

Université de Montréal

**Effets physiologiques de l'infection parasitaire chez le crapet-soleil
(*Lepomis gibbosus*)**

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**Effets physiologiques de l'infection parasitaire chez le crapet-soleil
(*Lepomis gibbosus*)**

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Résumé

Les facteurs de stress biotiques, tels que les parasites, peuvent affecter le fitness d'un animal en modifiant le comportement et la physiologie de l'hôte. Puisque les parasites sont omniprésents et ont des impacts importants sur les communautés écologiques, il importe de comprendre comment et dans quelle mesure ils modifient la vie de leurs hôtes. Ainsi, l'étude de la capacité de performance d'un hôte parasité par le biais de la physiologie et du comportement pourrait fournir une compréhension plus mécanistique des changements phénotypiques de l'hôte pendant l'infection. Nous avons utilisé des crapets-soleil (*Lepomis gibbosus*) infectés par des trématodes et cestodes comme système modèle pour étudier les effets des endoparasites sur les traits métaboliques et le comportement de fuite de l'hôte. Les traits de performance métaboliques aérobiques (taux métabolique standard et maximal, capacité aérobique) et de performance de fuite (réactivité et temps de réponse à une attaque aérienne simulée) ont été mesurés chez les poissons à travers un gradient d'infection visible (c.-à-d. la prévalence de points noirs sur les poissons) et d'infection non-visible (c.-à-d. causée par des endoparasites, cestodes et trématodes, non-apparents mais quantifiés post-mortem) à l'aide de respiromètres et d'arènes comportementales. Nous avons démontré que la charge parasitaire influence les performances physiologiques et comportementales des crapets-soleil. Nous avons observé une diminution significative des taux métaboliques standard et maximal le long d'un gradient d'infection par des endoparasites non-visibles, mais pas pour une infection visible de type point noir. L'intensité de l'infection par les endoparasites non-visibles était également liée à une diminution de la réponse à une attaque aérienne simulée. Nos résultats suggèrent que l'incorporation de l'infection parasitaire dans les études écologiques, physiologiques et comportementales s'avère essentielle pour identifier et comprendre les causes de la variation des caractères intraspécifiques au sein des populations sauvages.

Mots-clés : Écophysiologie, parasites, réponse de fuite, respirométrie, capacité de performance, infection

Abstract

Biotic stressors, such as parasites, can affect an animal's fitness through changes to their host's behaviour and physiology. Since parasites are ubiquitous and have significant impacts on ecological communities, it is important to understand how and to what extent they alter the lives of their hosts. Thus, studying how host performance capacity is affected by parasites through physiology and behaviour could provide a more mechanistic understanding of host phenotypic changes during infection. We used pumpkinseed sunfish, *Lepomis gibbosus*, infected with endoparasites, including trematodes (the causal agent of black spot disease), as a model system to study the effects of infection on host aerobic metabolic performance and escape behaviour. Aerobic metabolic performance traits (standard and maximum metabolic rate, aerobic scope) and escape response performance traits (responsiveness and response latency to a simulated aerial attack) were measured in fish from across a gradient of visible endoparasite infection (i.e. trematodes causing black spot disease) and non-visible infection (i.e. internal cestodes and trematodes quantified post-mortem) using custom-built respirometers and behavioural arenas. Here, we demonstrate that parasite load is related to the physiological and behavioral performances of wild caught pumpkinseed sunfish. We find a significant decrease in standard metabolic rate and maximal metabolic rate along the gradient of non-visible endoparasite infection but not for visible infection with black spot. Non-visible endoparasite infection intensity was also related to decreased responsiveness to a simulated aerial attack. Our results provide further confirmation that incorporating parasite infection in ecological, physiological and behavioural studies is critical for understanding the causes of intraspecific trait variation in wild animal populations.

Keywords: ecophysiology, parasites, infection, fast-start escape response, respirometry, performance capacity

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Liste des sigles et abréviations

± : plus ou moins

c.-à-d. : c'est-à-dire

SMR : Standard metabolic rate

TMS : Taux métabolique standard

MMR : Maximal metabolic rate

TMM : Taux métabolique maximal

AS : Aerobic scope

CA : Capacité aérobie

P : p-value

$\dot{M}O_2$: taux de consommation d'oxygène

LM : Modèle linéaire (linear model)

N/n : échantillon

X² : Coefficient de chi-carré

r : coefficient de corrélation de Pearson

R² : Coefficient de détermination

DF : degrés de liberté (degrees of freedom)

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Chapitre 1 – Introduction générale

Les animaux sauvages sont soumis à divers facteurs de stress (ou *stresseurs*) abiotiques et biotiques. Pour les organismes aquatiques, comme les poissons, les paramètres physico-chimiques de l'eau, tels que le pH, la température et la concentration d'oxygène sont des sources potentiellement importantes de stress abiotique et leurs effets ont été largement étudiés (Fromm, 1980; Gutha et al., 2018; Przeslawski et al., 2015; Samanta et al., 2018; Sampaio et Freire, 2016; Slaninova et al., 2009; Zhou et al., 2018). Or, les conséquences des stresseurs biotiques, tels que l'infection par des pathogènes ou des parasites, sont, quant à elles, moins bien connues. Il a été démontré que les effets de ces stresseurs biotiques peuvent être influencés par certains facteurs abiotiques, risquant ainsi d'être amplifiés par les changements climatiques (Marcogliese, 2001). L'abondance et la distribution géographique des parasites dépendent donc de la fluctuation des paramètres physico-chimiques de l'eau, fluctuation modulée par les conditions climatiques (Altizer et al., 2013; Marcogliese, 2001; Marcogliese, 2008). Par exemple, l'augmentation de la température affectera la phénologie de plusieurs espèces de parasites, modulant ainsi la prévalence d'infection et la charge parasitaire des hôtes potentiels (Marcogliese, 2001; Poulin, 2006). Il importe donc d'approfondir notre compréhension de la dynamique hôte-parasite au sein des populations naturelles.

L'omniprésence des parasites dans les systèmes terrestres et aquatiques devrait être suffisante pour témoigner de leur importance écologique (Binning et al., 2017; Careau et al., 2012; Dobson et al., 2008; Lafferty et al., 2008; Marcogliese, 2004). Cependant, le rôle écologique des parasites a longtemps été sous-estimé, probablement en raison de leur petite taille, ou alors parce qu'ils sont dissimulés à l'intérieur d'organismes plus complexes. De plus, l'évaluation quantitative

de la charge parasitaire d'un hôte sans le sacrifier et la complexité du cycle de vie des parasites représentent des obstacles importants à l'étude de ces organismes complexes et à leur incidence sur leurs hôtes (Caballero et al., 2015; McElroy et al., 2015; Poulin et Morand, 2000). Néanmoins, les travaux de recherche sur les parasites et sur leur rôle écologique s'intensifient, notamment sur la modification sur l'assemblage des communautés, la migration et le mouvement que peuvent subir leurs hôtes en plus d'être amplifié dans un contexte de changements climatiques (Altizer et al., 2011; Cable et al., 2017; Marcogliese, 2001; Marcogliese, 2008; Pietrock et Marcogliese, 2003; Poulin, 1999).

Le parasitisme

Le parasitisme se définit comme un mode de vie où un organisme parasite (généralement de petite taille) vit sur ou à l'intérieur d'un organisme hôte en lui causant, à un certain point durant sa vie, une forme de blessure ou de nuisance causant une réduction de fitness (Huggins, 1959; Poulin et Morand, 2000; Price, 1980). Les organismes parasites sont des consommateurs et utilisent donc leurs hôtes comme une ressource, sans toutefois nécessairement les tuer (Caballero et al., 2015; Croll, 1966; Poulin, 1999). Les parasites vivant sur la surface du corps de leur hôte, les ectoparasites, peuvent causer une inflammation, des pertes de sang, de l'irritation et autres dommages qui peuvent avoir un effet direct ou indirect sur l'allocation d'énergie et la forme physique de leurs hôtes impactant ainsi leur fitness (Binning et al., 2013; Binning et al., 2014). Les endoparasites, quant à eux, vivent à l'intérieur du corps de leur hôte. On les retrouve incrustés dans les tissus et organes, comme le muscle ou le foie, ou libres dans l'une des cavités de l'hôte, comme le tractus digestif, la cavité abdominale ou les poumons (Arnott et al., 2000; Huggins, 1959).

Plusieurs difficultés sont associées aux études sur les infections parasitaires. D'abord, la

quantification de la charge parasitaire d'un organisme s'avère problématique puisqu'en plus de représenter une tâche laborieuse, cela implique inévitablement la mort de l'hôte. Il est plus simple d'étudier l'effets des parasites chez leurs hôtes lorsqu'ils sont visibles à l'œil nu, assurant ainsi la survie de l'hôte. Toutefois, il est rare qu'un individu soit infecté par un seul parasite (Bordes et Morand, 2011). Il serait donc pertinent d'élaborer une technique qui permettrait aux biologiste de faire une évaluation complète et exhaustive de la charge parasitaire totale de leur modèle d'étude.

Certaines classes de parasites, dont les cestodes et les trématodes, possèdent un cycle de vie complexe, puisqu'ils font un passage obligé par un ou plusieurs hôtes intermédiaires. Dans une grande majorité des cas, le dernier hôte intermédiaire doit se faire ingérer par un hôte final. Certains parasites ont la capacité d'infliger des modifications phénotypiques à leur hôte favorisant ainsi cette transmission. Les modifications phénotypiques observées chez les animaux infectés par des endoparasites peuvent être morphologiques, physiologiques et comportementales, et peuvent, dans certains cas, être perçues comme de la manipulation (McElroy et de Buron, 2014; Poulin et Thomas, 1999). Par exemple, un nématode, *Myrmeconema neotropicum*, infectant des fourmis, *Cephalodes atratus*, modifie la couleur de leur abdomen leur donnant l'allure de petites baies en plus d'affecter leur comportement afin de les rendre plus susceptibles à la prédation par leur hôte final, un oiseau frugivore (Yanoviak et al., 2008). La manipulation peut affecter la physiologie ou le comportement de manière plus subtile. Par exemple, le comportement et les performances de nage de l'épinoche à trois épines, *Gasterosteus aculeatus*, peuvent être modulés lors de l'infection par un cestode, *Schistocephalus solidus*. Les individus infectés passent alors plus de temps à la surface de l'eau et ont une réponse de fuite diminuée, les rendant plus susceptibles à la prédation par un oiseau piscivore (Talarico et al., 2017). Mieux comprendre les mécanismes associés à ce type de modifications phénotypiques causées par les parasites ainsi que ce qui les influence

permettra aux écologistes de la faune de mieux prévenir et atténuer les impacts de modifications écologiques causées par les invasions parasitiques sur les populations de l'hôte (McElroy et de Buron, 2014; Nathan, 2008).

Effet des parasites sur la capacité de performance de l'hôte

La capacité de performance d'un individu dépend de son aptitude à exécuter des fonctions d'une pertinence écologique, et influence donc son fitness. Cette capacité peut être mesurée selon différentes variables, telles que la vitesse, la distance et le temps d'exécution de ces fonctions (Arnold, 1983; McElroy et de Buron, 2014). Elle est donc principalement liée au mouvement, à la morphologie, à la physiologie et au comportement d'un animal. Malgré les multiples recherches faites sur la manipulation parasitaire les mécanismes associés demeurent mal définis (Poulin, 2010), il a été démontré que la capacité de performance de l'hôte demeure potentiellement affectée par cette manipulation (Binning et al., 2017; McElroy et de Buron, 2014).

Plusieurs métriques nous renseignent sur la capacité de performance des animaux, dont la mesure des taux métaboliques (référée dans ce texte comme performance métabolique aérobie), qui est une composante du budget énergétique d'un individu. La réponse de fuite (référée dans ce texte comme performance de fuite), également un indice de la capacité de performance, nous renseigne sur les multiples volets impliqués dans un comportement de survie chez un animal. Les traits métaboliques, quant à eux, tels que le taux métabolique standard (TMS), le taux métabolique maximal (TMM) et la capacité aérobie (CA; étant la différence entre TMM et TMS), permettent d'estimer le métabolisme en mesurant la consommation d'oxygène chez les poissons. Ces taux métaboliques permettent d'évaluer les capacités de l'individu à accomplir des fonctions physiologiques impliquant une demande énergétique aérobie (Claireaux et Lefrançois, 2007). Le

TMS représente le taux de consommation d’oxygène ($\dot{M}O_2$) le plus bas qu’un animal peut atteindre pour maintenir sa survie (Burton et al., 2011; Chabot et al., 2016). Le TMM représente quant à lui la quantité maximale d’énergie métabolisée de manière aérobie par un organisme, et est estimée en mesurant le taux de consommation d’oxygène ($\dot{M}O_2$) à la suite d’un exercice épuisant (Reidy et al., 1995; Rummer et al., 2016). En ce qui a trait à la capacité aérobie, elle représente la capacité d’un animal à effectuer des fonctions aérobiques additionnelles à celles requises pour sa survie, y compris les réponses immunitaires, la digestion, la reproduction et l’activité physique en général (Claireaux et Lefrançois, 2007; Clark et al., 2013).

L’accélération rapide, ou « fast-start », est un paramètre utilisé pour étudier la réponse de fuite chez les poissons. Cette accélération est une réaction stéréotypée exécutée de manière anaérobique par un individu en réponse à une attaque par un prédateur. Plusieurs variables sont prises en compte lors de l’évaluation de cette réaction, soit l’occurrence de la réaction ou la réactivité, le temps de réaction, la vitesse d’accélération ainsi que la distance parcourue face au prédateur. Ces paramètres affectent directement le fitness du poisson, et par le fait même sa survie (Domenici, 2010). La réaction et l’effort investis dans la réponse de fuite dépendent des coûts associés à l’opportunité de fuir de l’animal et sera influencé pas ses expériences antérieures (Domenici and Blake, 1997). Plus précisément, la masse musculaire, la morphologie ainsi que les réserves énergétiques de l’animal lui permettent d’être plus efficace lors d’une réponse de fuite. La moindre modification de ces traits peut donc affecter son habileté à réagir et ainsi impacter sa survie et son fitness (Allan et al., 2020; Binning et al., 2014; Langerhans, 2009).

Les parasites peuvent provoquer de nombreux types d’altérations phénotypiques chez leurs hôtes. Les exemples retrouvés dans la littérature touchent principalement aux modifications du comportement, probablement parce que celui-ci est facilement et directement observable

(Moore, 2002; Poulin, 2010). Des études récentes ont démontré que la capacité de performance de l'hôte serait une cible importante de la manipulation parasitaire (Binning et al., 2017; McElroy et de Buron, 2014). Par exemple, l'infection par un protozoaire parasite, *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*, chez les papillons monarques, *Danaus plexippus*, diminuerait leur durée de vol de 14% et la distance parcourue de 19%, impactant directement des traits physiologiques de ces papillons, et, par le fait même, leur migration (Bartel et al., 2011; Bradley et Altizer, 2005). Caballero *et al.* (2015) ont, quant à eux, observé une diminution du métabolisme maximal chez les geckos, *Hemidactylus turcicus*, liée à une augmentation de la charge parasitaire par un pentastome, *Raillietiella indica*. Enfin, Allan *et al.*, (2020) ont comparé des demoiselles orangés, *Pomacentrus amboinensis*, parasités par un seul gnathiid avec des individus non-parasités et ont noté une diminution de 13% de leur vitesse de réponse, une diminution de 30% de leur vitesse maximale d'accélération et une augmentation de 32% de leur temps de réponse de fuite, impactant ainsi des paramètres de survie face à un prédateur. Ces exemples suggèrent que les infections parasitaires peuvent avoir un effet important sur le mouvement et le déplacement des animaux, autant des déplacements quotidiens que de grandes migrations.

Les endoparasites des poissons d'eau douce

Les poissons d'eau douce du Québec sont sujets à une multitude d'infections parasitaires, principalement par des nématodes, des cestodes et des trématodes. Certains de ces parasites sont encore peu connus et étudiés. Parmi les plus connus, nous retrouvons les trématodes causant la maladie du point noir (p. ex. *Apophalus*, *Uvulifer*, *Crassiphiala*), l'infection par le cestode *Proteocephalus ambloplites* et l'infection par le trématode *Clinosomum marginatum*. Ces différentes espèces de parasites possèdent un cycle de vie complexe comportant deux hôtes

intermédiaires, dont un poisson. La maladie du point noir est une infection parasitaire très répandue chez les poissons d'eaux douces d'Amérique du Nord (Lane et Morris, 2000). Les parasites pouvant causer le point noir font partie de la famille des *Diplostomidae*, dans la classe des trématodes. Ce sont des parasites dits digénétiques, puisqu'ils présentent un cycle de vie complexe impliquant trois hôtes provenant de différents taxons (Fig. 1.1). Les trématodes adultes pondent leurs œufs dans l'intestin de leur hôte final, un oiseau piscivore. Les œufs se trouvant dans les excréments de cet oiseau sont ensuite relâchés dans l'eau, où un escargot est infecté. Après maturation dans l'escargot, les larves de trématodes, les cercaires, sont relâchées par l'hôte. Les cercaires libres dans l'eau sont désormais prêtes à s'enkyster chez leur deuxième hôte intermédiaire, un poisson, soit le crapet-soleil (*Lepomis gibbosus*), l'achigan à petite bouche, *Micropterus dolomieu*, la perchaude, *Perca flavescens*, ou encore le meunier noir, *Catostomus commersonii* (Margolis et Arthur, 1979). Cet enkystement chez le 2^e hôte intermédiaire se nomme métacercaire. La formation du kyste par la metacercaire entraîne des dommages mécaniques et physiques, se manifestant par exemple par la détérioration des muscles et des saignements (Hunter et Hunter, 1938; Lane et Morris, 2000). Ces métacercaires s'incrustent dans la peau, les muscles, les écailles et/ou les nageoires des poissons, causant la maladie du point noir. Pour que le cycle soit complet, ce poisson maintenant parasité doit être mangé par l'hôte final, un oiseau piscivore, ou un mammifère dans certains cas (Fig. 1.1) (Berra et Au, 1978; Huggins, 1959; Hunter et Hunter, 1934). En effet, les métacercaires présentes sur la surface du poisson peuvent nous permettre d'attribuer une charge parasitaire visible au poisson sans avoir à le sacrifier, contrairement à la plupart des autres modèles endoparasitaires, et font de ce modèle un des rares cas nous permettant une telle quantification. L'avantage d'étudier le système modèle est de pouvoir combler les lacunes dans les connaissances des effets des parasites sur la physiologie de leur hôte d'une manière non-invasive.

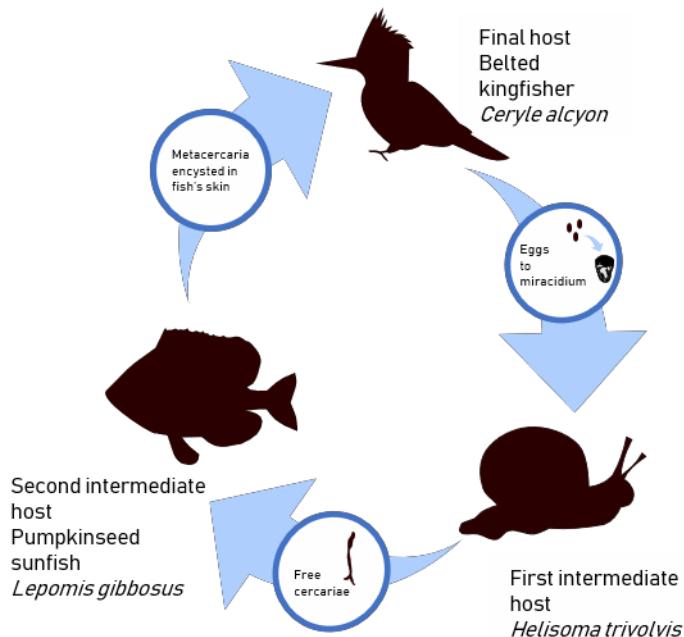


Figure 1.1. Exemple d'un cycle de vie de trématode causant la maladie du point noir. Dans cette figure, le cycle de vie de *Uvulifer ambloplitis* est illustré.

Il a été démontré dans l'étude de Lemly et Esch (1984) que la condition physique ainsi que la teneur en lipides des crapets arlequin, *Lepomis macrochirus*, parasités par le trématode, *Uvulifer ambloplitis*, une espèce causant le point noir, sont grandement affectées par le nombre d'enkystements présents sur chaque individu. De plus, les poissons présentant une infection sévère (>50 métacercaires/poisson) ne survivaient pas à des baisses de température, impactant ainsi négativement le recrutement suite à l'hiver. Les auteurs ont également noté une détérioration de la condition corporelle des individus infectés expérimentalement, une augmentation de la consommation d'oxygène durant l'infection et une diminution des teneurs en lipides corporels. En

contrepartie, Vaughans et Coble, (1975) n'ont trouvé aucun effet de l'infection par le point noir sur la relation masse-longueur, la température de tolérance critique ainsi que la susceptibilité de prédation chez la perchaude. Les effets physiologiques et comportementaux de ce type d'infection parasitaire sur son hôte intermédiaire demeurent mitigés et des recherches futures sont nécessaires.

Le cestode *Proteocephalus ambloplites* se retrouve sous une forme libre dans la cavité abdominale et dans certains organes internes chez ses hôtes. *Proteocephalus ambloplites* cause des dommages substantiels aux organes internes ainsi que la destruction des organes reproducteurs chez son hôte final, l'achigan à grande bouche et à petite bouche, *Micropterus salmoides* et *M. dolomieu*, ainsi que chez ses hôtes intermédiaires, *Lepomis sp.* (Mitchell et al., 1983). Le trématode *Clinostomum marginatum* est quant à lui retrouvé sous la forme d'un enkystement (metacercaire) dans les muscles et les branchies de son hôte intermédiaire poisson. Peu de littérature est disponible sur les effets de la présence de *C. marginatum* chez son hôte intermédiaire, mais sa taille relativement grande (3 à 8 mm) suggère que son enkystement imposera des dommages mécaniques chez son hôte. Cependant, les conséquences physiologiques et comportementales de ces deux parasites sur leurs hôtes sont peu connues.

La maladie du point noir ainsi que l'infection par *P. ambloplites* et *C. marginatum* sont des infections parasitaires connues, mais peu étudiées dans un contexte physiologique. Il est donc important d'avoir une vue d'ensemble sur la capacité de performance des poissons, incluant les performances métaboliques aérobiques et de fuite des individus parasités pour différentes charges afin d'avoir une meilleure compréhension des mécanismes associés aux coûts physiologiques liés à ces infections.

Espèce modèle

Le Crapet-soleil, *Lepomis gibbosus*, un poisson natif de l'Amérique du Nord, se retrouve dans la grande majorité des lacs du Québec. C'est un poisson généraliste qui se nourrit majoritairement d'insectes et de leurs larves, de gastéropodes, de zooplancton et de petits poissons. Il est retrouvé dans plusieurs types de lacs et constitue souvent une biomasse importante particulièrement dans les lacs peu profonds (Scott et Crossman, 1998). Les crapets-soleil sont grandement étudiés pour leur écologie (Danylchuk et Fox, 1994; Fox et Keast, 1990), mais leur physiologie, leur comportement et les effets de leur charge parasitaire sur cette dernière sont peu connus. Il est fréquent que les populations de crapets-soleil soient infectées par des métacercaires de trématode, ainsi que par d'autres endoparasites, notamment dans la grande région des Laurentides (Scott et Crossman, 1998; J. Guitard, observation personnelle; R. Carignan, communication personnelle, août 2018).

Objectifs et hypothèses

Les objectifs principaux de ce projet de maîtrise étaient donc (1) de déterminer si la charge parasitaire visible sur la surface des poissons nous renseigne sur la charge parasitaire interne (non-visible) et (2) d'évaluer si la capacité de performance des crapets-soleil est affectée par l'infection parasitaire du point noir. Plus précisément, nous cherchions à savoir si un gradient naturel d'infection aurait pour effet de modifier les performances métaboliques aérobiques et les performances de fuite face à une simulation de prédateur aérien. Pour ce faire, certains facteurs abiotiques, comme la température, étaient contrôlés. Ce projet de recherche visait à combler un manque d'information dans la littérature liée à l'effet des parasites sur la capacité de performance chez les poissons hôtes. Puisque les poissons hôtes sont souvent sujets à plus d'un type d'infection parasitaire (Bordes et Morand, 2011), nous avions émis l'hypothèse que la charge parasitaire

visible (par le point noir) serait un reflet de la charge parasitaire interne des individus récoltés. Considérant la tendance générale des infections parasitaires à diminuer la capacité de performance de l'hôte (McElroy et de Buron, 2014), nous supposons que les performances métaboliques et de réponse de fuite seraient négativement impactées par la charge parasitaire de l'hôte et ce, de manière proportionnelle à cette dernière.

Chapitre 2 – L’augmentation de la charge parasitaire est associée à une diminution des taux métaboliques ainsi qu’à la diminution de la réponse de fuite chez le crapet-soleil, *Lepomis gibbosus*.

Contribution des co-auteurs :

- Joëlle Guitard : Conception du projet d’étude, travaux terrain, analyse et traitement des données, rédaction
- Emmanuelle Chrétien : Analyses statistiques et révision du manuscrit
- Jérémy De Bonville : Participation aux travaux terrain, révision du manuscrit
- Dominique G. Roche : analyses statistiques, archivage des données
- Daniel Boisclair : révision du manuscrit, supervision
- Sandra Ann Binning : Conception du projet d’étude, financement du projet d’étude, révision du manuscrit, supervision.

Increased parasite load is associated with reduced metabolic rates and escape responsiveness in a sunfish host

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Résumé

Les animaux sauvages sont soumis à des infections par les parasites qui peuvent compromettre leurs performances physiologiques et/ou comportementales. Pourtant, la mesure dans laquelle la charge parasitaire est liée à la variation intra-individuelle des traits de performance au sein des populations sauvages reste relativement inexplorée. Nous avons utilisé le crapet-soleil (*Lepomis gibbosus*) et ses endoparasites comme système modèle pour explorer les effets de l'intensité de l'infection sur les performances métaboliques aérobiques et de fuite de ces individus. Les traits métaboliques (taux métaboliques standard et maximum, capacité aérobie) et la réponse de fuite (réactivité et latence de réponse à une attaque aérienne simulée de prédateur) ont été mesurés chez ces poissons à travers un gradient d'infection par des endoparasites visibles (c.-à-d. trématodes causant la maladie du points noir) et non-visible (c.-à-d. cestodes et trématodes internes quantifiés post-mortem) à l'aide de respiromètres et d'arènes comportementales. Nous avons constaté que des charges d'infection plus élevées sont liées à des taux métaboliques standard et maximal inférieurs chez les poissons et ce à travers un gradient d'infection par les endoparasites non-visible, mais pas à travers un gradient visible par la maladie du point noir. La charge d'infection par les endoparasites non-visibles était également liée à une diminution de la réactivité à une attaque aérienne simulée. Nos résultats suggèrent que l'infection par des parasites qui ne sont pas immédiatement apparent pour les chercheurs peuvent conclure en une variation intra-spécifique pour les performances physiologiques et comportementales des populations sauvages. Nous sommes d'avis qu'il importe d'aborder et de tenir compte, de manière plus explicite, de l'importance des infections naturelles dans les études liées à la performance et à l'écologie des populations à l'état sauvage.

Mots clés: écophysiologie, infection, réponse de fuite, respirométrie, performance, maladie du point noir, endoparasites

Abstract

Wild animals have parasites that can compromise their physiological and/or behavioural performance. Yet, the extent to which parasite load is related to individual variation in performance traits within wild populations remains relatively unexplored. We used pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) and their endoparasites as a model system to explore the effects of infection intensity on host aerobic metabolic and escape performance. Metabolic traits (standard and maximum metabolic rates, aerobic scope) and escape response (responsiveness and response latency to a simulated predator aerial attack) were measured in fish from across a gradient of visible (i.e. trematodes causing black spot disease) and non-visible endoparasite infection (i.e. internal cestodes and trematodes quantified post-mortem) using custom-built respirometers and behavioural arenas. We found that higher infection loads are related to lower standard and maximum metabolic rates in fish across a gradient of non-visible endoparasite infection, but not across a visible gradient of black spot disease. Non-visible endoparasite infection load was also related to decreased responsiveness to a simulated aerial attack. Our results suggest that infection with parasites that are inconspicuous to researchers may result in intraspecific variation in physiological and behavioural performance in wild populations. We agree with recent suggestions to more explicitly acknowledge and account for the role played by natural infections in studies of wild animal performance and ecology.

Keywords: ecophysiology, infection, fast-start escape response, respirometry, whole organism performance, black spot disease

Introduction

Experimental biologists studying wild animals often assume that their subjects are healthy and performing to the best of their abilities (e.g., Wilson et al., 2015). However, at any given moment, wild animals are host to a range of parasites or pathogens that can compromise their physiological and behavioral performance with significant ecological repercussions (Binning et al., 2017; Marcogliese, 2004; McElroy and de Buron, 2014; Poulin et al., 1994; Timi and Poulin, 2020). For example, infection by the protozoan, *Ophryocystis elektroscirrha*, causes 14% shorter flight durations and 19% shorter flight distances in Monarch butterflies, *Danaus plexippus*, compromising their ability to successfully migrate (Bradley and Altizer, 2005). As a result, parasites may be an important, yet overlooked, driver of intraspecific trait variation in both wild and laboratory populations (Spagnoli et al., 2017). Overlooking the influence of parasites on hosts can, thus, have substantial implications on the interpretation of results of physiological, behavioural and ecological studies.

The pervasiveness of parasites in both terrestrial and aquatic systems has been highlighted in the ecological literature (Caballero et al., 2015; Kuris et al., 2008; Poulin and Morand, 2000). Similarly, their physiological and behavioural effects on hosts can be dramatic. For instance, trophically-transmitted parasites can affect host predator-avoidance or risk-taking behaviours so as to facilitate transmission to their final host (Blake et al., 2006; Kuris, 2003; Parker et al., 2015). In killifish, *Fundulus parvipinnis*, individuals infected with larval trematodes swim to the surface, jerk and shimmer more often than uninfected fish, rendering them 31 times more susceptible to predation by birds (Lafferty and Morris, 1996). Although parasites generally have a detrimental effect on host performance capacity (McElroy and de Buron, 2014), infection may impact

hosts in counter-intuitive ways. For example, higher parasite load with the muscle dwelling myxozoan, *Kudoa inornate*, is related to faster burst swimming speed, gait transition speed and the difference between the two in spotted seatrout, *Cynoscion nebulosus* (McElroy et al., 2015). Thus, the effects of parasite infection and load on individual performance capacity can be very difficult to predict.

Success in activities such as foraging, predator avoidance, reproduction and locomotion largely depends on an individual's performance capacity, a measure of how well an individual can execute an ecologically relevant task (Arnold, 1983; Bennett, 1980). Aerobic metabolic performance is tightly linked to an organism's ability to uptake oxygen and can be estimated by measuring an animal's oxygen consumption rate ($\dot{M}\text{O}_2$) as a proxy of whole-organism metabolic rate. Two important physiological traits can be used to describe the upper and lower bounds of an animal's ability to metabolize oxygen. The standard metabolic rate (SMR), and the maximum metabolic rate (MMR) are defined, respectively, as the minimum and maximum amount of energy that can be metabolized aerobically by an organism (Hulbert and Else, 2000). In ectotherms, SMR is the minimal amount of energy needed for maintenance at a given temperature and is estimated by measuring $\dot{M}\text{O}_2$ in a non-reproductive, resting, post-absorptive state (Chabot et al., 2016). MMR can be estimated by measuring an organism's $\dot{M}\text{O}_2$ during or shortly following exhaustive exercise (Norin and Clark, 2016; Rummer et al., 2016). The difference between these two traits, the aerobic scope, represents an animal's ability to perform functions above those required for basic maintenance, including mounting an immune response, digestion, locomotion, growth and reproduction (Claireaux and Lefrançois, 2007). Parasites that interfere with any aspect of energy demand or cardiovascular physiology may affect the upper and lower bounds of an animal's AS, and therefore its capacity to carry out various physiological or behavioural tasks. Notably,

activation of the immune system during infection may lead to an increase in the host's SMR, and therefore, reduce its AS (Bashir-Tanoli and Tinsley, 2014; Eraud et al., 2005). Alternatively, parasite infection has also been found to decrease SMR when parasites are located in or cause tissue damage to metabolically active organs (Caballero et al., 2015; Ryberg et al., 2020). Similarly, parasites that affect tissues such as the gut, liver or skeletal muscles could impair MMR if they affect the ability of the animal to direct blood flow to these tissues (Coleman, 1993; Gentile and King, 2018).

In response to a predator attack, fishes often perform a sudden burst of anaerobically-powered swimming, known as a fast-start or escape response (Domenici and Blake, 1997). Parasitic infection could alter escape responses behaviourally, by reducing host responsiveness or increasing response latency, and physiologically, by impairing neuromuscular function. A recent study reported that experimental infection with a gnathiid isopod ectoparasite in juvenile Ambon damselfish, *Pomacentrus amboinensis*, increased their escape latency by 32% and reduced their routine swimming distance and speed by 50% (Allan et al., 2020). To date, however, few studies have explicitly quantified the relationship between host physiological or behavioural performance in wild populations across a gradient of natural parasite infection intensity (but see; Ruehle and Poulin, 2019; Ryberg et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2020).

One of the difficulties associated with studies of parasitic infections is quantifying an individual's parasite load to the host without sacrificing it. Quantifying host parasite load is time consuming and requires detailed knowledge of parasite taxonomy to accurately identify specimen below the family-level. As a result, parasites are not routinely considered during biodiversity surveys or during other ecological monitoring activities (Dougherty et al., 2016). This is unfortunate given their important

ecological role. One way some ecological monitoring websites have gotten around this problem is by focusing on the presence of visible infections that are easy for scientists and members of the general public to identify. For example, Happel 2019 used photos uploaded to the public database, iNaturalist, to explore the biogeography of black spot infection in fishes across North America. Black spot disease is caused by infection with the metacercaria of digenetic trematodes and can easily be identified and quantified non-invasively on hosts through the presence of conspicuous black spots on the fish surfaces. These types of infections provide an unparalleled opportunity to consider infections in ecological monitoring. Since wild animals are often co-infected with several types of parasites simultaneously (Bordes and Morand, 2011), identifying whether “visible” parasite loads, such as black spot disease are related to infection intensity with other “hidden” parasites may provide biologists with a simple and useful means of accounting for parasite infections in their studies.

Here, we tested the effects of natural parasite infection on the aerobic metabolic and escape response performance of wild-caught, adult pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*). We assessed whether visible infections could be used as a proxy of overall endoparasite burden, and thus costs, in hosts, by separately quantifying visible (i.e. trematode metacercaria causing black spot disease) and non-visible (i.e. other cestode and trematode endoparasites) infections in fish. We examined the relationship between parasite infection in wild-caught fish and performance in aerobic metabolic (SMR, MMR, AS) and behavioural (responsiveness to a threat, response latency) performance traits.

Given that hosts can be co-infected with multiple parasite species, we predicted a relationship between the visible burden of infection and the non-visible one. Following the overall tendency for parasite infection to decrease host performance (McElroy and de Buron, 2014), we also predicted the aerobic metabolic and escape performances would be impacted negatively with infection intensity

in this system.

Material and methods

Study species

Sunfishes (*Lepomis* sp.) are abundant in Eastern North America and have been used as model species in behavioural, ecological and kinematic studies for decades (Brett and Sutherland, 1965; Crans et al., 2015; Gerry et al., 2012; Lemly and Esch, 1984; Tytell and Lauder, 2008). Sunfishes are also hosts to a range of parasites (Margolis and Arthur 1979), which are likely to have a negative impact on host performance capacity (McElroy and de Buron, 2014; Binning et al., 2017). In particular, trematodes causing black spot disease are common in many populations of sunfish (Chapman et al., 2015). Heavy black spot infection in juvenile bluegills (*Lepomis macrochirus*) is reported to cause changes in oxygen consumption rates, body condition, and total body lipid content, lowering overwinter survival probability close to 0% for fish with more than 50 black spots (Lemly and Esch, 1984). Trematodes causing black spot disease have complex life cycles requiring two intermediate hosts, usually a snail and a fish, with a piscivorous bird or a mammal as a final host. Larval trematode cercaria emerge from the snail and encyst under the fish's skin, in fins and muscle forming black spots approximately 21 days after initial contact (Hunter and Hunter, 1938; Huggins, 1959; Berra and Au, 1978). In addition, sunfishes are hosts to many other endoparasites (e.g., cestodes; including *Proteocephalus* sp, other trematodes including yellow grub; *Clinostomum marginatum*), which can be counted and identified post-mortem (Margolis and Arthur, 1979). Sunfish naturally infected with black spot provides a great opportunity to assess the degree to which visible infections (i.e. black spot disease) and hidden infections (i.e. other endoparasites) impact the performance capacity of hosts.

Fish collection and housing

A total of 42 naturally parasitized sunfish of similar size (total length: 8.5 ± 0.7 cm; mass 10.24 ± 2.46 g; mean \pm standard deviation) were captured with minnow traps and seine nets in Lake Cromwell near the Université de Montréal's Station de biologie des Laurentides (SBL, Québec; 45.98898°N , -74.00013°W) in July 2019. Individuals were between 2 and 4 years of age (scale-based age determination, unpublished data) and harboured varying numbers of black spots (6-273 metacercaria visible on the left side of the fish). Fish were transported to the SBL laboratory facilities within one hour of capture and received a hydrogen peroxide treatment (2.5 ml of 3% H_2O_2 per liter of freshwater) for 30 minutes to remove ectoparasites, fungus or bacteria that could cause infections. Fish were then transferred to a 600L flow-through holding tank ($215 \times 60 \times 60$ cm) supplied with water pumped from nearby Lake Croche (45.99003°N , -74.00567°W) and held following a 12 h:12 h light: dark cycle. Water was particle-filtered, oxygenated, and UV-sterilized before entering the holding tanks at a rate of 0.14 to $0.68 \text{ m}^3 \text{ hr}^{-1}$, allowing a full water replacement every 1 to 4 hours (flow rate adjustments were made to maintain the water temperature at 21°C ; actual range: 17°C - 23°C). Water temperature and oxygen levels were monitored twice daily (OxyGuard, Handy Polaris, Denmark) and excess food and debris were siphoned daily. Fish were left in the holding tank for 24 h before each individual was measured (wet mass (g), total (TL) and standard (SL) length (mm)). Each fish was identified with a unique three-colour code using visual implant elastomer tags (VIE; Northwest Marine Technology) implanted on each side of the dorsal fin using a 29G needle. Through all procedures, fish were manipulated in individual water-filled plastic bags to minimize air exposure and stress. All fish were fed to satiation twice a day (8:30 AM and 6:30 PM) with a mix of bloodworms and commercial fish pellets (Nutrafin Bug Bites, Cichlid Formula) and were acclimated for 3 to 5 days before the onset of experiments. After this acclimation period, the fish underwent

respirometry experiments, followed by a 5-day rest period before escape response experiments. Fish were euthanized immediately following escape response experiments and frozen (-18C) for later dissection and quantification/identification of endoparasite load (see Fish dissection below for details). Fish were collected and cared for with approval from the Université de Montréal's animal care committee (Comité de déontologie de l'expérimentation sur les animaux; permit number 19-034) and the Ministère des Forêts, de la Faune et des Parcs (permit number SEG 2019-05-17-1580-15SP).

Respirometry experiments

Oxygen consumption rate ($\dot{M}\text{O}_2$: mg O₂ hr⁻¹) was measured using intermittent flow respirometry to estimate fish metabolic traits (SMR, MMR, AS). Two identical, separate experimental water baths, (78 cm x 33 cm x 38 cm, 80 L) each contained four resting chambers made from Perspex cylinders (16 x 6 cm, length x diameter). The chambers were opaque with a transparent viewing window located on top. Each chamber was connected to a closed water circuit (491ml; volume includes recirculation tubes) with a recirculation pump (to achieve adequate water mixing) on which a fiber-optic oxygen probe (firesting 4-channel oxygen meter, PyroScience GmbH, Aschen, Germany) was connected. Dissolved oxygen levels were measured every 3-seconds. The four chambers were connected to a flush pump operated by a digital timer programmed to turn on for four minutes and off for six minutes. This created a 10-minute loop allowing for a four min period of water replacement and oxygenation and a six min period where the chamber was sealed with no outside exchange of water. Water temperature in chambers was maintained at 21°C (actual range: 20.8°C - 21.7°C) through the use of a third water bath where temperature was regulated via an aluminum coil pumping chilled water (Thermo Fisher Scientific,

EK20 immersion cooler, USA). All tanks were filled with filtered, UV-sterilized lake water (same as the holding tanks). Background oxygen consumption rates ($B_{MMR} \dot{M}O_2$) were measured in each empty chamber for 30 minutes before and following every fish. The respirometry chambers, tubing, pumps and water baths were cleaned every 3 days with a mix of warm water and 3% hydrogen peroxide (H_2O_2) and left to dry outside in direct sunlight.

Fish were fasted for 24 hours prior to all respirometry experiments to ensure they were in a post-absorptive state (Chabot et al., 2016; Clark et al., 2013). Each trial started with a 3-minute chase protocol followed by 1-minute of air exposure, a common method to estimate MMR in small fishes (Roche et al., 2013; Rummer et al., 2016). A fish was transferred in a water-filled plastic bag to a circular chase arena (48 cm x 41 cm, height x diameter, 67 L). The fish was then chased by hand for 3 minutes. When the fish began to fatigue, the experimenter would lightly pinch the fish's tail to force swimming. Fish were then removed from the arena and held out of water for 1-minute. The fish was then placed into a respirometry chamber, which was immediately (less than 15s) sealed for 10 minutes to estimate MMR. Once all 8 fish had been chased and the 10-minute measurements completed, control of the system was switched to the automatic timers running the 10 minute loops as described above for the next 18 to 20 hours, during which oxygen consumption rates of fish stabilized, and SMR could be estimated. Oxygen levels remained above 80% during this experiment. After respirometry experiments, fish were removed from the chambers and returned to their holding tanks to recover before the escape response experiment.

Escape response experiments

Escape response experiments were conducted to measure a fish's reaction to a simulated aerial predator attack. These experiments were performed between 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM on fish that

had been fasted for 12 to 20 h, to prevent them from regurgitating food during a trial and to maximize the energy available for swimming and recovery. The escape response arena and experimental protocol were based on designs and procedures described in Binning et al., (2014) and Jornod and Roche, (2015). Briefly, fish were introduced to the escape response arena in a water-filled plastic bag to minimize air exposure. The arena was a 60 x 60 x 30 cm acrylic clear bottom tank under which a mirror was suspended at a 45° angle to film the escape response from below. The escape response arena was filled with the same water as the holding tanks to a height of 8 cm, which limited vertical movements by the fish while permitting the full extension of their dorsal and pelvic fins. The water temperature in the arena was maintained at 21°C and changed every hour to control temperature and oxygen levels (<95% air saturation). Prior to the experiments, fish were left undisturbed in the arena for 10 minutes to acclimate. Once the fish was static, the stimulus within the fishes field of view, and at a maximum of 10 cm distance from the head of the fish, we used a mechano-acoustic stimulus located in the far-left corner of the arena to simulate an aerial attack. A weighted stimulus (iron bolt, 2,6 cm long) was released by an electromagnet and fell through an opaque PVC tube (22 cm long and 4 cm wide) suspended 1 cm above the water surface to avoid visual stimulation of the fish (Binning et al., 2014; Marras et al., 2011). Each individual was subjected to three trials, with a 10-minute interval between trials (Jornod and Roche, 2015). The reaction of the animal was filmed with a 240Hz high speed camera (EX-FH100, Casio, USA) at 240 frames per second. Fish were euthanized following the escape response experiments (see Fish dissection section).

Fish dissection

After the escape response experiments (12 days after capture), fish were euthanized with an overdose of eugenol solution and placed in a freezer at -18°C until they were dissected. Fish body

cavity, liver, digestive tract, muscles and gills were dissected and inspected under a dissecting scope. The number of black spots were assessed by counting the number of cysts on the body surface and on all fins visible on the left side of each individual (Ferguson et al., 2010). Two species of internal parasites were identified. *Proteocephalus ambloplites* was the most prevalent and abundant species (prevalence: 93%, min-max: 0-153). It was mostly found in the fish liver and in body cavity. *Clinostomum marginatum* was less prevalent (prevalence: 26%, min-max: 0-7) and mostly found encysted in the fish's gills and muscles. To correct a fish's mass for the number of parasites they harboured, we weighed approximately 20 individuals of each type of internal parasite and then divided by the number of parasites to obtain an estimate of the mass of one individual parasite. This process was repeated five times with different individual parasites. We averaged these five estimates for each parasite species to get a mean individual parasite mass, and then corrected the mass of each fish by the number of parasites of each type it contained (parasite-corrected fish mass; hereafter fish body mass; Lagrue and Poulin, 2015). Metacercaria causing black spots were not weighted as their collective mass was too small to be accurately estimated using our balance ($\pm 0.000\ 001$).

Data extraction and analyses

Respirometry data

Background oxygen consumption rates, SMR and MMR were extracted using the package *respR*(Harianto et al., 2019) in R v. 3.6.1 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing 2019). Data from three of the 42 individuals tested were excluded due to irregularities in the \dot{MO}_2 readings due to air accidentally entering the respirometry chambers. Metabolic rates ($\text{mg O}_2 \text{ h}^{-1}$) were calculated from the slopes obtained from the linear regression between oxygen concentration and time, accounting for the volume of the respirometer subtracting fish volumes (assuming a density of 1g/ml). $B_{\dot{MO}_2}$

was calculated based on an assumed linear increase in bacterial respiration from the start to the end of the trial. This data was then subtracted from the estimated fish metabolic rates. SMR was estimated from measurements taken after a 10h recovery period (based on consistency of oxygen uptake) following the chase and air exposure protocol until sunrise. The lowest 0.2 quantile of a minimum of 29 slopes (max number = 59) were used to estimate SMR with the *fishMO2* package in R and mean r^2 of slopes for all fish was 0.99 (Chabot 2016; Chabot et al. 2016; R Foundation for Statistical Computing 2018). MMR was estimated with a rolling regression to determine the highest rate of change in oxygen over 60 seconds using the 10 min data set excluding the first 30 seconds with the *respR* package in R (Harianto et al. 2019). Absolute AS was calculated as the difference between MMR and SMR (Halsey et al., 2018).

Escape response data

Video analysis was carried out using VLC media player. Responsiveness was assessed over the three trials: for each trial, we recorded whether a fish responded to the stimulus (i.e. performed a c-start following contact of the stimulus with the water) or not. Escape latency was determined as the number of frames between the first contact of the stimulus on the water and the first head movement of the fish initiating an escape response reaction and was assessed using the best performance (shortest time to respond) of an individual across the three trials (Domenici, 2010).

Statistical analyses

All data were analyzed in R v. 3.6.1 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing 2019). General linear models (LM's; *lm* function in R) were used to model the effect of parasite load on the measures of metabolic traits (SMR, MMR and AS). Collinearity between fixed factors in the models was assessed using a Variance inflation factor (VIF) with the *car* package (*vif* function in R). Fish

body mass and fish total length were highly correlated ($N=42$; Pearson's correlation $r=0.96$, $P<0.001$; Fig. AI), thus, only one of the two was used as a predictor in each of the models; fish body mass was used for models for metabolic traits and total length for models of escape response traits. The number of internal parasites, number of black spots, fish body mass (parasite-corrected fish mass), the interaction between the number of internal parasites and fish body mass as well as interaction between the number of black spots and fish body mass were included as predictors in all three models.

A general linear model was also used to quantify the effect of parasite load on response latency. Response latency was log10 transformed to meet model assumptions. The number of internal parasites, number of black spots, fish's total length, the interaction between the number of internal parasites and fish total length as well as interaction between the number of black spots and fish total length were included as fixed factors for this model.

We used a generalized linear mixed-effects model (GLMM) with a binomial response (logit link) using the package *lme4* (Bates et al., 2014) to quantify the effect of parasite load on fish responsiveness during escape response experiments. Fish ID was included as a random effect. Number of internal parasites, number of black spots, fish total length and its interaction between the number of internal parasites and the number of black spots were included as fixed factors. Covariates in all models were z-transformed using the scale function in R. Model assumptions were assessed visually with diagnostic plots and were met for all models: the residuals of all models were normal, no relationship was observed between the residuals and the observed variable and no deviation from the 1:1 line in qq-plots.

Results

The number of black spots found on the fish's left side ranged from 6 to 273 (median: 56.5). The number of internal parasites found in the whole fish was between 0 and 153 (median: 15) this includes data for *P. ambloplites* and *C. marginatum* (93% vs. 26% prevalence; 0-153 vs. 0-7 parasites per fish respectively). No relationship was found between the number of internal parasites and the number of black spots ($n=86$, Pearson's correlation $r=0.12$, $P=0.24$; Fig. AII). Since the number of black spots and fish body mass were correlated ($N=42$; Pearson's correlation $r=0.38$, $P=0.01$), we determined the VIF of these variables in our models to determine whether it was appropriate to keep both factors as predictors. As the VIF term was low (2 at most) we kept both predictors in all of our models (Legendre and Legendre, 2012)

Variation in fish SMR ranged from 0.42 to 2.9 mg O₂ h⁻¹ while MMR ranged from 2.3 to 7.5 mg O₂ h⁻¹. There was a significant positive relationship between all three metabolic traits measures and fish body mass ($P_{SMR}=0.01$, $P_{MMR}<0.001$, $P_{AS}<0.001$; Table 2.1). There were no significant interactions between parasite load and fish body mass for any of the metabolic traits estimated (SMR; $P_{BS*MASS}=0.47$, $P_{INT*MASS}=0.35$, MMR; $P_{BS*MASS}=0.08$, $P_{INT*MASS}=0.54$, AS; $P_{BS*MASS}=0.10$, $P_{INT*MASS}=0.73$; Table 1). Black spot number did not have a significant effect on any of the three metabolic traits estimated; sunfish had similar rates of oxygen consumption and aerobic scope regardless of the number of black spots they harboured (Fig. 2.1 A, C, E). However, there was a significant negative relationship between both SMR and MMR and internal parasite load (Fig. 2.1. B, D): fish with a higher number of internal parasites had lower SMR (LM: $n=39$, $F=7.75$, $P=0.008$) and MMR ($F=5.15$, $P=0.02$; Table 1). There was no effect of internal parasite number on AS (LM: $n=39$, $F_{BS}=0.54$, $P_{BS}=0.47$, $F_{int}=2.27$, $P_{int}=0.14$; Table 1). One individual in our sample had an

extremely high number of internal parasites (153). When this individual was excluded from the analysis, both SMR and MMR still decreased significantly with internal parasite load (LM: n=38, $F_{SMR}=6.93$, $P_{SMR}=0.013$, $F_{MMR}=13.16$, $P_{MMR}=0.001$; Table AI and Fig. AV-A, B). Furthermore, aerobic scope also decreased significantly with internal parasite load when this individual was excluded (LM: n=38, $F=8.01$, $P=0.008$; Table AI and Fig. AV-C).

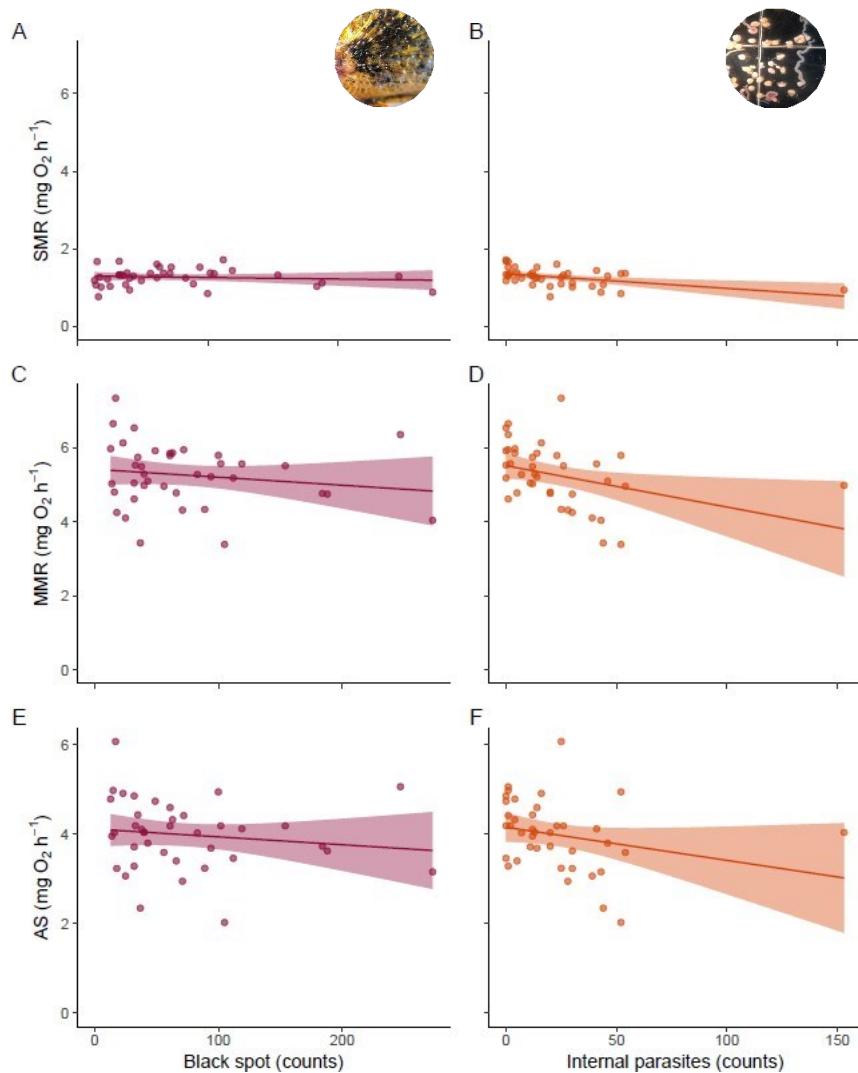


Figure 2.1. Relationship between parasite load and host metabolic traits. Mass-adjusted metabolic traits (SMR, MMR, AS) as a function of number of black spots (A, C, E) and number of internal parasites (B, D, F) in sunfish (n=39). Mass-adjusted metabolic rates are metabolic rates (SMR and MMR) adjusted to a common body mass (10.4 g) by adding the residuals of a regression of log MR vs log body mass to the fitted model value for the average body mass of all fish in the study. (See fig. AV for the relationships between parasite load and metabolic traits for fish with 0 to 50 parasites)

Table 2.1. Test statistics obtained from linear regression models of SMR, MMR and AS as a function of black spot, internal parasites (Internal), fish body mass (Mass), and interactions between black spot number and mass (BS*mass) and internal parasites and mass (Int*mass) in sunfish from Lake Cromwell ($n=39$). Statistically significant results are in **bold**. (See table. AI for test statistics for the relationship between parasite load and metabolic traits for fish with 0 to 50 parasites)

	DF	F-value	P-value
SMR			
Black spot	1	0.44	0.51
Internal	1	7.75	0.009
Mass	1	12.64	0.001
BS*mass	1	0.53	0.47
Int*mass	1	0.88	0.35
MMR			
Black spot	1	0.82	0.37
Internal	1	5.15	0.03
Mass	1	59.20	7.35e-09
BS*mass	1	3.38	0.08
Int*mass	1	0.38	0.54
AS			
Black spot	1	0.54	0.47
Internal	1	2.27	0.14
Mass	1	47.02	7.93e-08
BS*mass	1	2.80	0.10
Int*mass	1	0.13	0.73

There was no significant relationship between fish latency to respond to an aerial attack and parasite load (black spot or internal) (LM: $N=42$, $F_{BS}=0.029$, $P_{BS}=0.87$; $F_{int}=0.001$, $P_{int}=0.98$; Fig. 2.2), length (LM: $N=42$, $F=0.76$ $P=0.39$) or any of the interactions (LM: $N=42$, $P_{BS*TL}=0.09$, $P_{int*TL}=0.35$).

There were no significant interactions between any of the measured variables for fish responsiveness (GLMM: $N=42$, $X^2_{BS}=0.29$, $P_{BS}=0.60$; $X^2_{int}=0.34$, $P_{int}=0.56$; Table 2.2). Black spot number did not have a significant effect on fish responsiveness (Fig. 2.3A; Table 2.2). However, there was a significant negative relationship between fish responsiveness to an aerial attack and

fish length (GLMM: N=42, $X^2=8.57$, P= 0.003); larger fish responded less often than smaller conspecifics. There was also a significant negative relationship between fish responsiveness and the number of internal parasites it hosted (GLMM: N=42, $X^2=4.5$, P=0.03). Heavily infected fish responded less often to a simulated aerial attack than less infected fish (Fig. 2.3B). However, this relationship seemed to be primarily driven by two heavily infected individuals (107 and 153 parasites respectively). When these individuals were removed from the analyses for comparison, there was no significant relationship between infection intensity and responsiveness (GLMM: n=40, $X^2=0.05$, P= 0.82; Fig. 2.3C).

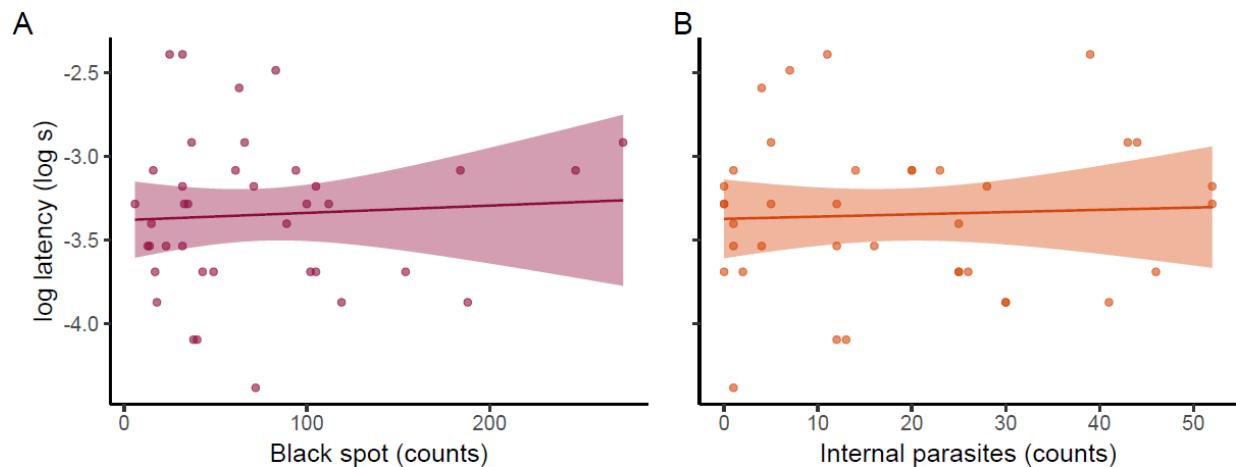


Figure 2.2. Relationship between parasite load and response latency. Influence of (A) internal parasites and (B) black spots on escape latency in sunfish from Lake Cromwell (n=38).

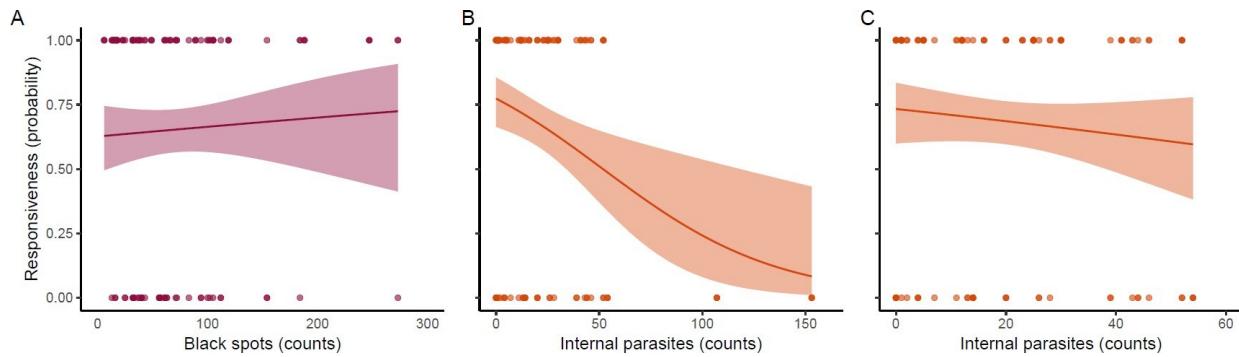


Figure 2.3. Relationship between parasite load and responsiveness to a simulated aerial attack. (A) Effect of black spot, (B) internal parasites and (C) internal parasites excluding the two most heavily infected individuals on the proportion of trials eliciting a fast-start during escape response experiments in sunfish from Lake Cromwell ($n=42$).

Table 2.2. Generalized linear mixed-effects model estimates for total length (TL), black spot load, and internal parasite load on responsiveness of sunfish from Lake Cromwell. Estimates are from the model without the interactions

	DF	χ^2	P-value	Estimates
Blackspot	1	1.50	0.22	0.57
Internal	1	4.50	0.034	-0.97
Total length	1	8.57	0.003	-11.29
BS*TL	1	0.29	0.60	
Int*TL	1	0.34	0.56	

Discussion

Our results highlight the importance of considering parasite load when studying the physiological and behavioural performance of wild animal populations. We found that metabolic rate estimates such as SMR and MMR, as well as responsiveness to a simulated predator attack decreased along a gradient of non-visible internal parasite load in pumpkinseed sunfish. Our experiments focused on natural infections in a fish population from a single lake, and thus, we cannot infer whether the trends observed are directly caused by parasite infection. Nevertheless, this is one of the first studies investigating the impacts of parasite load on aerobic metabolic and

escape response performance in adults across two different types of infection (i.e. externally visible black spot infection vs. non-visible endoparasite infections). Our results suggest that experimental studies interested in animal performance may be missing an important driver of intraspecific trait variation by not taking natural parasite infections into account.

Aerobic metabolic performance

Black spot load was not related to any of the aerobic metabolic performance traits measured in these sunfish. Other studies have similarly found no effect of black spot infection on hosts. For example, black spot infection did not impact the critical thermal temperature nor the body condition of three cyprinid species (Hockett and Mundahl, 1989). Similarly, Vaughans and Coble, (1975) found no effect of black spot number on the weight-length relationship, temperature tolerance or susceptibility to predation in yellow perch, *Perca flavescens*. Black spot formation is the result of the host's immune system responding to the encystment of trematode metacercaria in host tissues, usually the muscle or fins (Berra and Au, 1978). However, once encysted, metacercaria have very low metabolic demands, and thus are unlikely to have long-lasting direct effects on the host's metabolic traits once the infection is visible (Lemly and Esch, 1984). However, Lemly and Esch (1984) found that the oxygen consumption rates of bluegill sunfish increased approximately one month following experimental infection with the black spot-causing trematode, *Uvulifer ambloplitis*. This corresponds to the average development time (21 days) of the parasite in this host and reflects the time-period during which the parasite likely extracts an energetic toll on hosts. Oxygen consumption rates returned to pre-infection levels two months after experimental infection (i.e. one month after the formation of visible cysts) suggesting that the metabolic costs of these infections are short-lived (Lemly and Esch, 1984). A recent meta-analysis also found that the host stress

response to parasites is higher early on in an infection (O'Dwyer et al., 2020). Our rationale for exploring the effects of black spot trematodes on fish performance capacity traits was to validate whether this visible infection could be used as a proxy for overall infection load and costs as infection load can be easily assessed non-invasively in this species. Unfortunately, we did not find a strong relationship between these visible infections and internal parasite load ($N=86$, Pearson's correlation $r=0.12$, $P=0.24$; Fig. AII) meaning there is no shortcut to quantifying overall parasite load when assessing the impact of infection on individual performance traits.

Although we found no trend between black spot trematodes and aerobic metabolic and escape performance traits, there were strong negative relationships between metabolic rates and internal parasite intensity that are suggestive of a decrease in host aerobic metabolic performance. Indeed, we found that both SMR and MMR decreased with increasing internal parasite load. This trend was probably driven by infection with *P. ambloplites*, which was much more prevalent and abundant in our population than *C. marginatum* (93% vs. 26% prevalence; 0-153 vs. 0-7 parasites per fish respectively) and thus, more likely to cause tissue damage. *Proteocephalus ambloplitis* tapeworms infect sunfish through the ingestion of infected crustaceans (first intermediate host) such as copepods and cladocerans (Bangham, 1927). The cestode larvae then make their way through the fish's intestinal walls to the body cavity where they derive energy and nutrients from host tissues including the liver and gonads (Daly Sr. et al., 2006). As such, *P. ambloplites* can cause substantial damage to the organs of its intermediate and final hosts (piscivorous fishes) (Esch and Huffines, 1973; Mitchell et al., 1983). Conversely, *C. marginatum* encysts in the fish's skin, gills and muscle, and can cause physical damage at the site of encystment due to its relatively large size (3 to 8 mm) (Lane and Morris, 2000). Although the taxonomy and distribution of *Clinostomum* and *Proteocephalus* species has been relatively well

studied (Caffara et al., 2011; Mackie et al., 1983; Muzzall and Peebles, 1998; Osborn, 1911; Zimik et al., 2019), little is known about their effects on any of their host's physiology or behaviour. Our paper is among the first to document detrimental physiological and behavioural effects of these parasites on their intermediate sunfish hosts, which is surprising given their high prevalence and intensity in our study lake.

Standard metabolic rate represents the minimum rate of energy expenditure required to sustain life setting the floor for an animal's aerobic metabolic performance. Parasites tend to increase host energy demands through immune stimulation and maintenance costs; previous studies have found increased SMR in infected individuals. For example, Binning et al., 2013 found an increased SMR and a corresponding reduction in factorial aerobic scope in bridled monocle bream, *Scolopsis bilineatus* parasitized by the isopod, *Anilocra nemipteri*. Conversely, infection can lead to metabolic suppression in hosts either through a reduction in organ or tissue (e.g. muscle) mass or a decrease in the function of organs associated with energy metabolism (Mehrdana et al., 2014; Ryberg et al., 2020; Santoro et al., 2013). Although a lower SMR can be advantageous in scenarios where food or oxygen are limited (Killen et al., 2016), reduced SMR associated with high parasite loads is more likely a pathological consequence of infection; since much of an individual's SMR is used to maintain internal organ function, damage caused by parasites can reduce organ function and thus, SMR (Behrens et al., 2014; Hulbert and Else, 2000; Ryberg et al., 2020; Seppänen et al., 2008). For example, Eastern Baltic cod, *Gadus morhua* infected with high intensities of the liver nematode, *Contracaecum osculatum*, displayed lower SMR, reduced liver protein and lipid content suggesting that the metabolic function of this organ is compromised by high parasite loads (Ryberg et al., 2020). Similarly, *P. ambloplites* were mostly found in our fish's liver, which was often damaged when infection loads were high. This suggests a direct effect of *P. ambloplites* infection

on host aerobic metabolic performance in these sunfish. Experimental infections are needed to establish a causal link between infection and decreased host performance in this system.

Following on from SMR, MMR sets the ceiling for aerobic metabolic performance and is associated with increased performance during energetically demanding activities and in high-energy environments (Binning et al., 2014; Eliason et al., 2011; Norin and Clark, 2016). Internal organ damage caused by endoparasites likely reduces both SMR and MMR in hosts. Studies across taxa report decreases in host MMR with parasite infection (e.g. Bruneaux et al., 2017; Careau et al., 2012; Hvas et al., 2017). Importantly, a decrease in MMR is also often associated with a decrease in AS (Norin and Clark, 2016). While we saw a non-significant decrease in AS with increasing internal parasite load across the entire range of internal parasites recorded (0 to 153 internal parasites), this was due to an observed lower SMR and MMR in heavily infected fish. This suggests that the lower MMR with increasing parasite load decreases somewhat faster than that of SMR, although this result remains marginal. Nevertheless, removing the most infected fish still resulted in a significant negative relationship between metabolic rates (SMR, MMR) and internal parasite load for the range of 0 to 50 internal parasites. Further sampling of heavily infected fish to confirm the trend at higher infection levels is needed. Reduced AS can result in less capacity for growth, reproduction and potentially survival of heavily infected individuals (Metcalfe et al., 2016), but this relationship, and the potential ecological consequences in parasitized individuals, need to be explored more thoroughly.

Escape behaviour

Responsiveness to a simulated aerial attack was negatively correlated with internal parasite load, but not black spot trematodes. When startled, many fish species perform a characteristic C-

start escape response, which is an important determinant of an individual's survival during a predator attack (Domenici et al., 2011). Maximum speed, maximum acceleration and latency to respond are all considered important parts of this stereotyped reaction (Domenici et al., 2011), and can all be impacted by infection (Allan et al., 2020). Conversely, we found no relationship between parasite infection and response latency in our adult sunfish. Other studies on adult fish have also found no effect of parasites on escape performance. In bridled monocle bream, *Scolopsis bilineata*, parasitized by Anilocra isopod ectoparasites, response latency, maximum velocity, maximum acceleration and cumulative distance travelled did not differ between infected and uninfected fish (Binning et al., 2014). Similarly, Ruehle and Poulin, (2019) failed to detect a significant reduction in escape performance in infected common bully, *Gobiomorphus cotidianus*, hosts even when host vision is affected. We also recorded the kinematic components of the escape response for our fish. This data is currently being analyzed (Undergraduate student intern project; Papillon et al. unpublished data).

Although the kinematic components of an animal's escape response offer useful predictors of an individual's escape performance, escape responsiveness is arguably the most important determinant of survival in the face of a threat (Domenici, 2010): an individual that does not react during an attack has almost no chance of survival regardless of how fast it can escape in theory. In our sample, the two most heavily infected individuals never responded to our simulated aerial attack. Although the relationship we observed between a decrease in responsiveness and parasite load is driven by the escape performance of these two individuals, our results remain ecologically relevant: we collected very few other heavily infected individuals possibly because these individuals are selectively removed from the population through predation. Over-dispersion of parasites within hosts, whereby few individuals harbor most of the parasites in a population, is a

well-documented ecological phenomenon (Anderson and Gordon, 1982). Although many factors can explain such patterns, including increased susceptibility and/or tolerance to infection in some individuals, our results suggest that performance reduction in heavily infected individuals may also play a role. If heavily infected individuals are predated upon at higher rates than uninfected or lightly infected individuals due, in part, to decreased responsiveness, we would expect to sample fewer of these individuals in a given population. This idea warrants further investigation.

Other considerations

Host life stage can play a large role in individual responses to parasites. For example, juvenile chipmunks, *Tamias striatus*, show a 7.6% increase in resting metabolic rate in response to infection by botfly larvae, resulting in a ~5g body mass loss over summer (Careau et al., 2010) whereas no significant effect of infection is observed in adults (Careau et al., 2012). It is possible that younger individuals are more affected by stressors, including infection, because more energy is required for growth and development (Allan et al., 2020; Careau et al., 2010). Older hosts also typically harbor more parasites than younger ones, probably because parasites are recruited faster than they die in hosts, especially in the case of encysted parasites like those causing black spot disease (Hawlena et al., 2006). The fact that we did see strong relationships between internal infections and our performance measures, even in our adult fish, is a further reminder of the important impact that parasites can have on their hosts throughout ontogeny, and their contribution to otherwise unexplained individual variation in performance often observed in natural populations (Timi and Poulin, 2020).

Our study explicitly quantified the intensity of infection of both externally visible and internally non-visible parasites. However, the process of counting and identifying endoparasites is

difficult and time-consuming, and often not included in the context of studies on wild populations. When infection is considered, the host's infection status (i.e. infected or not) is typically the variable of interest. This binomial categorization can be relevant and related to impact on some host populations, especially in the case of large endo- or ectoparasites (Fogelman et al., 2009; Jolles et al., 2020). However, parasite load can be more important than infection status for understanding the ecological and physiological consequences to hosts (Poulin, 2019; Timi and Poulin, 2020). For instance, killifish, *Fundulus parvipinnis*, infected with larval trematodes face higher rates of predation by birds along an infection gradient (Predation rates in uninfected: 0.02%, lightly: 22%, heavily: 80% infected fish hosts) (Lafferty and Morris, 1996). As there are generally fewer highly parasitized individuals in natural host populations (Crofton, 1971; Shaw et al., 1998), it can be difficult to accurately estimate the effect of high parasite loads on populations because these individuals can be hard to sample and test in the lab. Heavily infected individuals may also be more susceptible to environmental stressors, which could potentially lead to selective mortality based on infection status during extreme events like freezing or heat waves (Bruneaux et al., 2017; Greenspan et al., 2017; Lemly and Esch, 1984). The effects of concomitant stressors like temperature and parasite load have rarely been tested in natural populations and remains an area in need of further research especially given projected future global change.

Conclusion

Our results suggest that parasite load is an important, overlooked driver of intraspecific performance trait differences in host populations. Experimental infections are needed to confirm the causal relationship between infection load and performance traits in these fish hosts. We expect experimental infection with black spot and/or bass tapeworm would result in similar performance traits impairments as documented here, especially if juveniles are used. The fact that we were

unable to link externally visible black spot infection with non-visible endoparasites is potentially problematic for experimental biologists; not only are these visible infections a poor proxy of overall infection load, but also non-visible internal infections, which seem to be related to the highest performance costs, are less likely to be taken into consideration by experimental biologists. While we acknowledge that sacrificing individuals in order to quantify endoparasite infection is not always feasible or desirable in the context of experimental work on wild animals, we encourage researchers to consider alternative ways of controlling for this potential confounding effect such as treating experimental animals with anti-parasite treatments like praziquantel (Bader, 2017) prior to testing their performance after confirming that such treatments themselves do not impact the traits to be measured.

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Chapitre 3 – Conclusion

Afin de compléter leur cycle de vie, les parasites ont recours à une multitude de stratégies qui altèrent certains phénotypes de leur hôte. Ces altérations, de nature physiologique, morphologique et/ou comportementale, ont souvent comme conséquence d'augmenter le fitness du parasite au détriment de celui de son hôte (Poulin et Morand, 2000). Les multiples exemples cités dans ce mémoire démontrent l'intérêt des scientifiques à comprendre ce phénomène, parfois nommé *manipulation parasitaire*, mais laissent également sous-entendre à quel point cette dernière peut être imprévisible. Les parasites peuvent impacter le fitness de leur hôte de manière directe (Fogelman et al., 2009) ou indirecte (Shaw et al., 2009). L'infection parasitaire a aussi le potentiel d'interagir avec d'autres stresseurs, autant biotiques qu'abiotiques, comme certains autres pathogènes, ainsi que les fluctuations des paramètres physico-chimiques de l'eau (Fromm, 1980; Kotob et al., 2016).

L'objectif global de ce projet était d'évaluer et de comprendre l'effet des parasites sur les capacités de performance métabolique aérobie ainsi que leur impact sur la performance de fuite des poissons face à un prédateur simulé, le long d'un gradient d'intensité parasitaire. Les poissons jouent le rôle d'hôtes intermédiaires ou finaux pour une multitude de parasites. Ces parasites sont souvent non-visibles en raison de leur localisation dans le poisson (p. ex. cavité abdominale, organes internes, muscles, branchies). Les poissons sont aussi les hôtes de plusieurs types d'ecto- et endoparasites qui sont quant à eux visibles et qui ne nécessitent pas de sacrifier l'animal pour être dénombrés. Nous avons évalué si la charge parasitaire des crapets-soleil infectés par le point noir et par des parasites internes allait influencer les traits métaboliques (TMS, TMM, CA) ainsi que les composantes de la réponse de fuite (réactivité et temps de réponse). En connaissant l'effet lié aux différents types de parasites (point noir et internes), nous voulions également explorer la possibilité d'estimer la charge

parasitaire globale d'un poisson ainsi que son coût en se basant sur sa charge parasitaire visible externe.

Le premier objectif de ce projet était d'observer l'influence de l'intensité de la charge parasitaire sur les traits métaboliques (TMS, TMM, CA) des crapets-soleil du lac Cromwell. Nous avions tout d'abord comme hypothèse que l'augmentation de l'infection parasitaire chez le crapet-soleil allait affecter négativement le TMM des individus, en raison de sa potentielle interférence avec certaines fonctions digestives. De plus, nous supposions que l'augmentation de l'infection parasitaire dans les muscles aurait comme conséquence de réduire le CA. Nos hypothèses sur l'effet des parasites sur le TMS étaient, quant à elles, mitigées. En effet, les parasites ont généralement un effet négatif sur le TMM, mais l'effet sur le TMS varie selon les études (Robar et al., 2011). La littérature démontre que les parasites peuvent soit réduire le TMS pour les mêmes raisons que nous apportons dans cet article, soit causer une augmentation de la réponse immunitaire jumelée ou non avec des dommages à certains organes internes (Ryberg et al., 2020). Une augmentation du TMS peut également être observée lors d'une infection parasitaire (Binning et al., 2013). Pour notre part, nous avons pu observer qu'aucun des traits métaboliques (TMS, TMM, CA) n'était affecté par le nombre de points noirs, qui variait de 6 à 273 (Fig. 2.1). Ce résultat pourrait être expliqué par la faible demande métabolique des point noirs sur leur hôte. Un coût physiologique semble associé à la formation des kystes, mais ce coût devient presque inexistant lorsque la métacercaire est complètement formée. Nous avons aussi observé que tous les traits métaboliques (TMS, TMM, CA) diminuaient avec l'augmentation du nombre de parasites internes, lorsqu'il variait entre 0 et 50. Nos résultats ne permettent pas d'établir le type de relation entre les traits métaboliques (TMS, TMM, CA) et le nombre de parasites internes à partir du moment où celui-ci dépasse 50. Bien que la visibilité des points noirs nous permit d'y associer aisément une charge parasitaire, les organes

ciblés par les parasites internes et la charge associée à ces derniers étaient inconnus jusqu'à la toute fin des expériences. Ainsi, il nous était difficile d'estimer les dommages causés par les parasites internes à certains organes et, par conséquent, l'impact potentiel de ces parasites sur la physiologie et possiblement le comportement du poisson. La diminution significative des traits métaboliques en fonction de la quantité de parasites internes pourrait s'expliquer par les dommages aux organes internes métaboliquement actifs, comme le foie. Ainsi, toute perturbation du budget énergétique et du métabolisme en fonction de la charge parasitaire pourrait avoir un impact sur la réponse immunitaire, sur l'évitement des prédateurs chez l'hôte ou sur l'activité générale, et ultimement avoir des répercussions sur le fitness de l'hôte (Lemly et Esch, 1984; Ryberg et al., 2020). Le deuxième objectif du projet était d'observer l'influence d'un gradient de charge parasitaire sur les composantes de la réponse de fuite des crapets-soleils du lac Cromwell. Nous avions émis l'hypothèse que les poissons les plus parasités seraient moins réactifs et présenteraient ainsi un temps plus élevé de réponse au stimulus (Allan et al., 2020; Langerhans, 2009). Cette hypothèse était fondée sur le fait que la modification de ces réactions contribuerait à compléter le cycle de vie du parasite. Si un poisson infecté est moins réactif face à une attaque par un prédateur, le parasite augmente ses chances de se retrouver chez son hôte final, et donc de terminer son cycle de vie (Parker et al., 2009; Parker et al., 2015). Nous avons observé que la réponse face à une attaque simulée par un prédateur n'était pas influencée par le nombre de point noirs. Inversement, nous avons observé une diminution de la réponse des poissons face à un prédateur selon le gradient de parasitisme interne. Toutefois, cette diminution était influencée par deux individus démontrant une charge parasitaire interne importante (107 et 153). Nos travaux ne permettent donc pas de définir le type de relation prévalant entre la réponse des poissons face à une attaque simulée et le nombre de parasites internes lorsque celui-ci dépasse 50. Ainsi, les deux observations faites dans ces

conditions (Fig. 2.3.) suggèrent que d'autres relations impliquant la réponse des poissons face à une attaque simulée pourraient être obtenues au-delà de 50 parasites (e.g. une relation négative entre ces 2 traits). Le temps de réaction au stimulus n'était quant à lui pas modifié, ni par le nombre de points noirs, ni par la charge parasitaire interne. Lors d'une attaque par un prédateur, la priorité pour la survie de l'individu est de répondre (Domenici, 2010). Si l'animal n'a aucune réaction, ses caractéristiques cinématiques (distance parcourue, vitesse et accélération maximum suite au stimulus) ne lui seront pas de grande utilité. Les deux individus les plus parasités n'ayant pas répondu à aucune des attaques simulées, aucune donnée de temps de réponse n'a pu être obtenue. La charge parasitaire pourrait entraîner une léthargie provoquée par les dommages infligés aux organes internes, comme le foie, et ainsi entraîner une diminution de la capacité à métaboliser de l'énergie. Cette dernière hypothèse pourrait ainsi permettre d'expliquer pourquoi les individus très infectés n'ont pas réagi aux attaques simulées. Le budget énergétique d'un animal étant limité (Hammond and Diamond, 1997), le fait que la charge parasitaire interne affecte le budget énergétique de l'animal l'entraîne à devoir faire des choix dans son investissement d'énergie. L'absence de réponse à une attaque de prédateur chez les individus très parasités pourrait donc être une conséquence de cette nouvelle demande énergétique. Dans l'éventualité où l'animal investirait son énergie à répondre à l'attaque, les paramètres cinématiques de cette réponse de fuite seraient peu ou pas changés, expliquant également pourquoi le temps de réponse n'est pas affecté. Ces paramètres cinématiques ont été enregistrés pour nos 42 individus et sont en cours d'analyses. Ils nous permettront de mieux investiguer cette hypothèse.

Perspectives d'études

Ce projet visait à évaluer l'impact de la charge parasitaire sur l'hôte en contrôlant l'effet de stressors abiotiques affectant la physiologie, comme la température. Compte tenu du fait que la

température de l'environnement du poisson a une influence sur son métabolisme (Claireaux et Lagardère, 1999), les individus ont été hébergés et soumis à des expériences à la même température que celle du lac duquel ils ont été échantillonnés. Une suite logique de ce projet serait de quantifier l'effet des parasites sur les poissons en modifiant les températures d'exposition. Il serait ainsi intéressant d'évaluer si ce stresseur abiotique jumelé à un stresseur biotique aurait un effet antagoniste ou amplificateur de l'effet déjà marqué des parasites sur la physiologie des poissons. Cela nous permettrait de détecter l'occurrence d'une synergie de stresseurs et de mieux quantifier l'effet des infections parasitaires dans un contexte de changements climatiques. De plus, il serait intéressant de voir si les poissons parasités ont une tolérance moins grande aux températures extrêmes. Lemly et Esch (1984) ont observé que les crapets arlequin hautement parasités avait un taux de survie à l'hiver 90% plus faible que celui des individus sains. Il serait donc pertinent d'évaluer la résistance aux températures extrêmes chez les poissons infectés par le point noir, mais également par les parasites internes, étant donné l'effet négatif significatif de ces derniers observé sur le métabolisme des crapets-soleil.

Davantage de recherches doivent être conduites sur le système parasitaire lui-même. La maladie du point noir peut être causée par plusieurs espèces et certains travaux en cours démontrent que les crapets-soleil du lac Cromwell seraient infectés par au moins deux de ces espèces (*Uvulifer ambloplitis* et *Apophallus venutus*) (Lanthier, I., communication personnelle, 2020). L'infection expérimentale serait l'avenue qui nous permettrait de mieux comprendre à quel moment les parasites affectent leur hôte. De cette manière, nous pourrions documenter les changements physiologiques qui prévalent chez l'hôte dès l'infection.

Infection expérimentale

Une grande partie de ce projet a été consacrée à l'élaboration d'un protocole d'infection expérimentale par le point noir. Des individus non parasités furent récoltés afin d'être mis en contact avec des escargots infectés par un trématode. Nous avions récolté 46 crapets-soleil provenant du lac Triton, dans lequel le point noir est absent. De plus, les poissons ont préalablement reçu un traitement antiparasitaire, afin de s'assurer qu'ils ne présentaient aucune infection. Brièvement, les individus ont été soumis aux tests de respirométrie et de réponse de fuite. Ensuite, ces individus ont été mis en contact durant 14 jours avec des escargots infectés. Les escargots ont été récoltés dans le lac Cromwell, dans lequel la prévalence du point noir est très élevée. Une période d'attente de développement des kystes de 21 jours a ensuite été appliquée. Les poissons ont alors été soumis aux mêmes tests de respirométrie et de réponse de fuite qu'avant l'infection. C'est lors de la dissection des poissons que nous avons observé qu'aucun point noir n'avait infecté nos individus. Ceci pourrait être expliqué par le fait que les poissons et les escargots ne provenaient pas du même lac. Plus précisément, une composante génétique pourrait être en cause. Les cercaires émergeant des escargots d'un lac pourraient ne pas être, ou très peu, infectieuses pour les poissons provenant d'un lac différent, phénomène traduisant une adaptation locale (Ballabeni et Ward, 1993; Lively et Dybdahl, 2000).

Parasites internes

Il serait intéressant de pousser l'étude des effets des parasites internes sur la physiologie des poissons, en particulier sur les dommages engendrés au foie. Ces parasites sont en effet retrouvés majoritairement dans le foie, causant des plaques de tissus sclérosés, mais aussi dans toute la cavité abdominale des poissons. Certains tests sanguins nous permettraient ainsi de connaître les fluctuations d'enzymes (alanine aminotransférase, aspartate aminotransférase et phosphatase alkaline) et de protéines (albumine) régulées et produites par le foie (Giannini et al., 56

2005). Les niveaux anormaux de ces substances sanguines nous renseigneraient sur les dommages causés au foie, sur la croissance et sur la réparation de l'organe et nous aideraient à comprendre l'intensité de ces dommages.

Puisque les parasites ont un effet négatif sur le CA des poissons, une analyse de taille et d'âge serait simple et probablement très révélatrice. Un individu présentant un plus grand CA pourrait présenter une habileté à consommer plus de nourriture qu'un individu avec un CA plus petit, influençant ainsi des mesures de performance comme la croissance (Auer et al., 2015a; Auer et al., 2015b). Ces analyses nous permettraient ainsi d'évaluer la différence de taille entre des individus du même âge présentant un gradient de charge parasitaire.

Les infections parasitaires représentent un modèle d'étude complexe qui agit sur plusieurs niveaux, autant physiologiques que comportementaux. Il est donc important de pousser les études faites sur les effets que ces infections peuvent avoir sur leur hôte, puisque celles-ci ont le potentiel d'affecter l'écologie de l'hôte et du parasite lui-même (Poulin, 1999). Il est aussi important de bien classifier le type d'infection et la cible afin d'apporter des solutions durables pour toutes les communautés impliquées. En effet, malgré leurs effets nuisibles sur leurs hôtes, les parasites jouent un rôle écologique important dans la régulation des populations.

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Annexe

Chapter 2: Supplemental information

There was no significant correlation between the number of black spots and number of internal parasites in fish collected from Lake Cromwell ($N= 86$, Pearson's correlation $r = 0.12$, $P=0.23$) (Fig. AII). This sample includes 86 fish dissected for a separate project and not analyzed here.

Longer fish responded less to the aerial attack during the escape response experiments ($N=42$, $X^2=8.57$, $P=0.003$; Fig. AIII). However, escape latency was not affected by fish size ($N=42$, $F= 0.76$, $P= 0.39$; Fig. AIV).

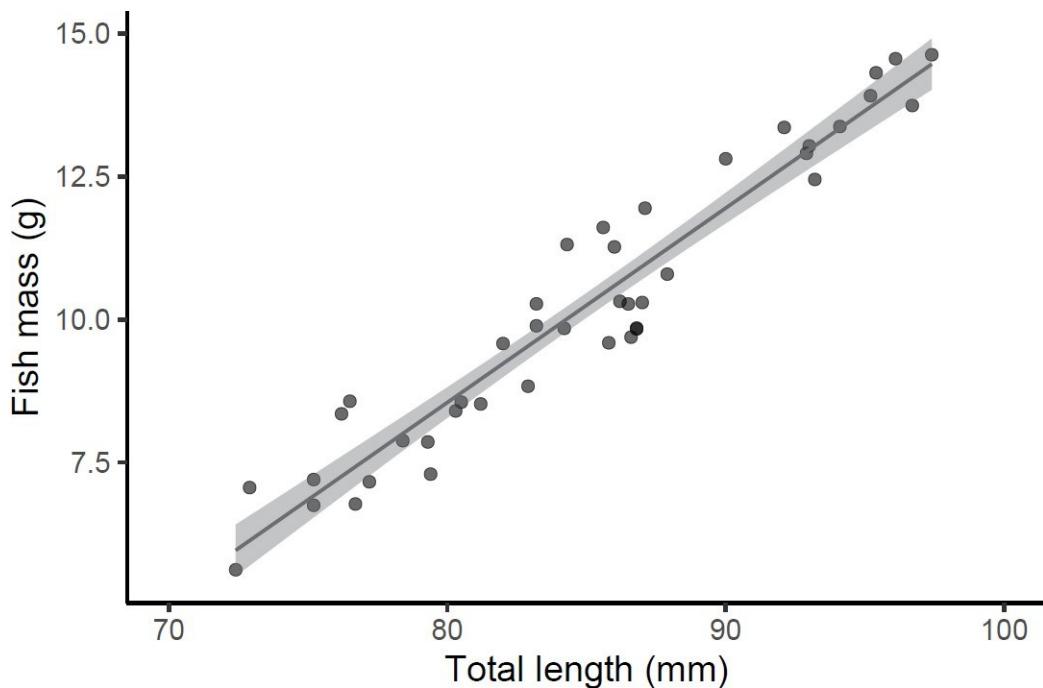


Figure A1. Fish mass (parasite-corrected fish body mass) (g) versus total length (mm) of sunfish from lake Cromwell (n=42).

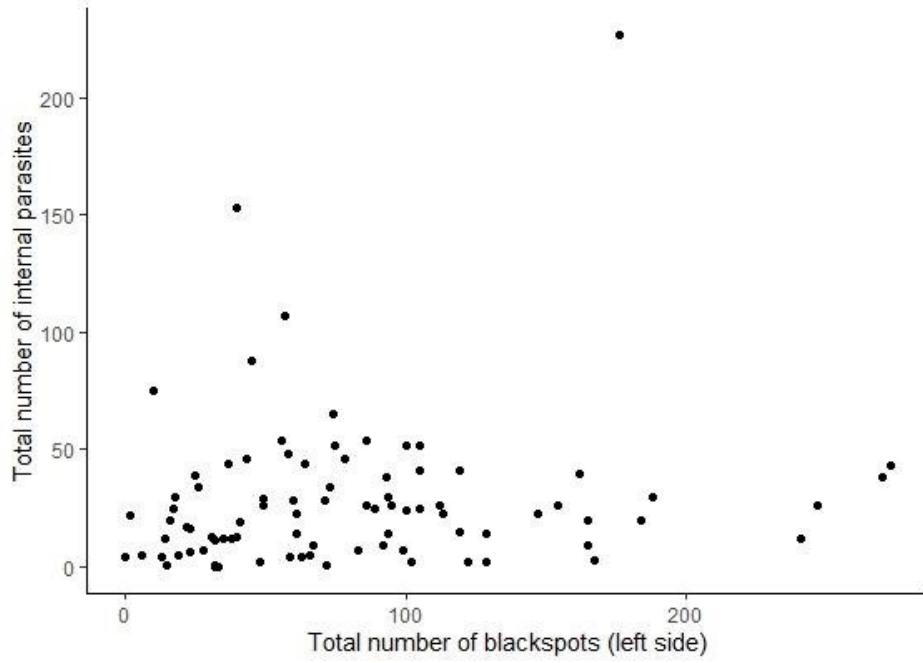


Figure AII. Total internal parasite load versus the total number of black spots on the left side of pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) collected from Lake Cromwell (N=86).

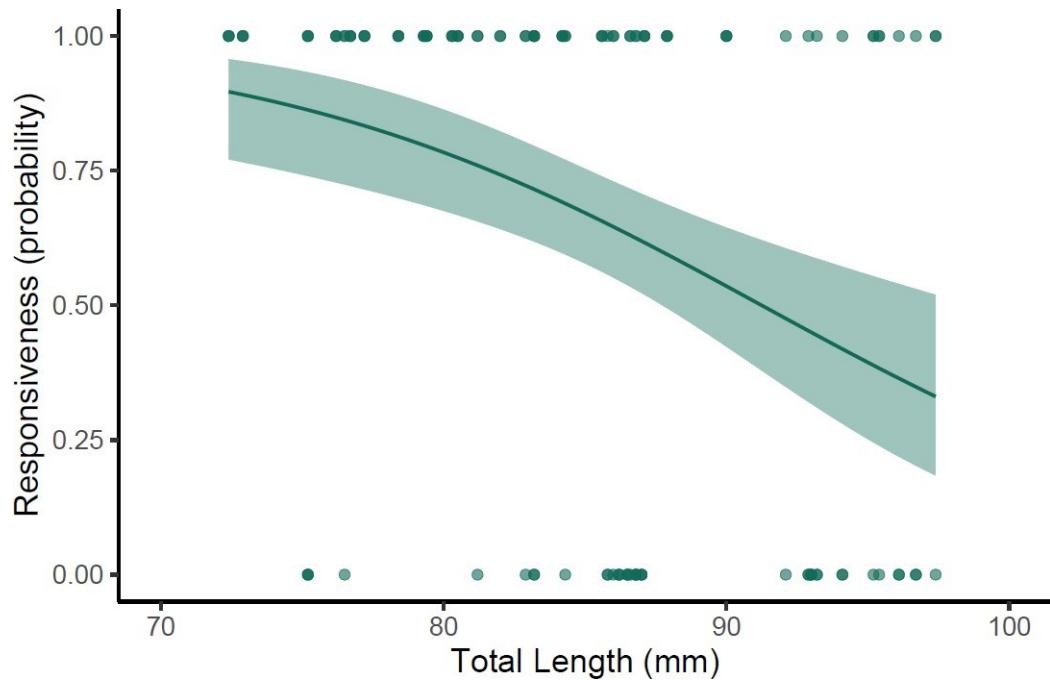


Figure AIII. Percentage of responsiveness in relation to the log of total length (mm) of pumpkinseed sunfish from lake Cromwell ($n=42$)

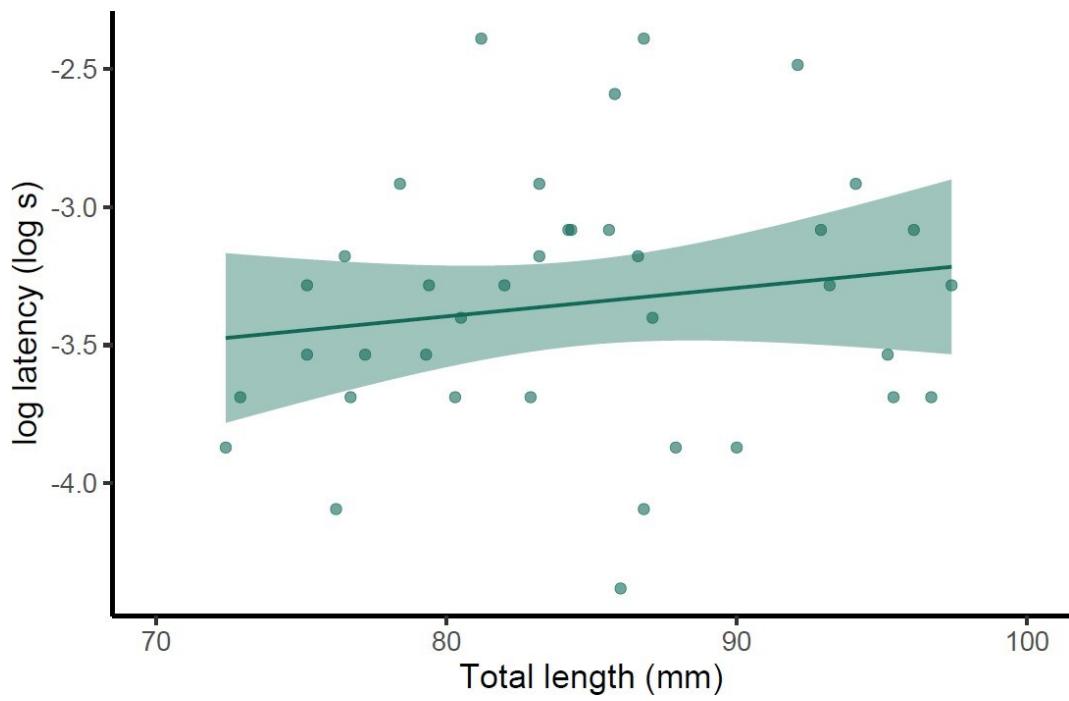


Figure AIV. Latency (log transformed) versus the total length of pumpkinseed sunfish from lake Cromwell ($n=42$).

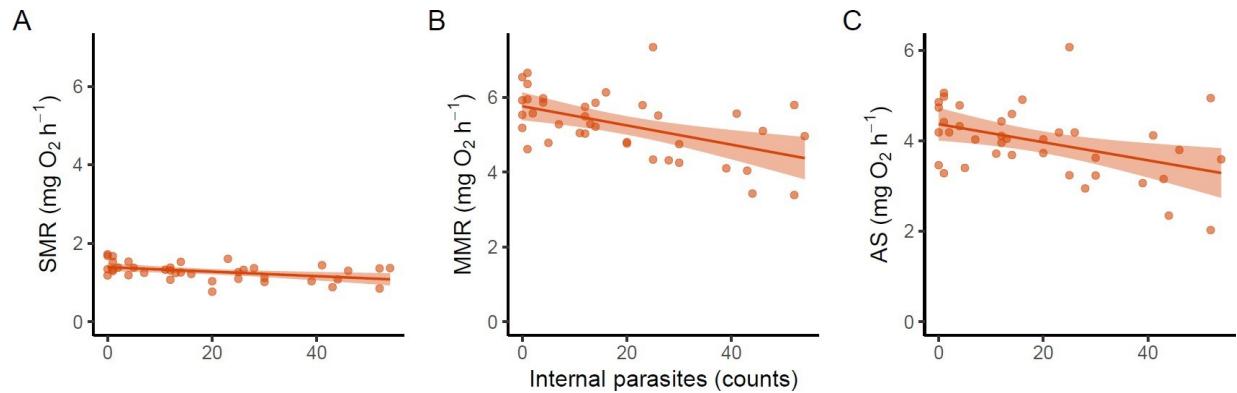


Figure AV. Effect of parasites on metabolic traits without one heavily infected individual. Mass-adjusted metabolic rates (SMR, MMR, AS) as a function of parasite load for internal parasites without the heavily infected ($n=150$) individual. (A) Influence of internal parasites on SMR. (B) Influence of internal parasites on MMR. (C) Influence of internal parasites on AS.

Table AI. Test statistics obtained from linear regression models of SMR, MMR and AS as a function of black spot, internal parasites (Internal), fish body mass (Mass), and interactions between black spot number and mass (BS*mass) and internal parasites and mass (Int*mass) in sunfish from Lake Cromwell without the one individual with 153 internal parasites. ($n=38$). Statistically significant results are in **bold**.

	DF	F-value	P-value
SMR			
Black spot	1	0.21	0.65
Internal	1	6.93	0.013
Mass	1	13.18	0.001
BS*mass	1	0.42	0.52
Int*mass	1	0.37	0.55
MMR			
Black spot	1	0.18	0.68
Internal	1	13.16	0.001
Mass	1	72.67	9.66e⁻¹⁰
BS*mass	1	3.2	0.083
Int*mass	1	0.024	0.88
AS			
Black spot	1	0.08	0.78
Internal	1	8.01	0.0079
Mass	1	55.70	1.71e⁻⁹⁸
BS*mass	1	2.56	0.12
Int*mass	1	0.12	0.73

Table AII. Model estimates from fixed factors obtained using the summary function in R from models (Table AI) without interactions of pumpkinseed sunfish (*Lepomis gibbosus*) from lake Cromwell without the one individual with 153 internal parasites (n=38).

	SMR		MMR		AS	
	Estimates	R ² a	Estimates	R ² a	Estimates	R ² a
Intercept	0.81	0.31	1.38	0.68	0.57	0.61
Internal	-0.024		-0.092		-0.068	
Mass	-0.15		-0.69		-0.54	
Black spot	0.62		4.62		4.0	

Table AIII. Model estimates from fixed factors obtained using the summary function in R from models (Table I) without interactions (n=39).

	SMR		MMR		AS	
	Estimates	R ² a	Estimates	R ² a	Estimates	R ² a
Intercept	0.80	0.31	1.30	0.61	0.50	0.55
Internal	-0.04		-0.18		-0.14	
Mass	-0.14		-0.40		-0.27	
Black spot	0.60		4.50		3.90	

