Conspecific brood parasitism in the spotless starling (*Sturnus unicolor*)

We are looking for a motivated and competent candidate for a PhD thesis at the

Laboratoire d'Ethologie Expérimentale et Comparée

Context: Conspecific brood parasitism (CBP) is an alternative reproductive tactic found in insects, amphibians, and birds. Within a population, some females do not defend a nest, dump their eggs in other nests and rely on the host to raise the offspring. Whereas many studies have focused on precocial and colonial species, not much is known about altricial species, where the costs for the host are higher, and thus, anti-parasitism strategies are more likely to have evolved. What tactic a female might choose, the stability of the tactic, the choice of the host to increase fitness, and the fitness consequences of parasitism are open questions that will be examined in this thesis.

Objectives: The spotless starling (*Sturnus unicolor*) is a small altricial passerine where CBP has been described. The study population has been followed for 15 years in the north of Madrid (Spain), and all the animals are marked and followed from birth to death. Therefore, it is a very interesting system to investigate individual differences in CBP. In particular, the objectives of the thesis are (i) to identify and characterize the females that follow this tactic in the population, (ii) to analyse the stability of the tactic (best-of-a bad-job situation vs. stable strategy), and (iii) to measure the fitness consequences of the tactic followed.

The thesis will involve fieldwork in Spain for at least 4 months per year.

Methods: apart from behavioural observations, trapping, and nest monitoring, hormonal and genetic analysis will be done in the lab at the LEEC:

Candidate. We are seeking a creative and motivated candidate with a Master in ethology, behavioural sciences, or a related field, with experience working with long data sets. The candidate should have very good oral and written English communication skills; knowledge of French or Spanish is not requested. Good knowledge in applied statistics (preferably using R) will be advantageous.

Thesis supervisor: Dr. Raquel Monclús   Contact**:** raquel.monclusburgoa@univ-paris13.fr

Applicants should submit a letter of motivation, a CV, a transcript of their Master marks, and two references before **May 15th**.

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