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Diversity and ecological implications of feather lice on wild and captive Grey Parrots in Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

The Grey Parrot is highly prized around the world for its reputation as an intelligent bird species. A good knowledge of parasites of the parrot will be useful in developing possible control measures, which can be used to enhance the survival rate of the parrot in both the wild and captivity. The study identified the diversity of feather lice (Mallophaga) of the Grey Parrot and determined ecological factors that can influence the transmission of these parasites within the bird populations. A total of one hundred and ninety seven (160) wild and captive parrots were sampled from Mebang and Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC). From the results obtained, five genera of feather lice were identified belonging to two families, one order and two sub-orders. The prevalence and intensities of infestation of ectoparasites within the two parrot populations were influenced by ecological factors such as site, age, sex, seasonality and density of the hosts. It was concluded that the rate of infestation of feather lice in Grey parrots could increase in captive enclosures than in their free ranging counterparts. A maximum enclosure size for a captive parrot population will reduce the probability of ectoparasitic host to host transmission, and will lead to overall health improvement.

Key words: Grey Parrot, Mallophaga, Feather Lice, Ectoparasite, Cameroon