Assessing prosocial tendencies of parrots in food sharing situations

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Abstract

Prosociality is considered one of the driving forces for cooperation in human and animal societies. The presence of prosociality in different taxa suggests convergent evolution. To broaden the phylogenetic spectrum in our understanding of prosociality, we examined two parrot species (i.e., African grey parrots (AGP) and blue-headed macaws (BHM)) using a food-sharing paradigm. By controlling the parrots' hunger level, we tested how satiation may affect their willingness to share food with their most affiliated partner and a less affiliated partner. We also assessed whether they reciprocated if roles were reversed and examined birds' regurgitation behaviour following the test condition. Preliminary results show that the parrots did not directly transfer any food pieces to their partner. However, food-sharing by regurgitation subsequent to the test situation occurred between the most affiliative partners and more frequently in the AGP than the BHM. This study highlights parrots as a fruitful model for studying prosociality.