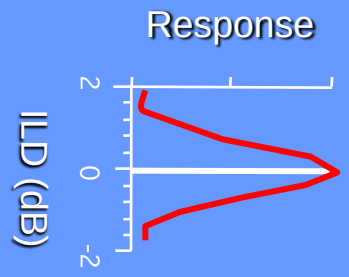


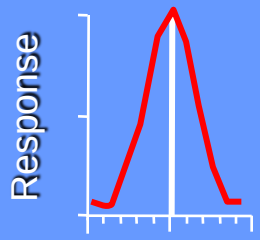
The Kv3-channels accelarate action potential repolarization, so that the duration of the action potential decreases specifically at a high resting potential. The Kv1-channels make the rising phase of the action potential steeper.

Lateral view of the barn owl brain

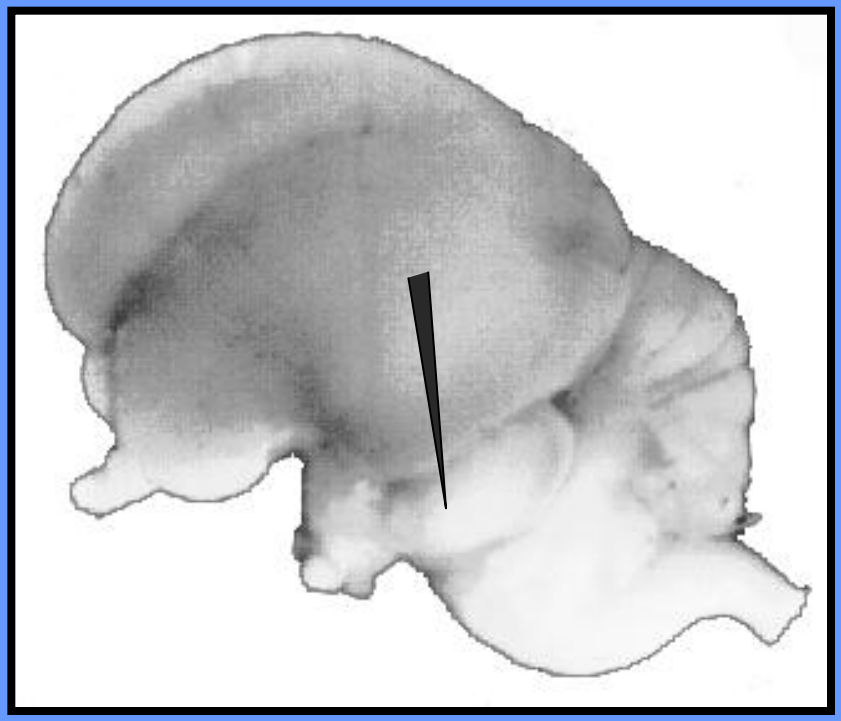


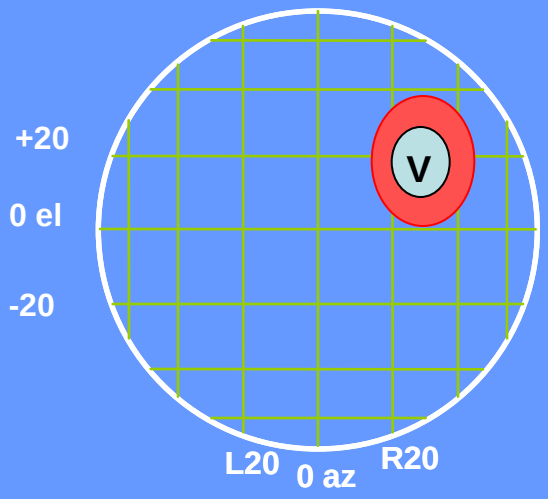


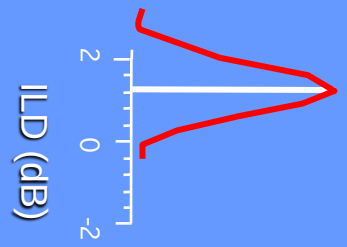


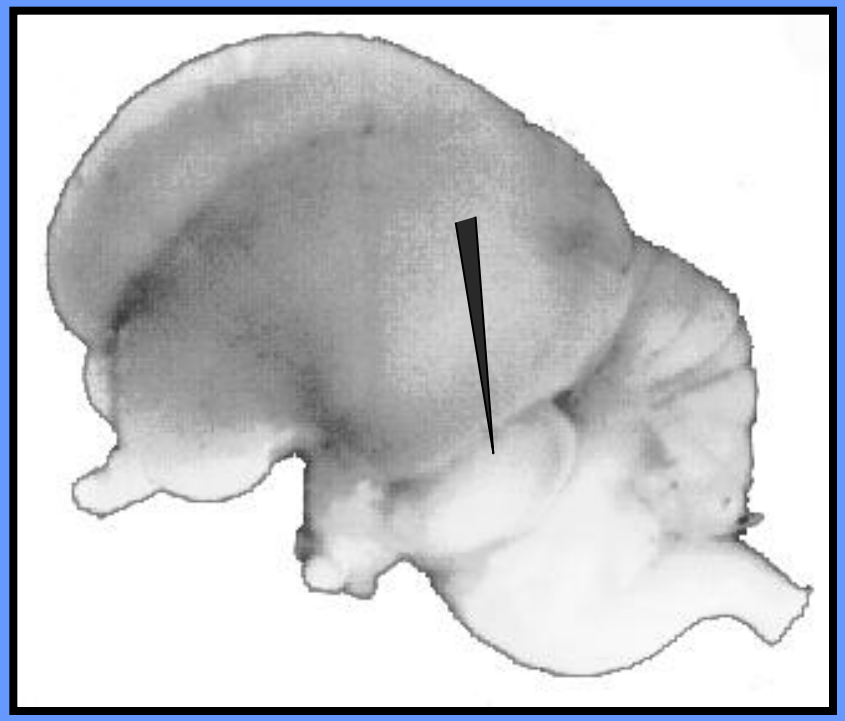


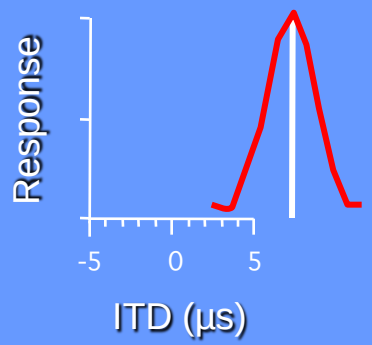
ITD (µs)



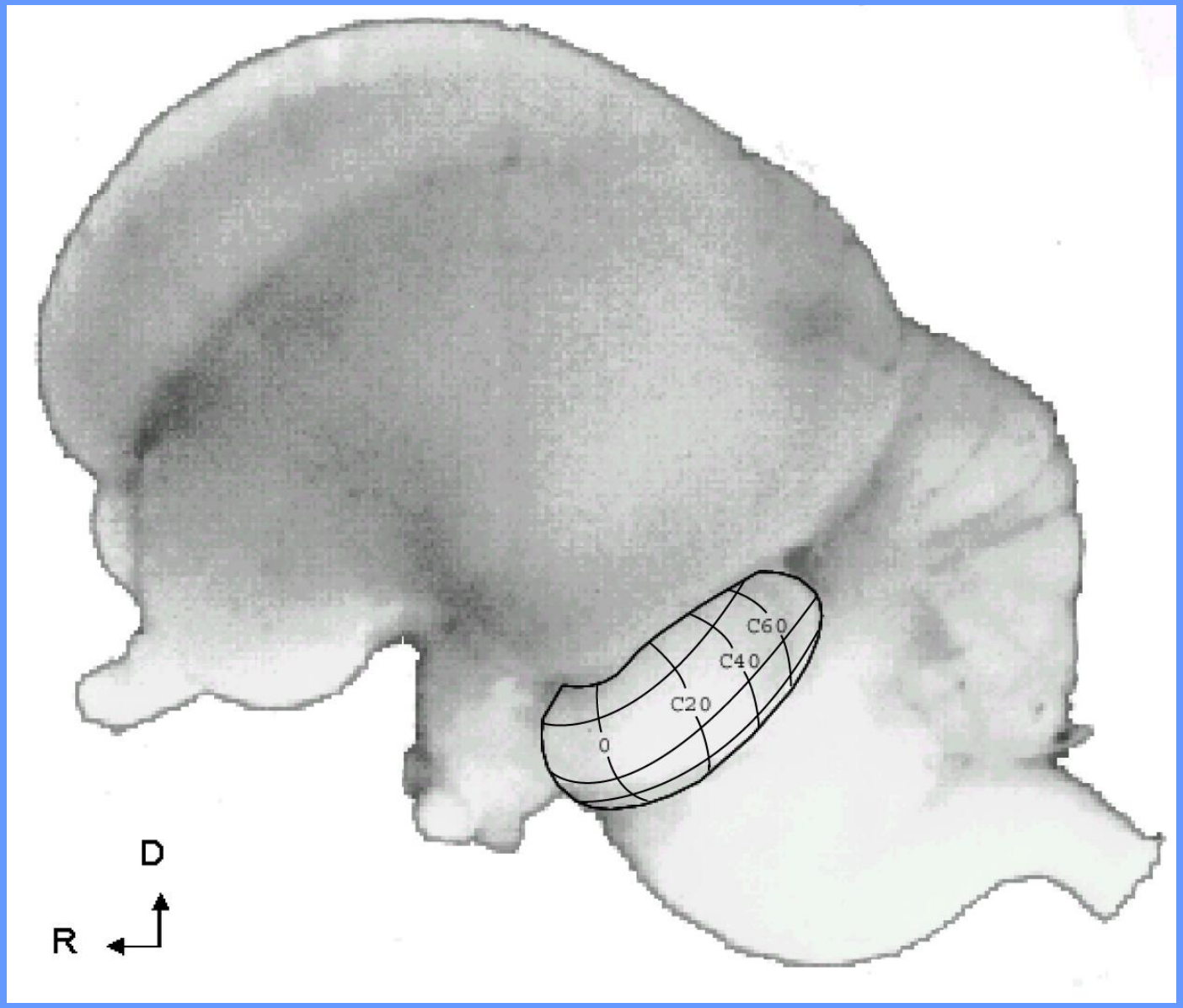

+20
0 el
-20
V
L20
0 az
R20


ILD (dB)
2
0
-2

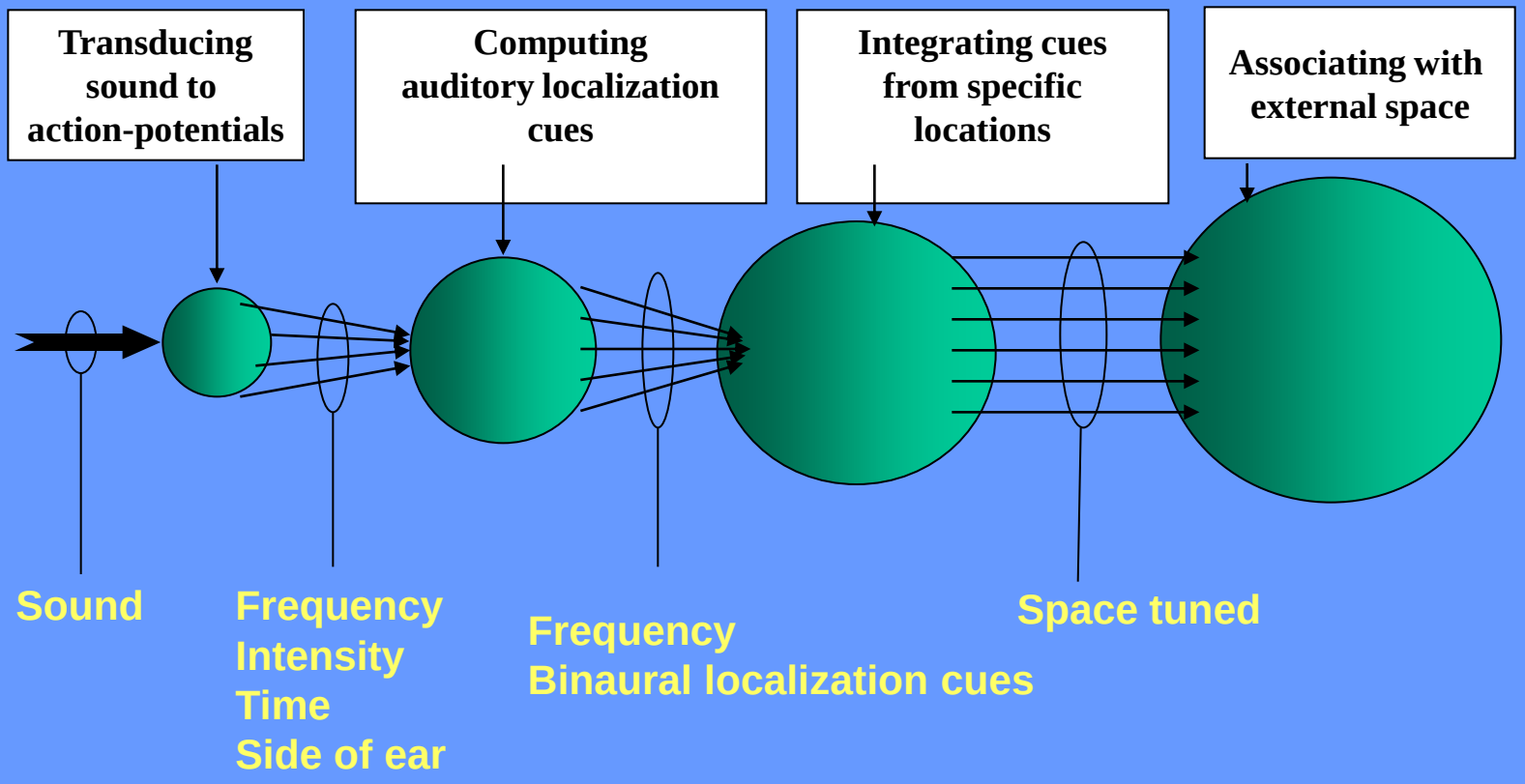



Response
-5
0
5
ITD (µs)

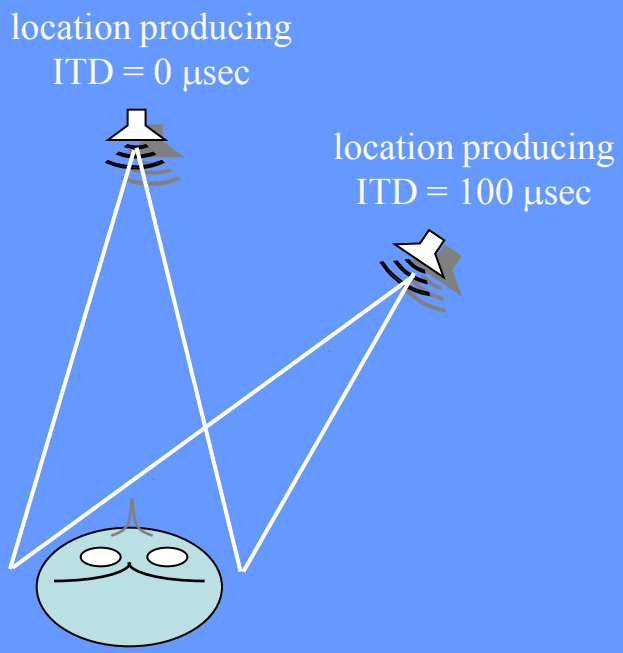
Visual and auditory maps in the OT



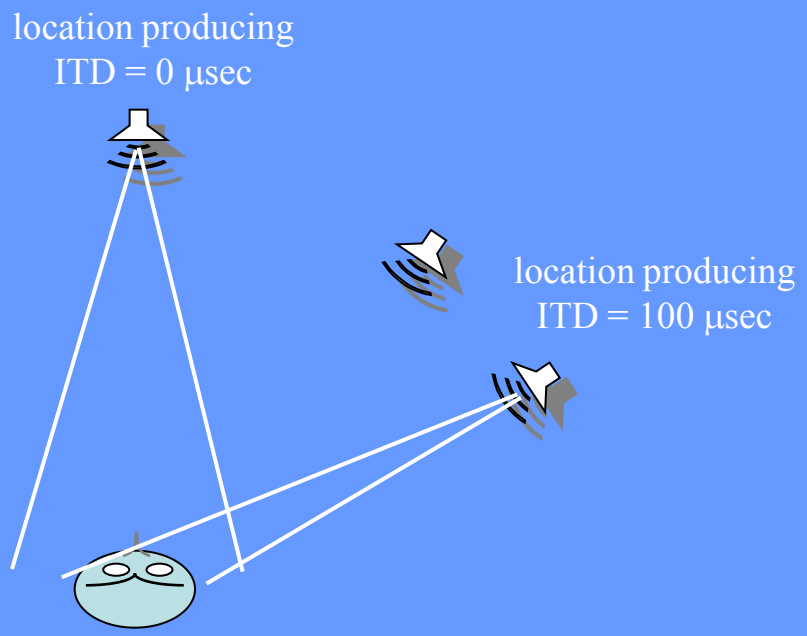
Computational map

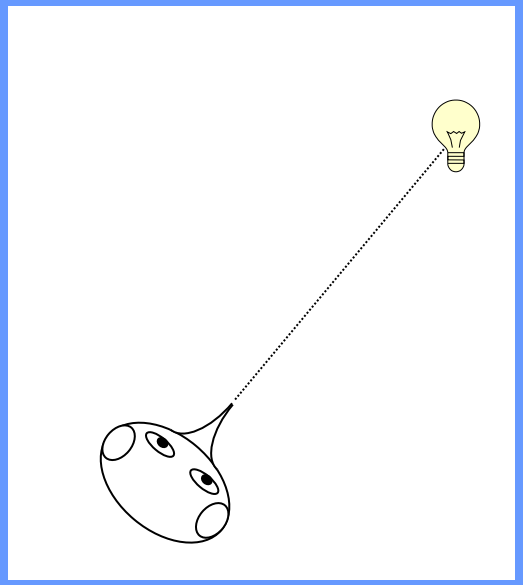


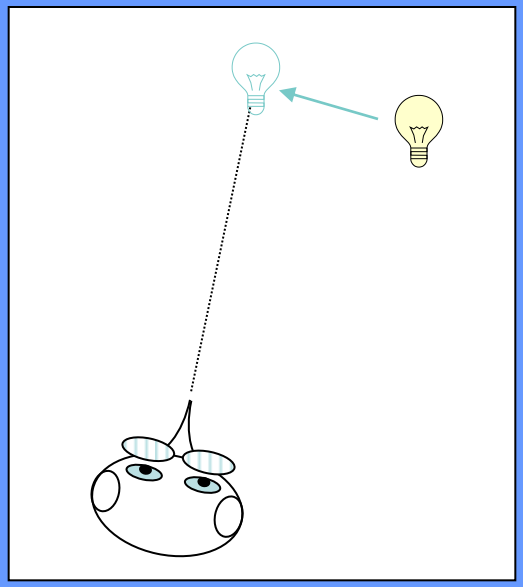
Computational maps
The matching problem

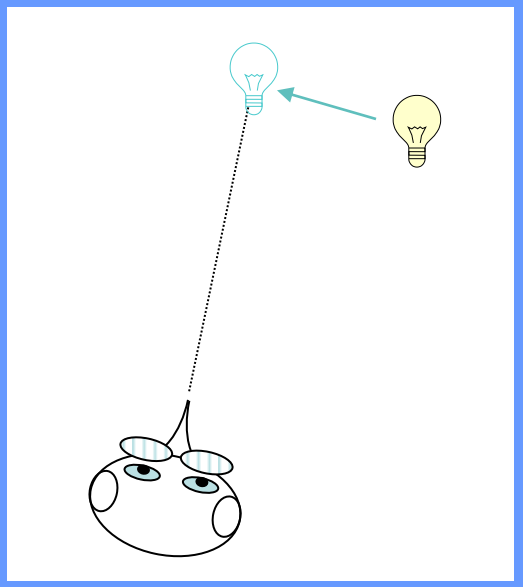


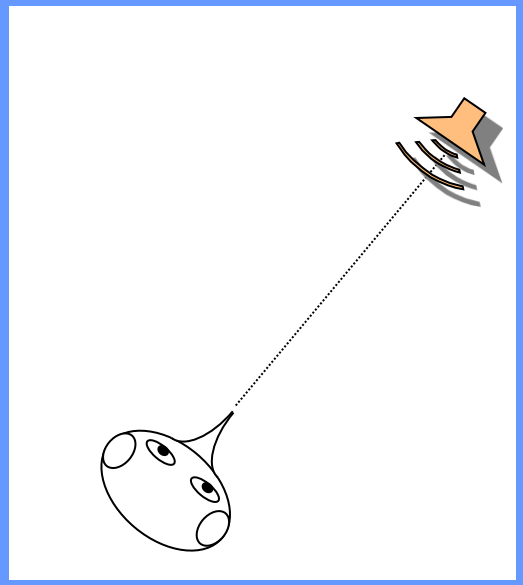
Computational maps
The matching problem

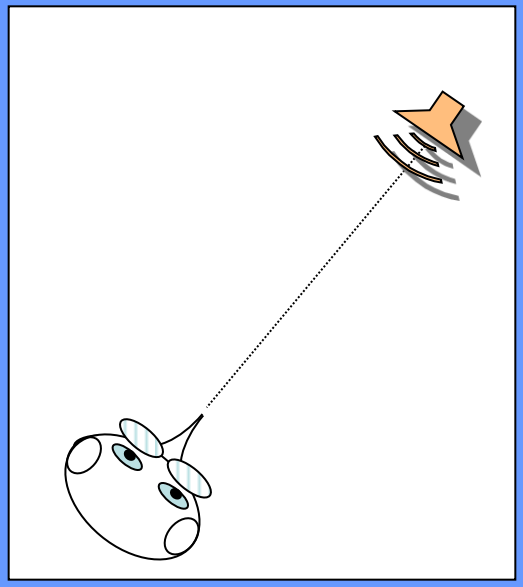


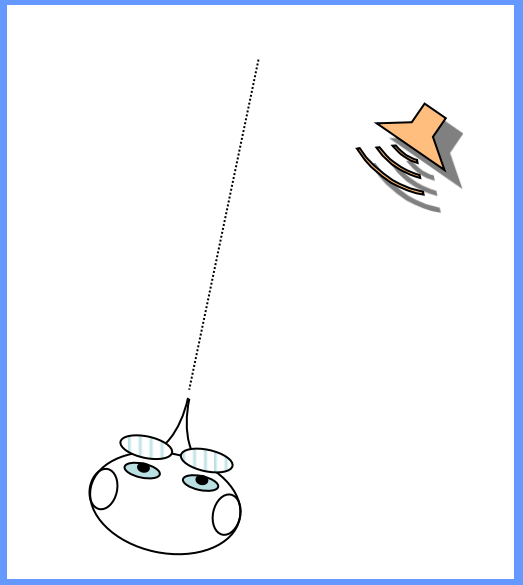












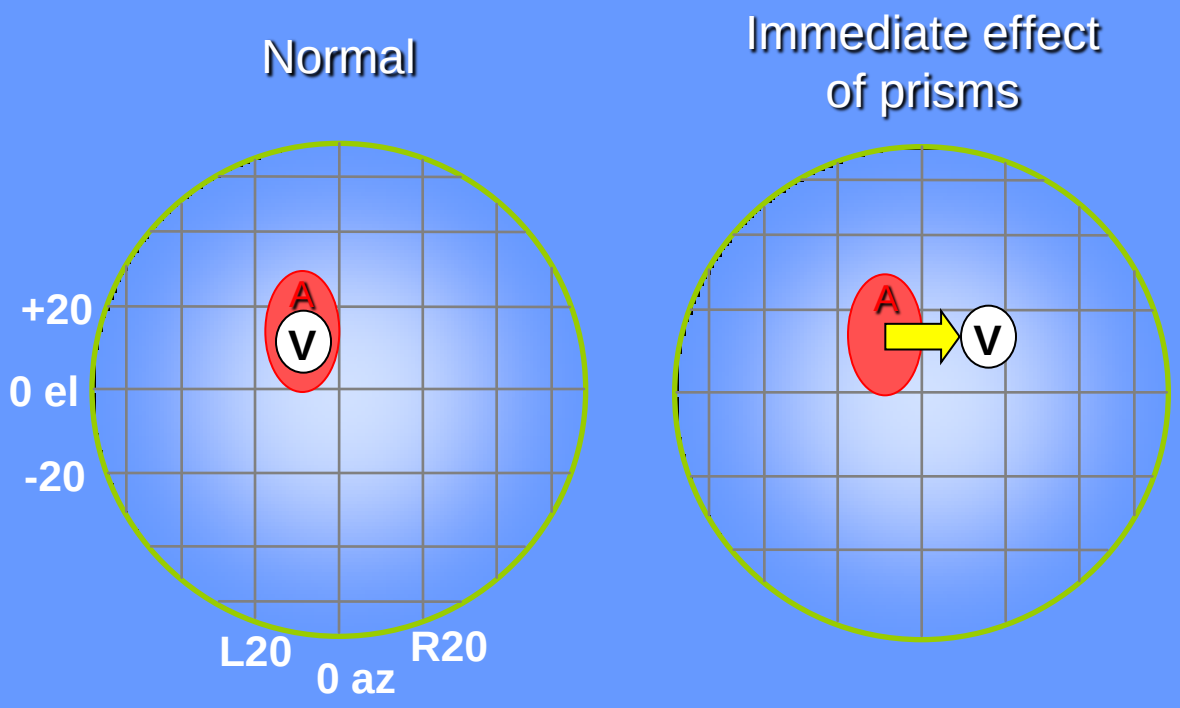
Normal

Immediate Effect of Prisms

Prism-adapted

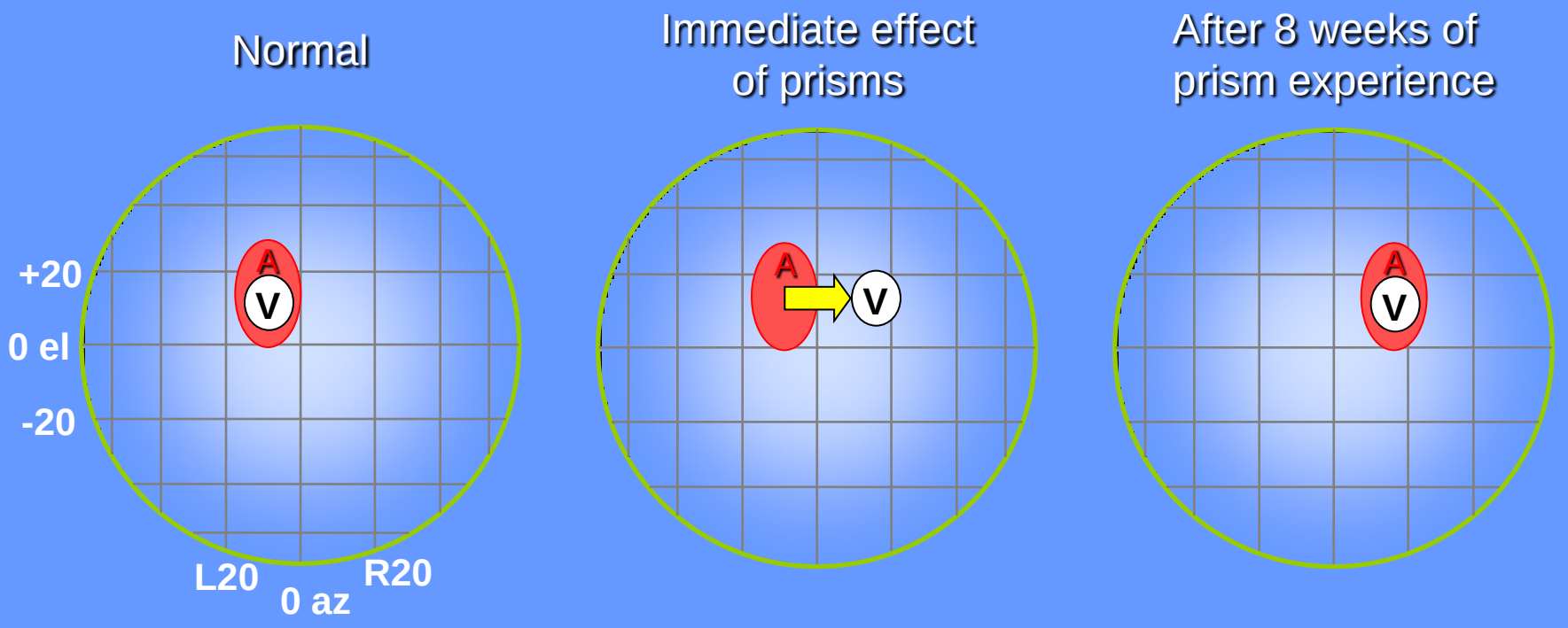
Knudsen and Knudsen J Neurosci (1989)

Effect of prism experience on auditory tuning



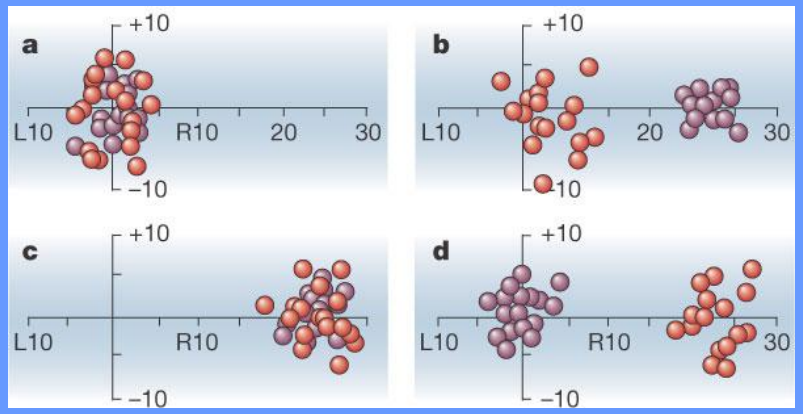
Knudsen and Brainard, Science (1991)

Effect of prism experience on auditory tuning

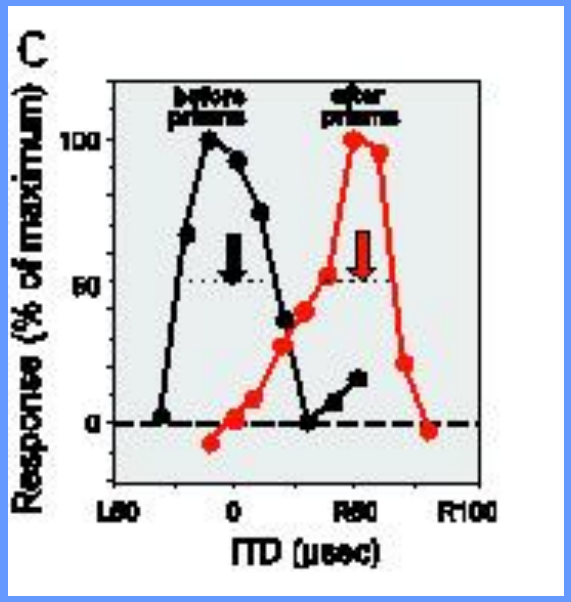


Quantification of learning

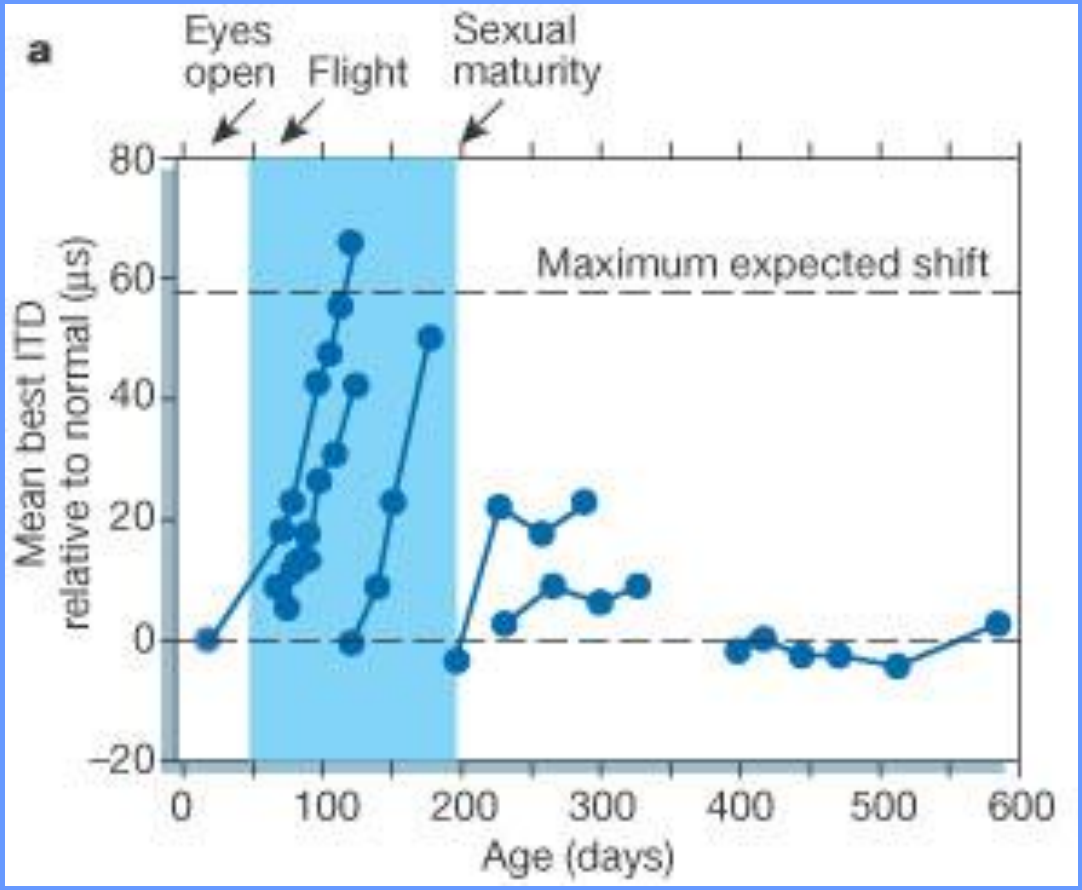
1. Behavioral test



2. Physiological test

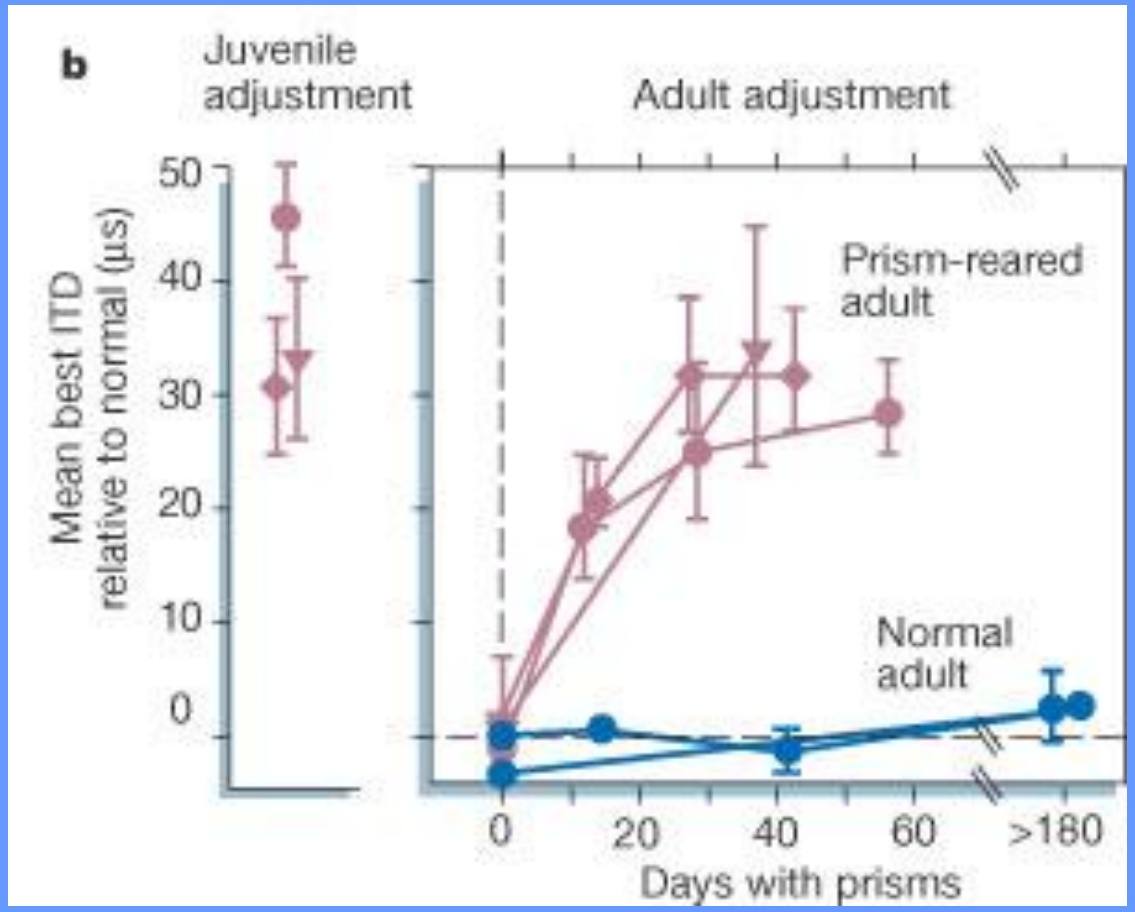


Decline in learning with age



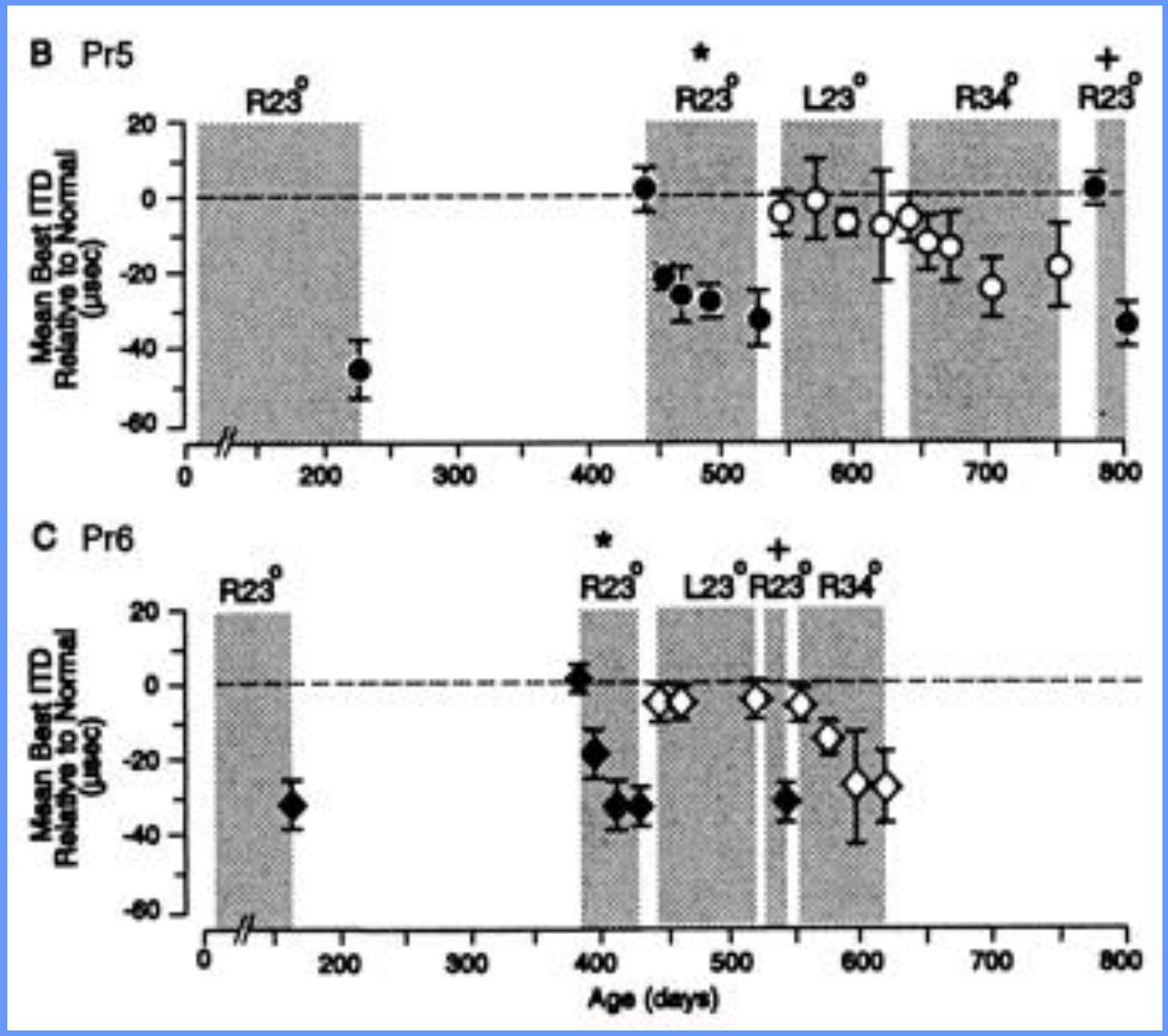
67. Knudsen, E. I. *Science*.(1998)

Increased capacity for learning in adults that have had appropriate experience as juveniles



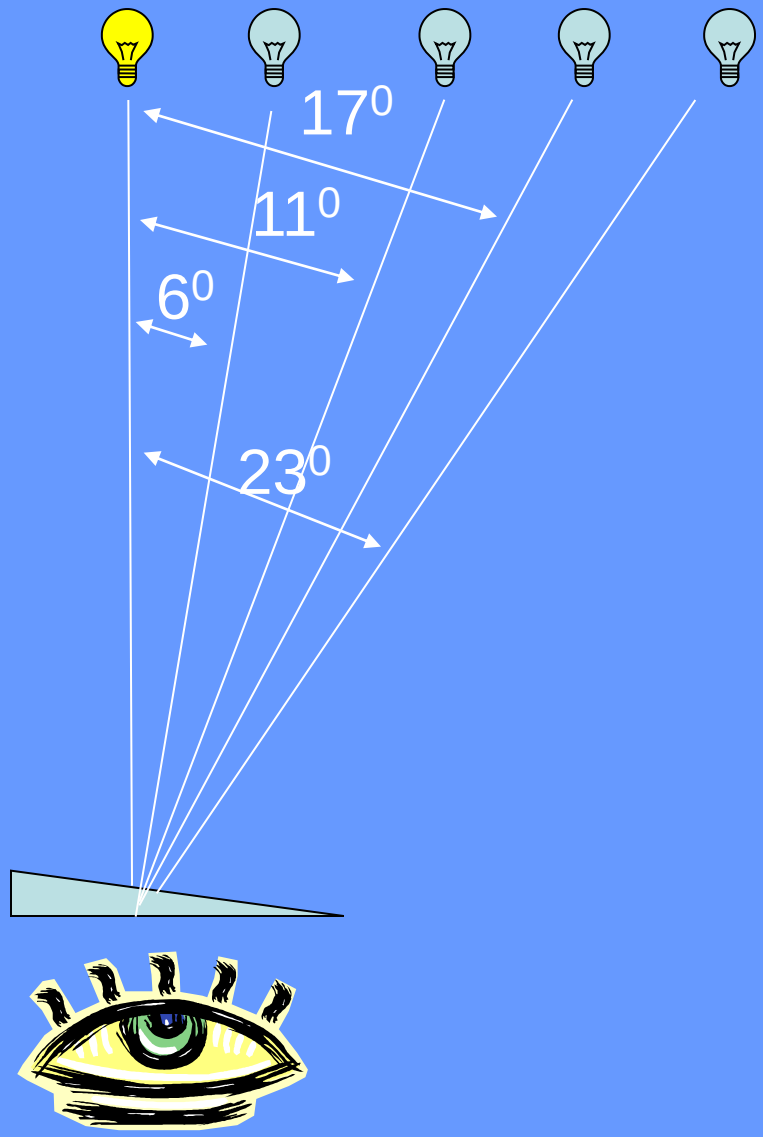
Knudsen, E. I. *Science*.(1998)

Effects of juvenile experience on adult learning

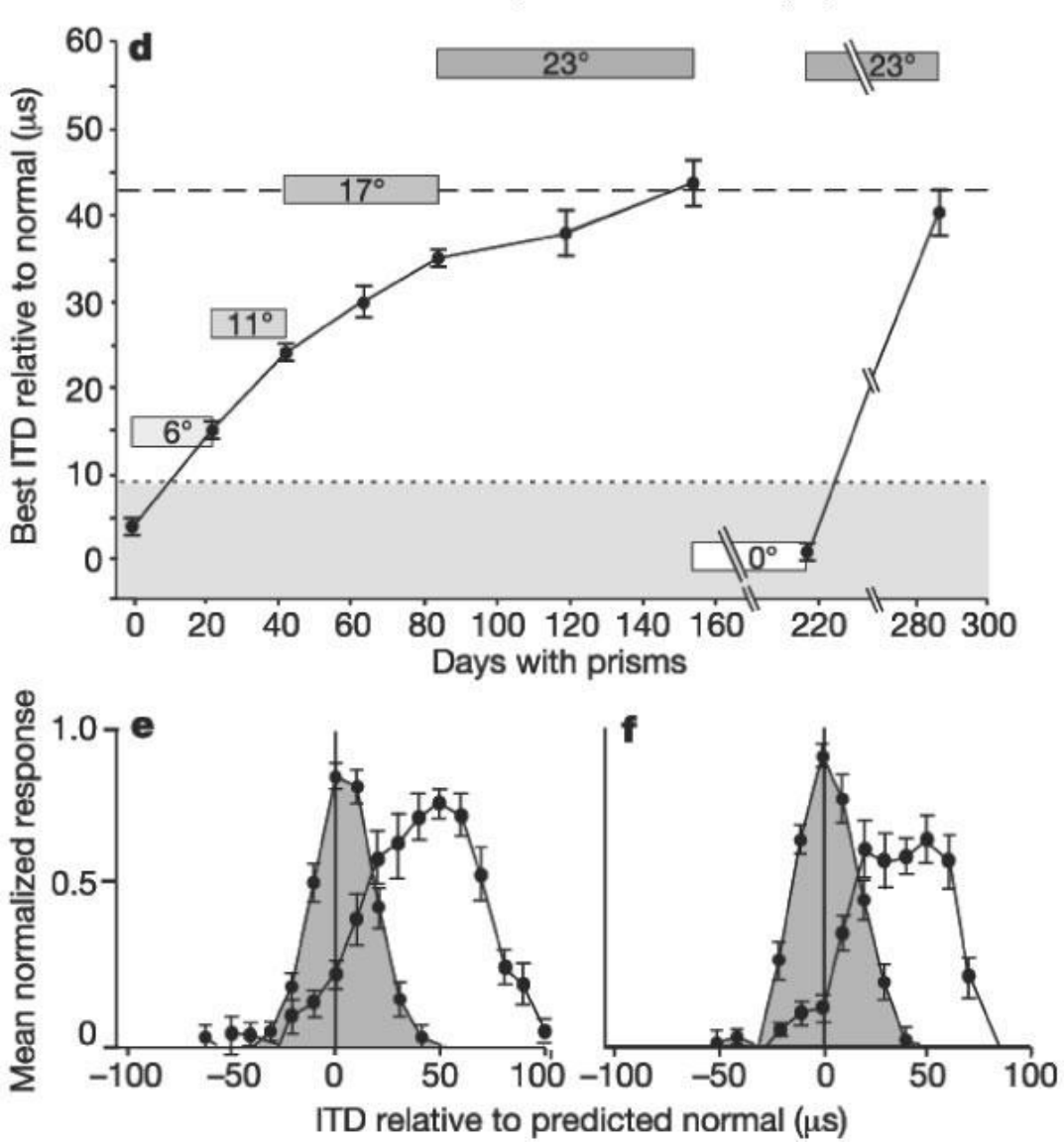


Knudsen, E. I. *Science*.(1998)

Incremental learning

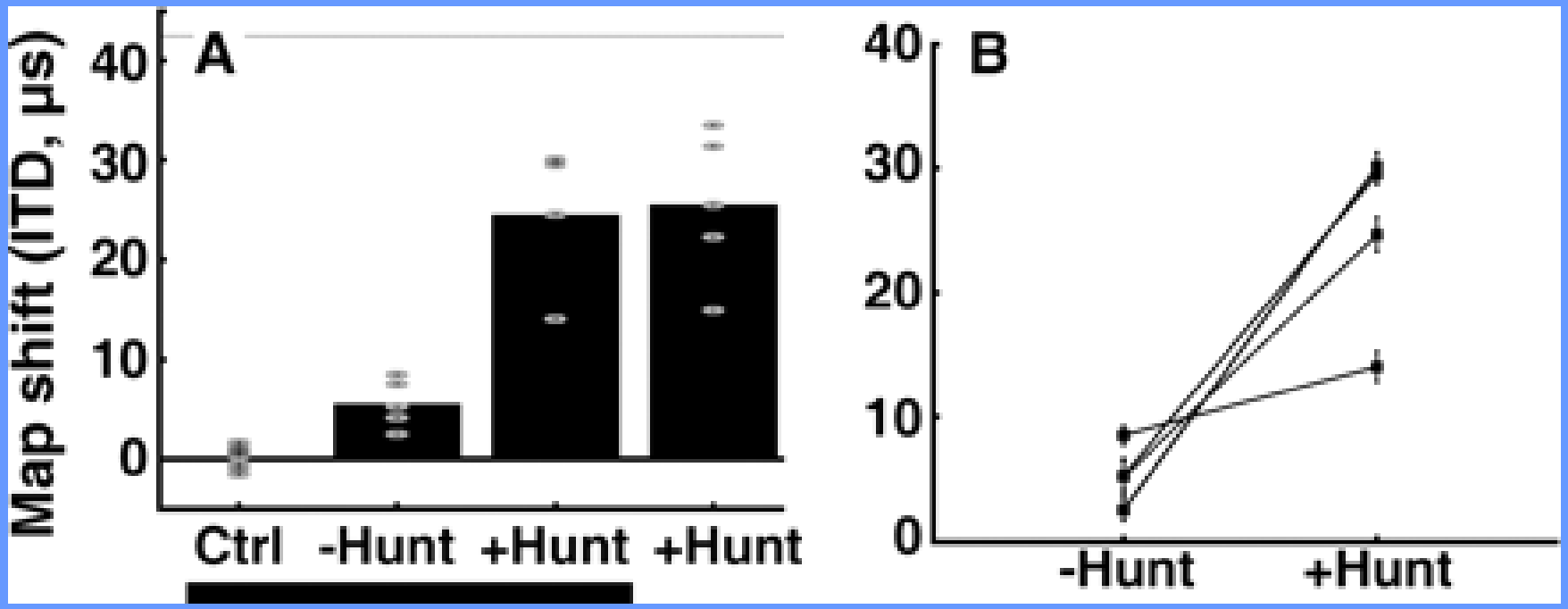


Incremental learning



Linkenhoker and Knudsen (2002) Nature

Rich and lively experiences increase learning capacity in adults

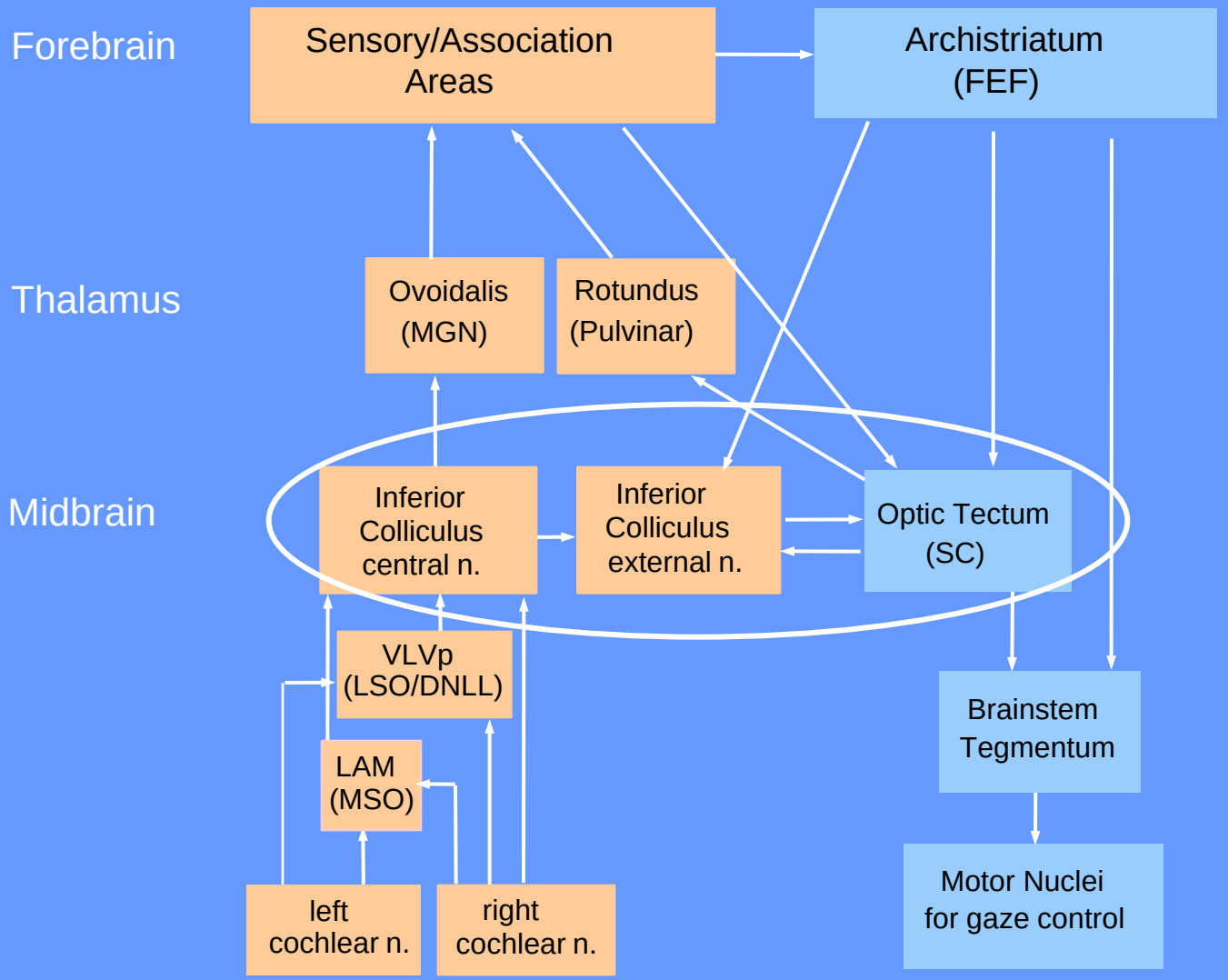


Bergan et al., Journal of Neuroscience (2005)

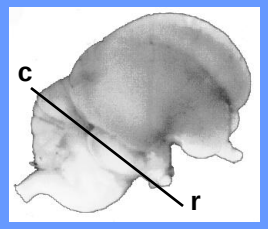
Summary

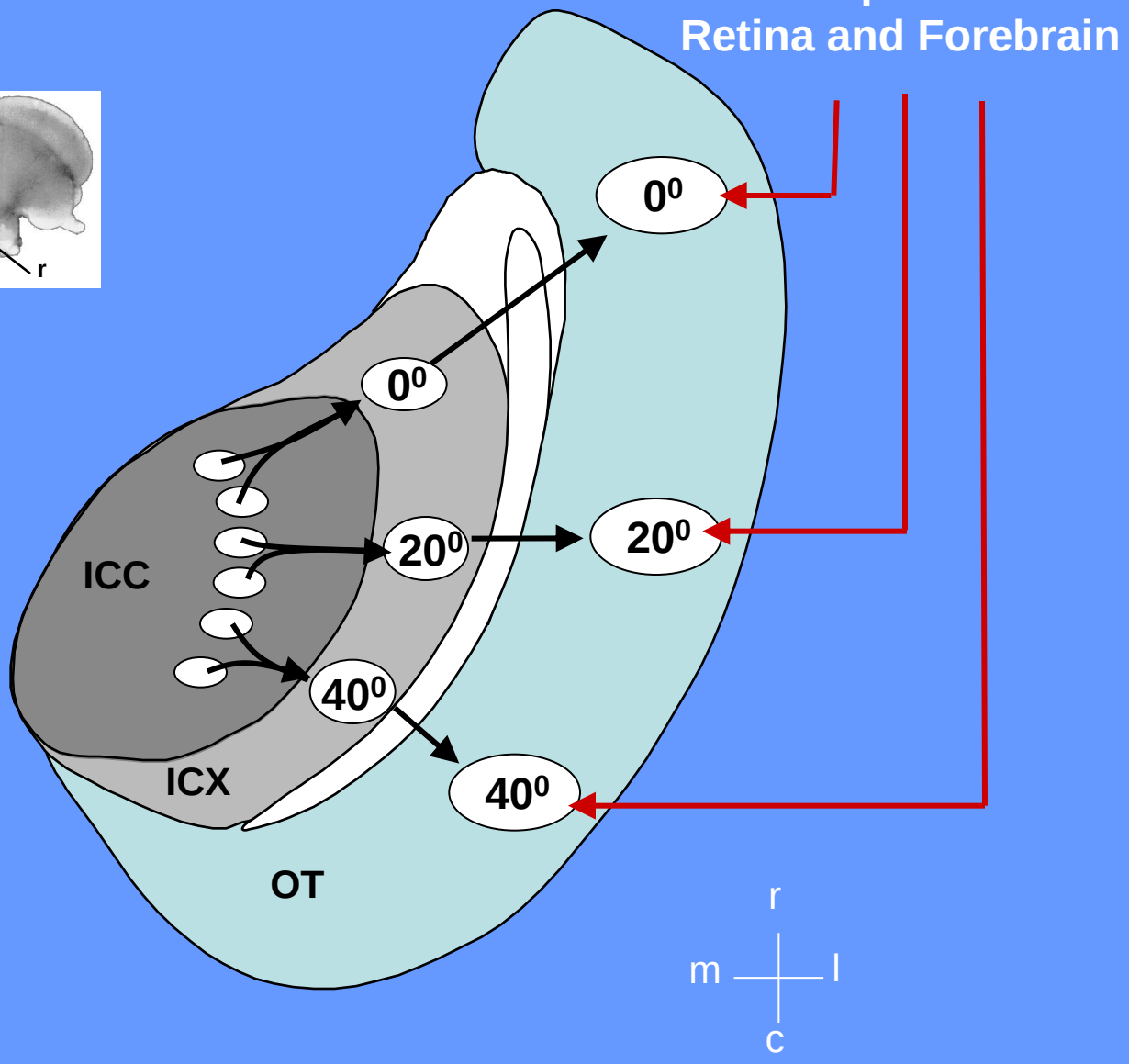
- Decline in learning with age
- Increased capacity for learning in adults that have had appropriate experience as juveniles
- Incremental training improves learning
- Rich and lively experiences increase learning capacity in adults

Where is the site of plasticity?

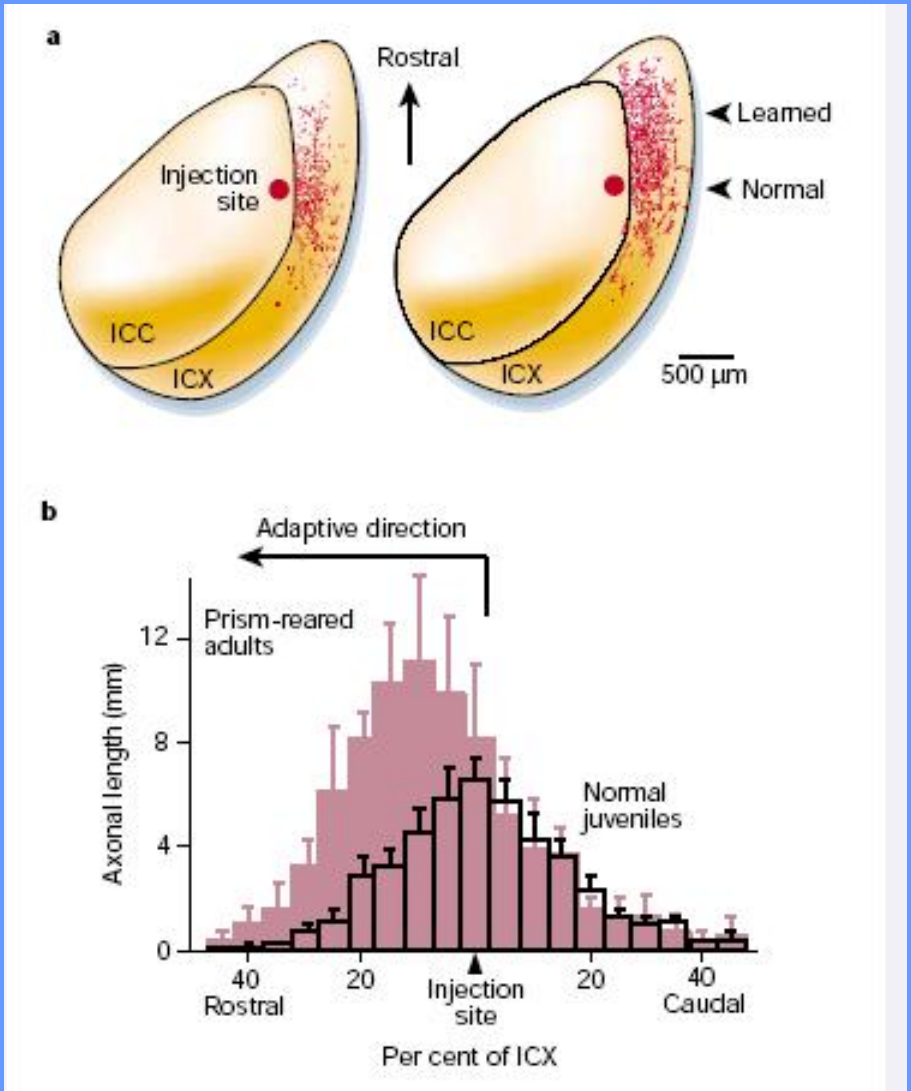


Horizontal section through the tectal lobe



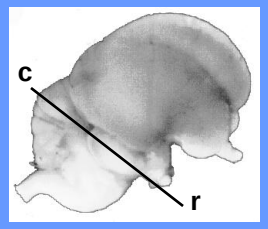


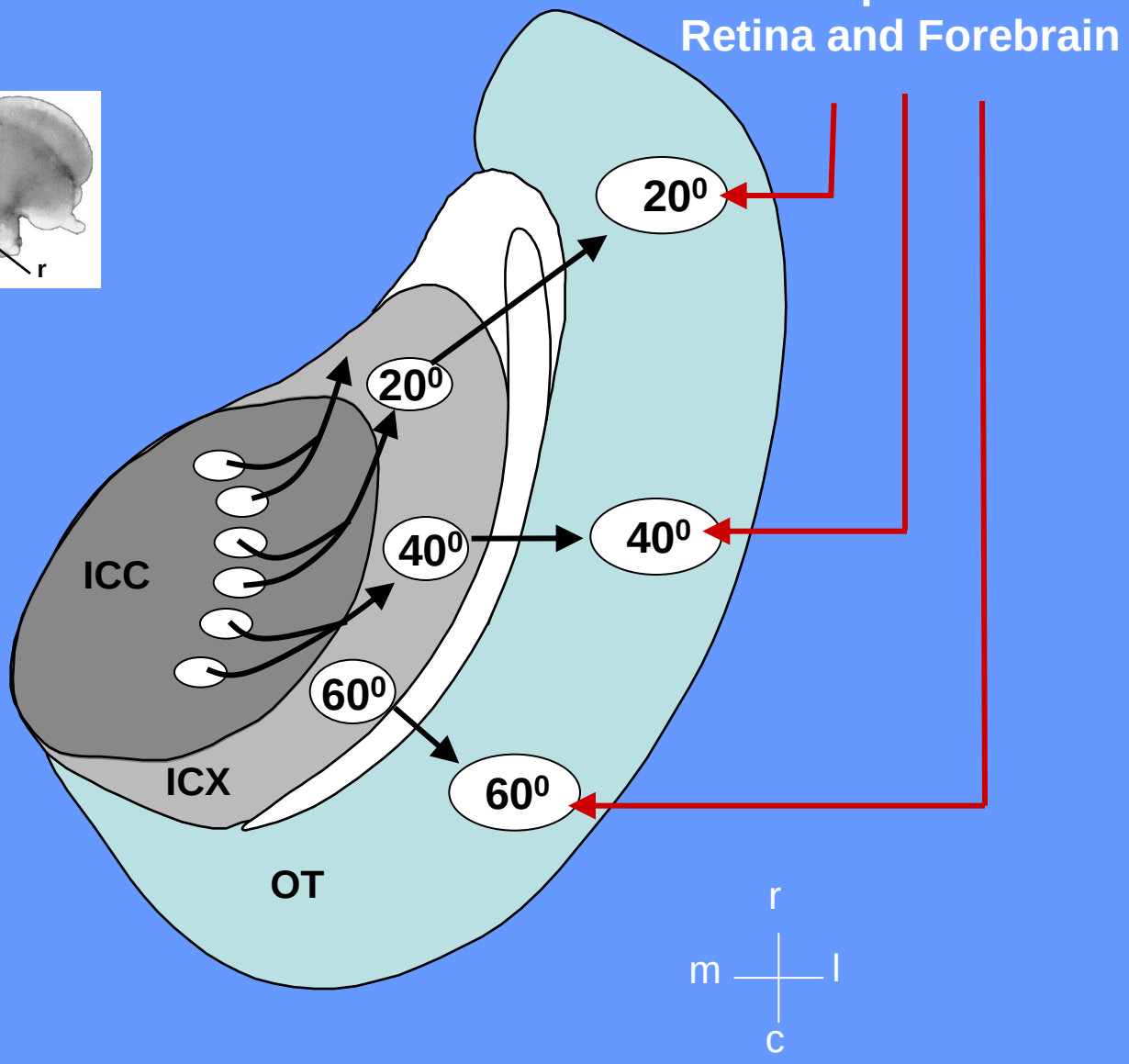
Site of plasticity in the ICX



Debello et al., J. Neurosci. 2001

After prism learning





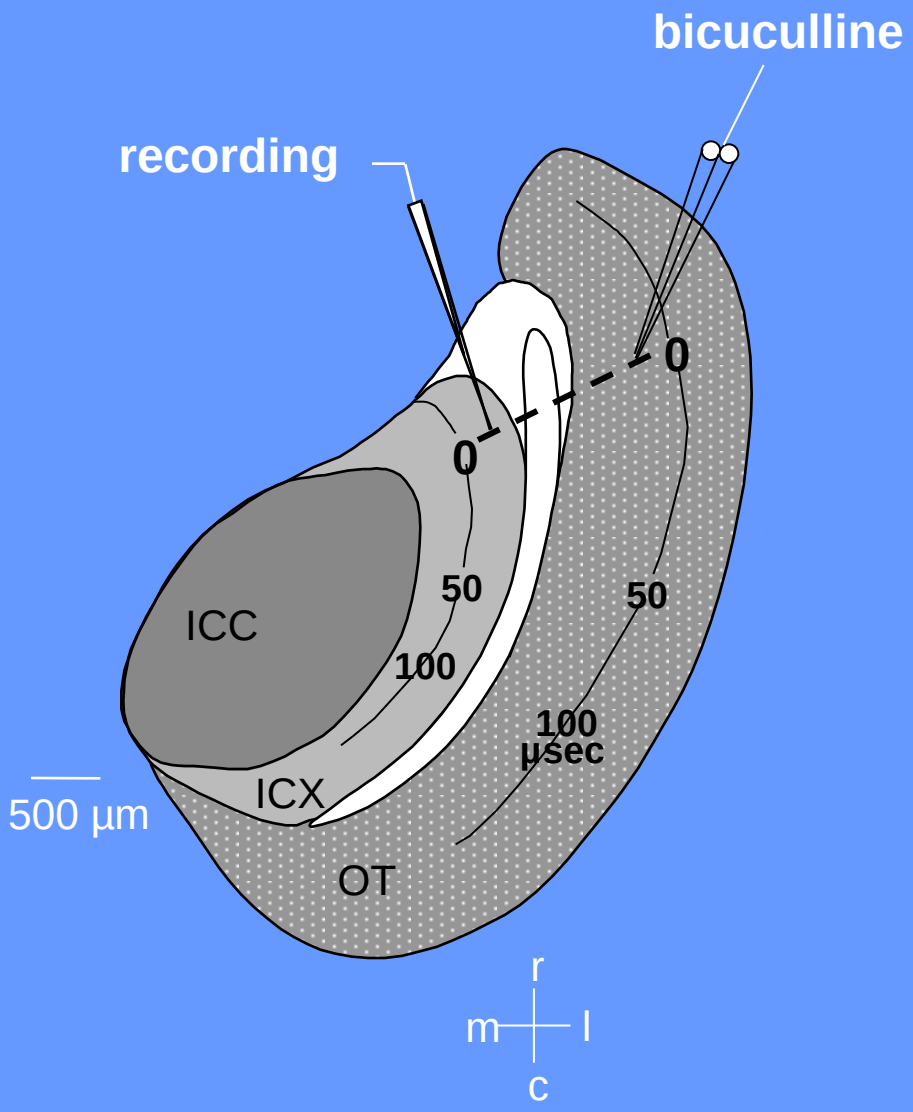
The instructive signal

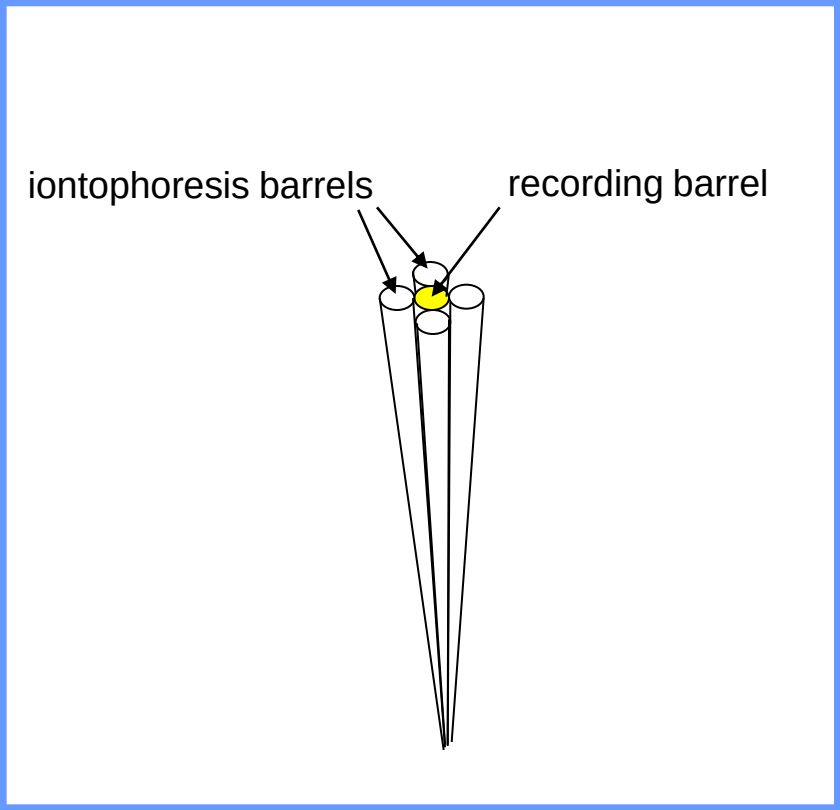
- Operates in the ICX

- Visually based

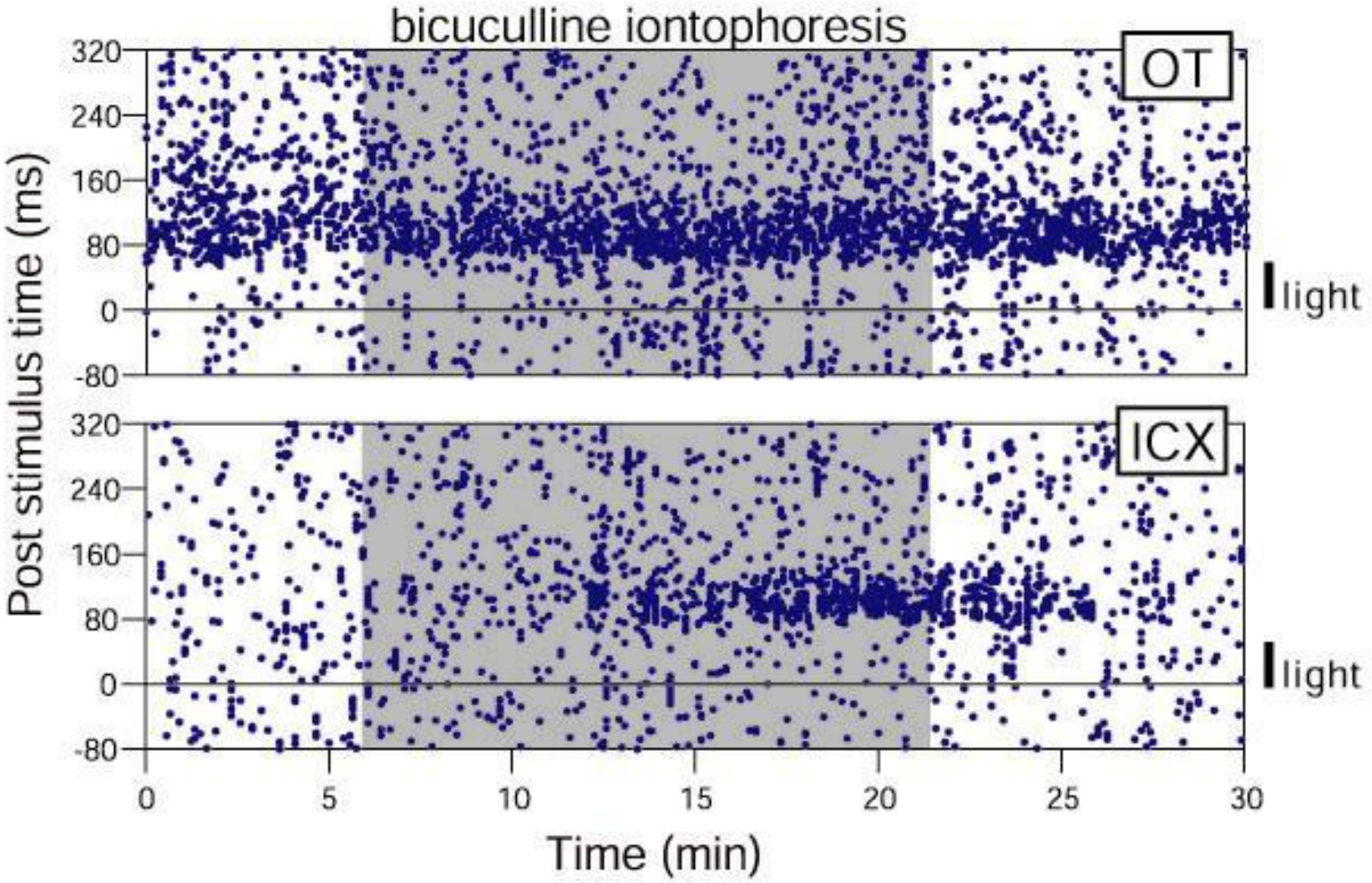
How can a visually based instructive signal act in an auditory structure?

Experimental techniques

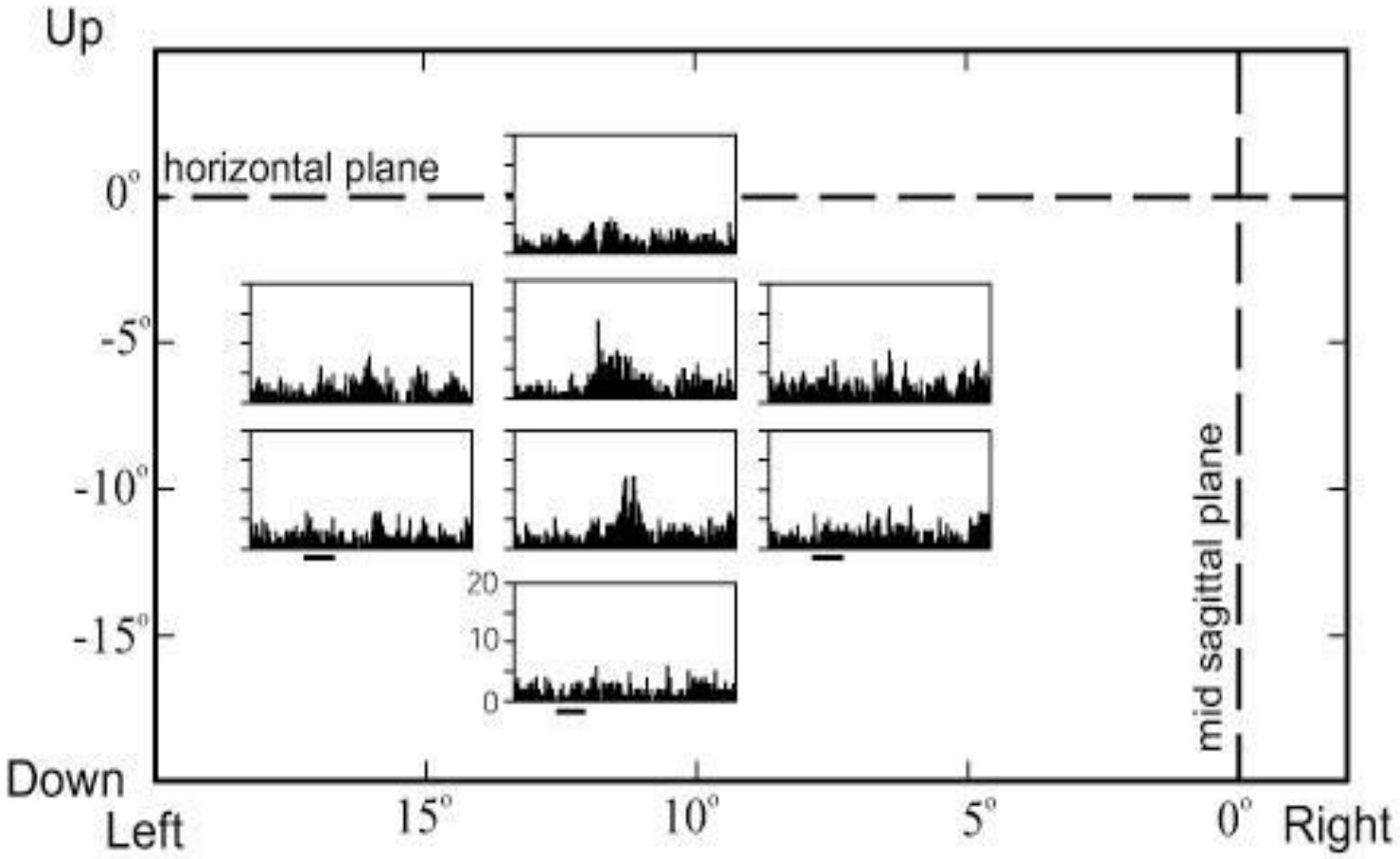


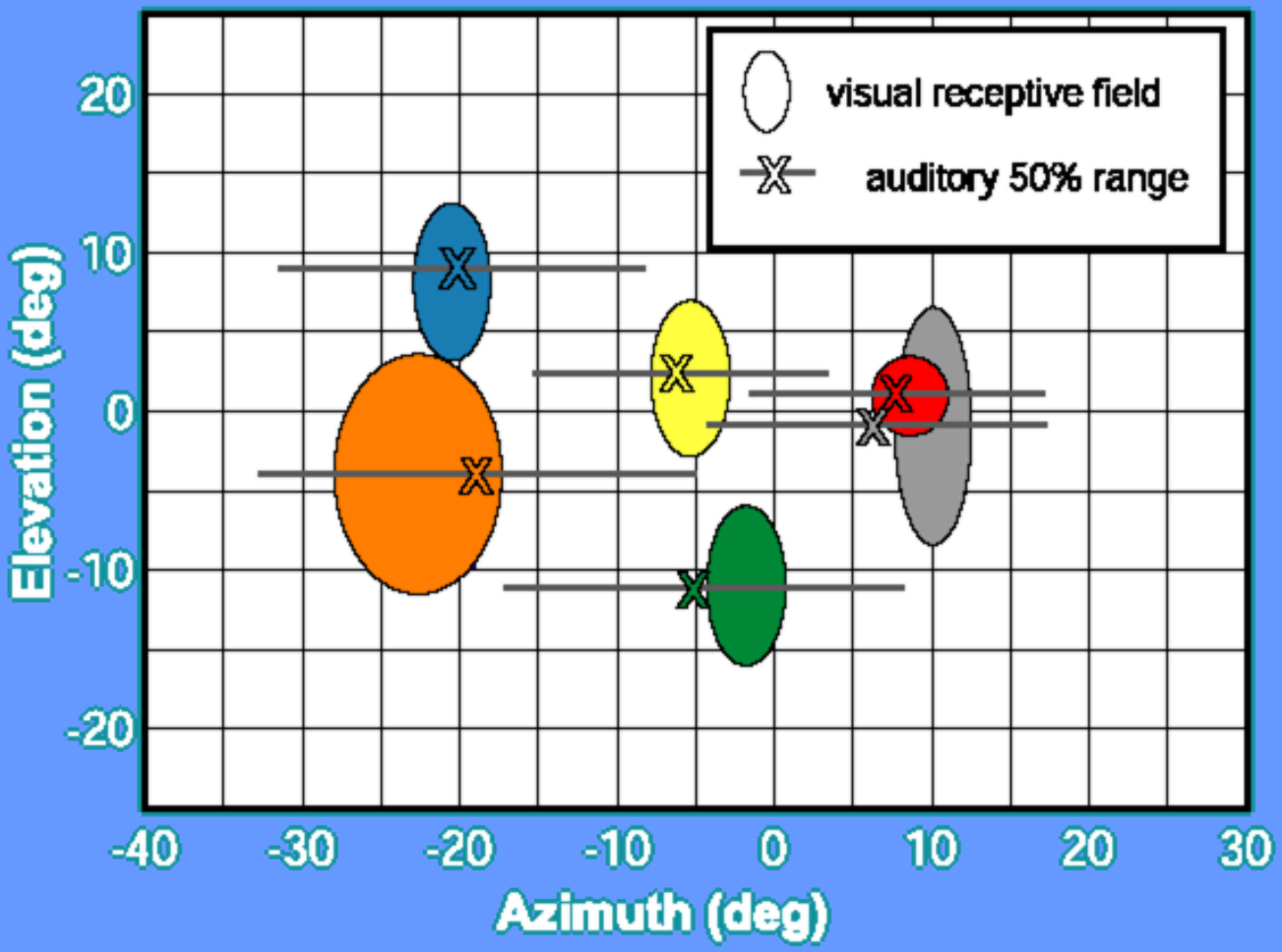


Light responses in the ICX



Visual Receptive Fields in the ICX




visual receptive field
auditory 50% range
Elevation (deg)
20
10
0
-10
-20
-40
-30
-20
-10
0
10
20
30
Azimuth (deg)

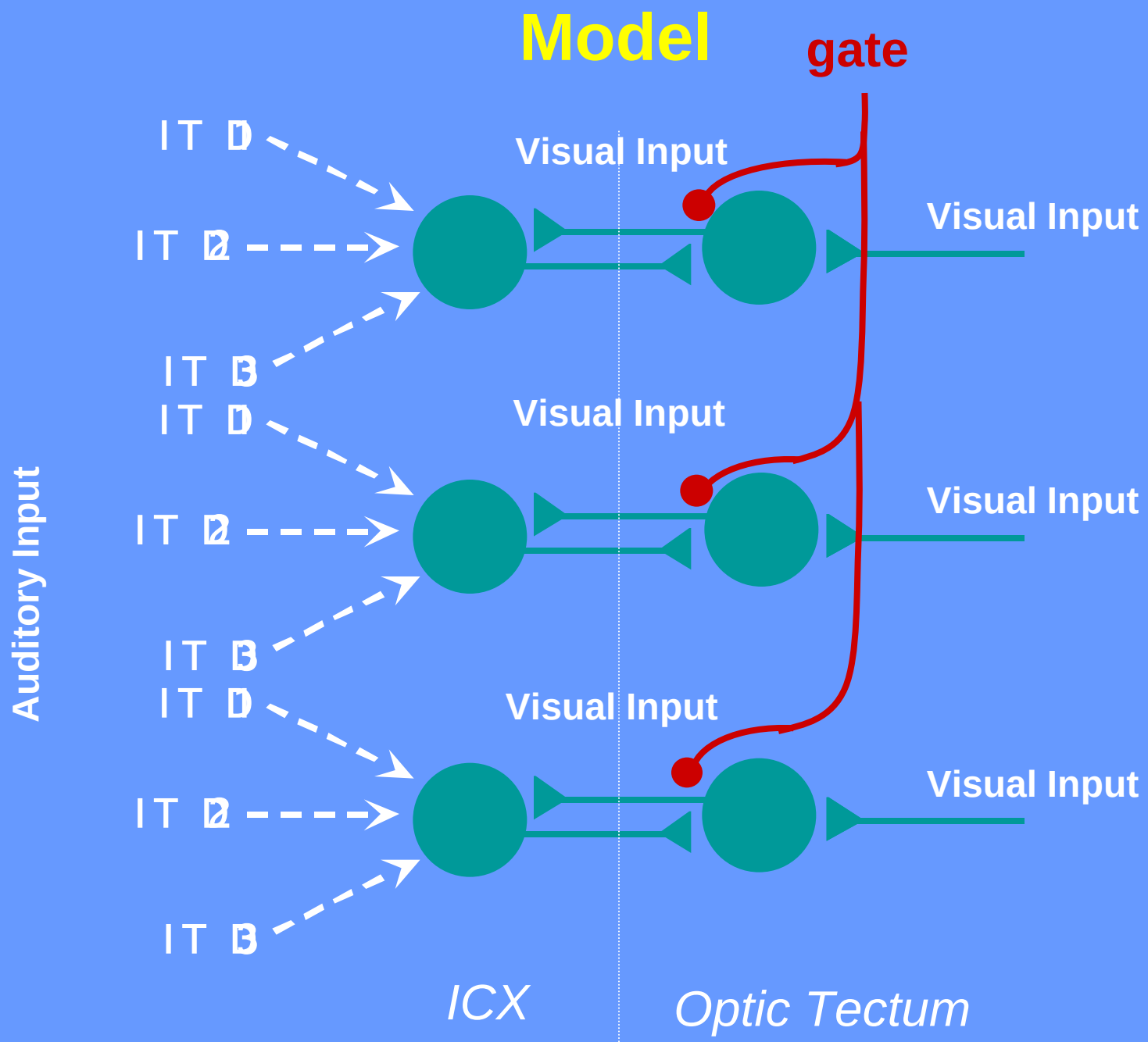
Properties of visual responses in ICX

- Arrive from the OT

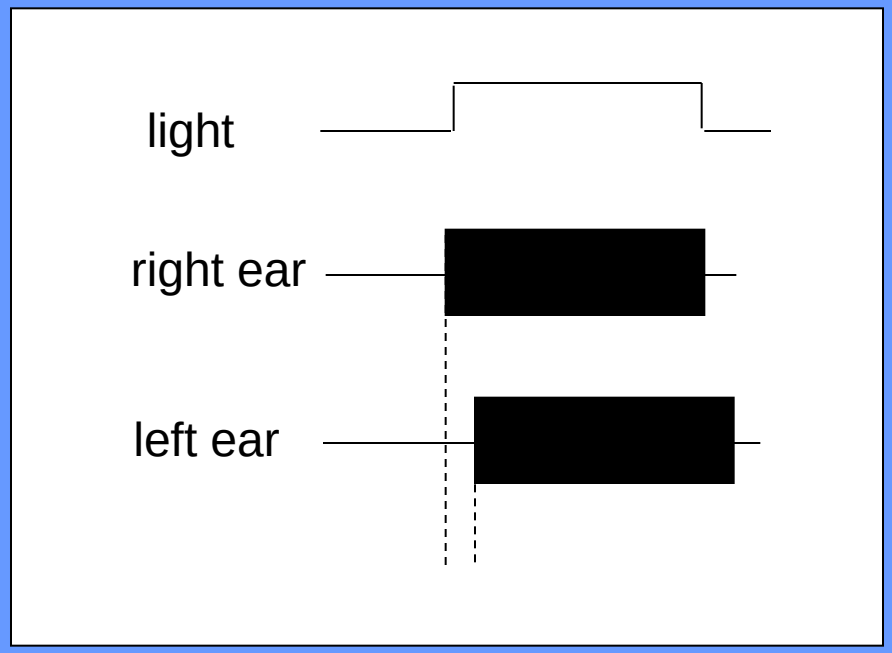
- Display spatially restricted visual receptive fields

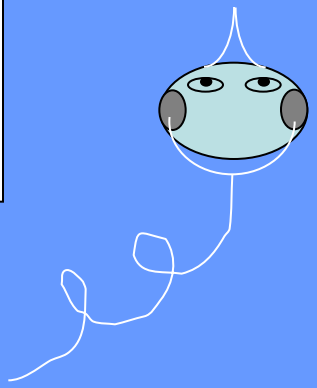
- Form a map of space

- Align with auditory spatial representation


Model
gate
ITD
ITD
ITD
ITD
ITD
ITD
Auditory Input
Visual Input
Visual Input
Visual Input
Visual Input
Visual Input
Visual Input
ICX
Optic Tectum

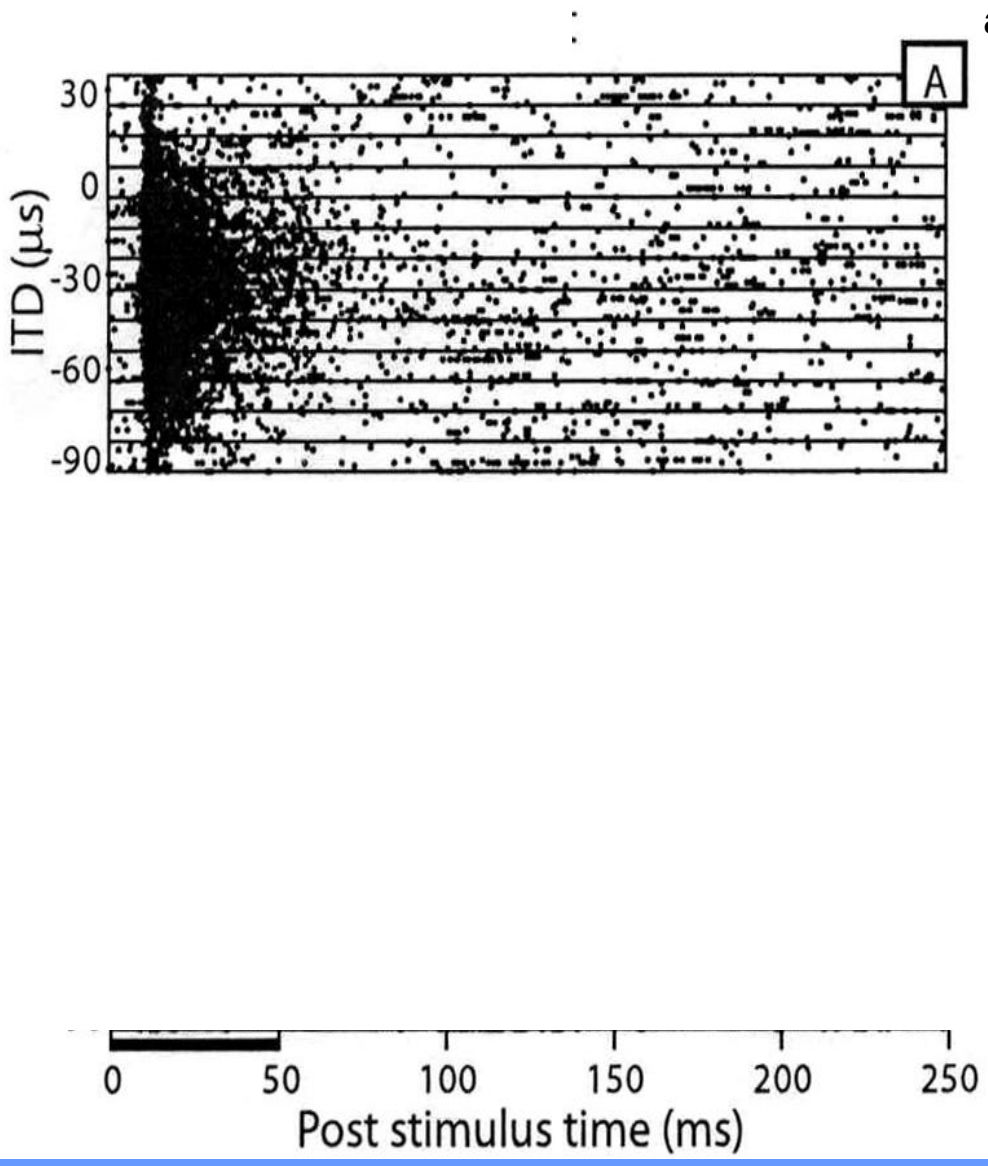
Bimodal Stimulus





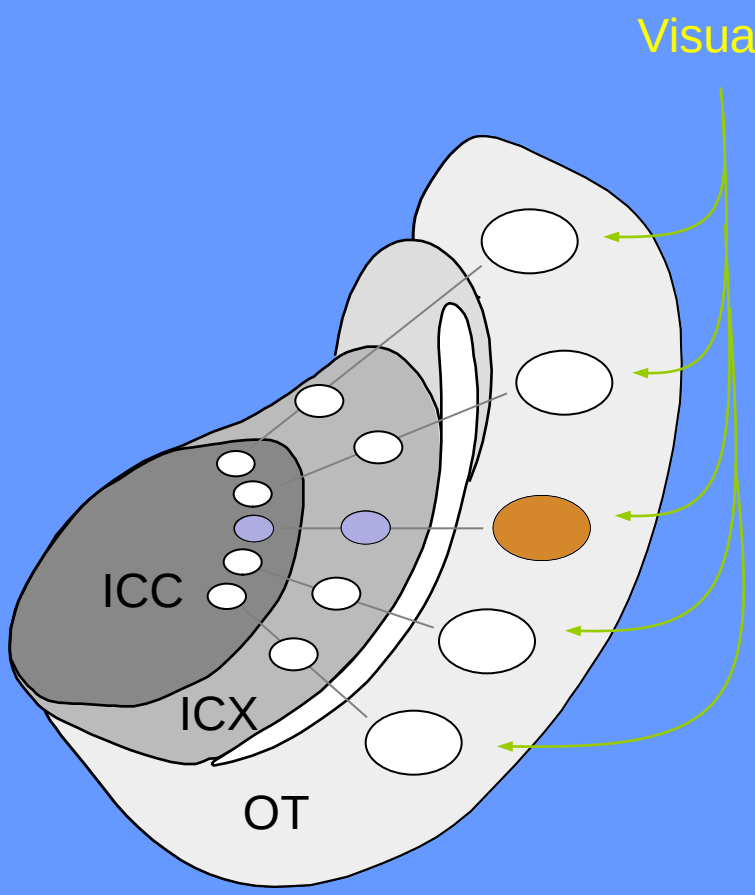
Visual and auditory interactions in the ICX

auditory



Bimodal stimulus

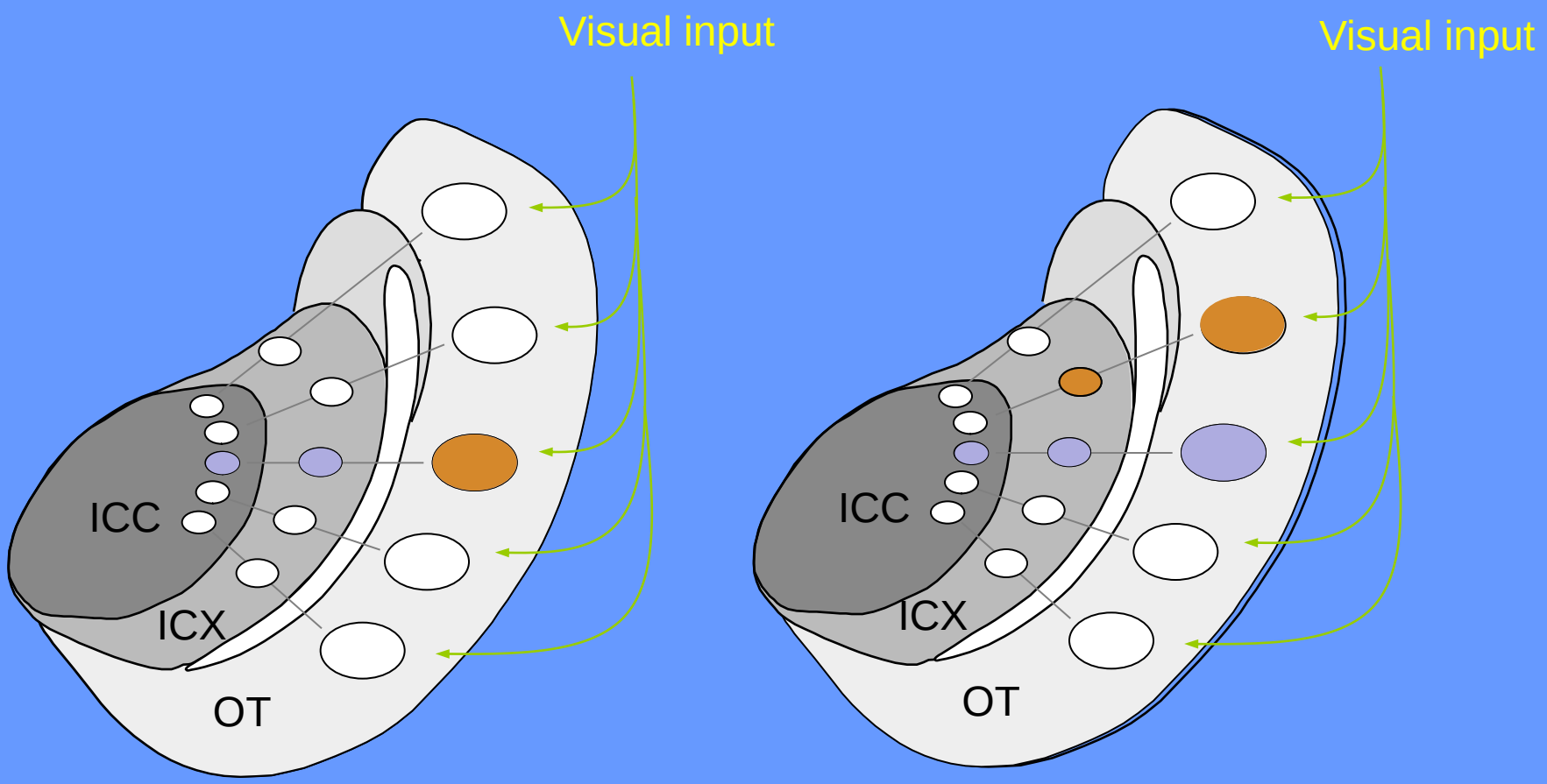
Normal



Bimodal stimulus

Normal

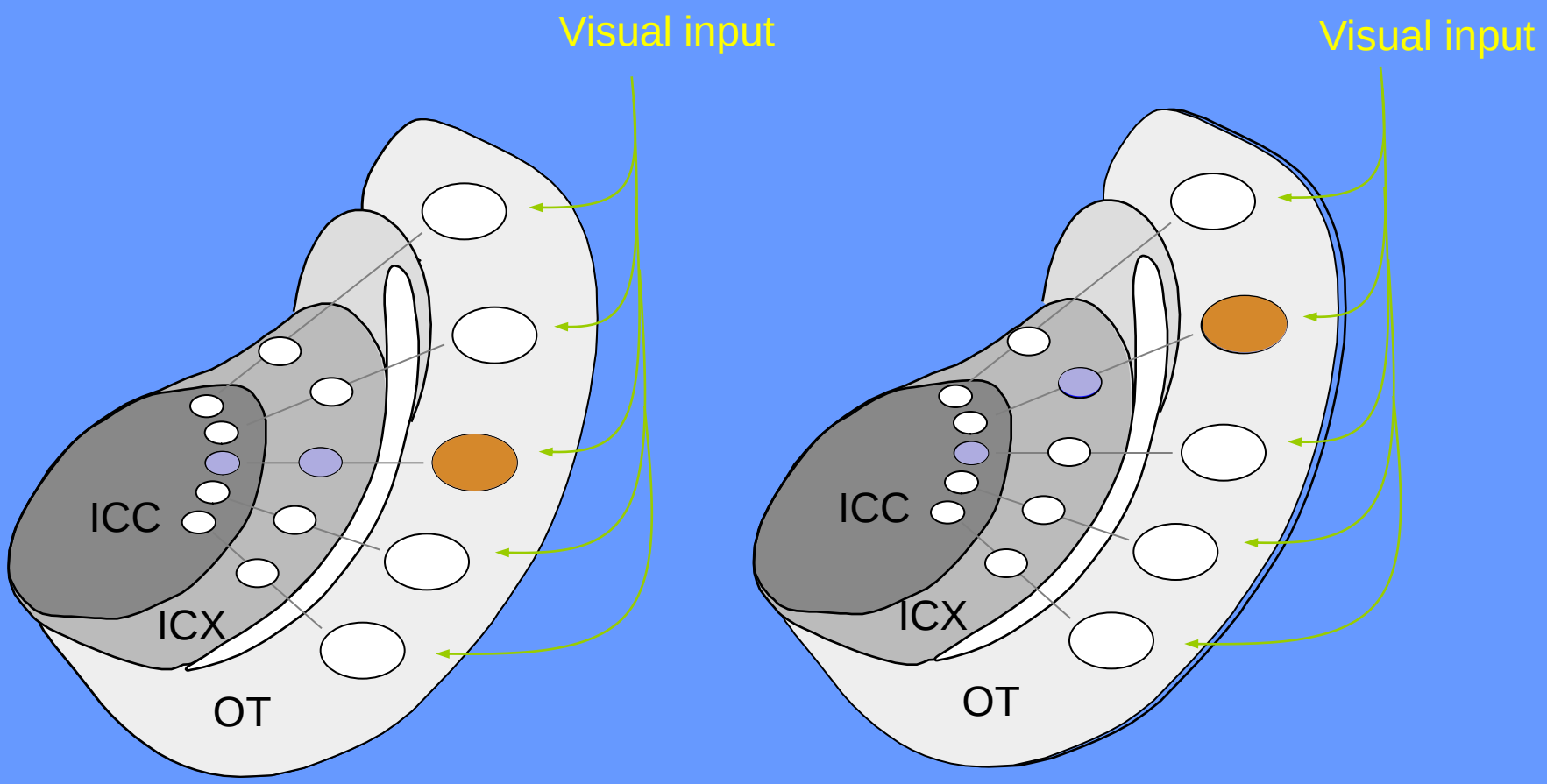
With prisms



Bimodal stimulus

Normal

With prisms



Summary

- An inhibitory gate controls the flow of visual information into the auditory system

Summary

- An inhibitory gate controls the flow of visual information into the auditory system
- The visual signals are appropriate to serve as the instructive signal for auditory plasticity

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  Daniel Feldman
  Michael Brainard
  Will Debello
  Brie Linkenhoker
  Joe Bergan

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