

"Social behavior and diseases: a comparative investigation of island and mainland bird populations" - additional support for Europe

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Understanding how social behaviour evolves is central to evolutionary biology (Wilson 1975, Trivers 1985, Székely et al., 2010). Social behaviour can be defined as interaction between conspecifics that influence fitness. Among the many social behaviours, mate acquisitions, pair bonds and parental care stand out as having some of the most diverse features animals may exhibit. Parental care, for instance, is negotiated between the caring male and female, and between the parents and the offspring (Royle et al., 2012). Recent research, however, reveals a somehow different aspect of social behaviour: social interactions influence how diseases, parasites and infections spread through populations (Van der Wal et al. 2012). For example, crowded situations when individuals are forced into confined space, promiscuous sexual contacts between males and females, or parenting provisioning of offspring may all influence distribution, contamination and spread of pathogens and diseases in a population (Anderson and May 1991). This project will focus on two research objectives: 1. Does social structure influence infections in island versus mainland bird populations? 2. Does social structure in a single, thoroughly studied population influence the prevalence and risk of infections and the spread of diseases?

Projektbeteiligte

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