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## Why disease ecology needs life-history theory: a host perspective

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# 1 **Why disease ecology needs life-history theory: a host perspective**

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3 **42 Abstract**  
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6 43 When facing an emerging infectious disease of conservation concern, we often have little  
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8 44 information on the nature of the host-parasite interaction to inform management decisions.  
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10 45 However, it is becoming increasingly clear that the life-history strategies of host species  
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12 46 can be predictive of individual- and population-level responses to infectious disease, even  
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14 47 without detailed knowledge on the specifics of the host-parasite interaction. Here, we argue  
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16 48 that a deeper integration of life-history theory into disease ecology is timely and necessary  
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18 49 to improve our capacity to understand, predict, and mitigate the impact of endemic and  
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20 50 emerging infectious diseases in wild populations. Using wild vertebrates as an example, we  
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22 51 show that host life-history characteristics influence host responses to parasitism at different  
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24 52 levels of organization, from individuals to communities. We also highlight knowledge gaps  
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26 53 and future directions for the study of life-history and host responses to parasitism. We  
27  
28 54 conclude by illustrating how this theoretical insight can inform the monitoring and control  
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30 55 of infectious diseases in wildlife.  
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40 **57 Keywords**  
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42 58 demography, demographic compensation, outbreak, pace of life, pathogen, slow-fast  
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3 60 **NOVELTY**  
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6 61 We present a novel synthesis on the intersection of life-history and host responses to  
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8 62 parasitism, to demonstrate that a deeper integration of life-history theory into disease  
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10 63 ecology is a fruitful avenue of research to advance the understanding and mitigation of  
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12 64 wildlife infectious diseases. This synthesis highlights that life-history strategies can lead to  
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14 65 a variety of host responses to parasitism, modulating host immune responses, the  
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16 66 mechanisms of host demographic compensation, the potential for rapid evolution of  
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18 67 resistance or tolerance mechanisms, and the efficiency of parasite transmission and disease  
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20 68 risk in multi-host parasite systems.  
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## 69 INTRODUCTION

70 Infectious diseases are an important threat to biodiversity (Daszak *et al.*, 2000). This is  
71 particularly true for emerging infectious diseases, for which the lack of host-parasite  
72 coevolutionary history can lead to extreme levels of parasite virulence and/or host  
73 susceptibility, ultimately inducing strong population-level impacts (e.g., Daszak *et al.*,  
74 2000, 2001; Fisher *et al.*, 2012; Scheele *et al.*, 2019a). Nonetheless, empirical evidence  
75 further reveals that host population collapse is not the only outcome from a novel host-  
76 parasite interaction (Tompkins *et al.*, 2011). Some populations of susceptible hosts can  
77 persist despite initial marked population declines (e.g., fish, Rogowski *et al.*, 2020;  
78 amphibians, Briggs *et al.*, 2010; marsupials, Wells *et al.*, 2019). Understanding the factors  
79 that determine these alternative, sometimes contrasting, population-level impacts of  
80 infectious disease has interested disease ecologists for decades and numerous factors about  
81 the parasite, the host, and the environment have been identified as important in the  
82 dynamics of host-parasite systems (Fig. 1; Anderson and May, 1979; Tompkins *et al.*,  
83 2011).

84 We argue that a deeper integration of life-history theory (hereafter LHT) into  
85 disease ecology is both timely and necessary to improve our capacity to understand,  
86 predict, and mitigate the impact of endemic and emerging infectious diseases in wild  
87 populations. A related approach that has provided a fruitful avenue of research is the study  
88 of how epidemiological parameters, such as parasite transmission rates (De Leo and  
89 Dobson, 1996), epidemiological thresholds (Bolzoni *et al.*, 2018), and host competence  
90 (Downs *et al.*, 2019), scale allometrically with host body size. As body size is the main  
91 factor shaping interspecific variation in life-history traits (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016; Healy *et al.*,

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3 92 2019), the allometric scaling of epidemiological parameters with host body size is expected  
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5 93 to be, at least partially, associated with host life-history characteristics. Yet, body size is not  
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7 94 always an accurate proxy of host life-history traits, especially when high-level taxonomic  
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9 95 ranks (e.g., class level or higher) are considered. For example, within mammals, humans  
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11 96 and bats show a particularly long lifespan and low fecundity for their relatively small body  
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13 97 sizes (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016; Healy *et al.*, 2019). Indeed, after controlling for allometric  
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15 98 constraints, considerable interspecific variation in life-history traits remains and other  
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17 99 factors, such as life-history trade-offs, phylogeny, and mode of life, are known to play  
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19 100 important roles in shaping the diversity of host life histories (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016; Healy *et*  
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21 101 *al.*, 2019). Here, we argue that the position of a host species along the classical slow-fast  
22  
23 102 life-history continuum (see below) can determine their response to parasitic infection (Fig.  
24  
25 103 1). It is worth noting that other host traits, such as population density and the level of  
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27 104 sociality (Han *et al.*, 2015, 2020), as well as parasite life-history traits (Barrett *et al.*, 2008;  
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29 105 **Silk and Hodgson, 2020**), also play critical roles in host-parasite dynamics, but those  
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31 106 aspects are beyond the scope of this review.  
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38 107 We focus this review on LHT predictions relative to host responses to infectious  
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40 108 disease at different levels of organization, from individual-level susceptibility to host  
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42 109 community assembly (Fig. 1). Although these theoretical predictions are broad in scope,  
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44 110 with empirical validations in plant and animal species (e.g., plants, Pagán *et al.*, 2008;  
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46 111 invertebrates, Agnew *et al.*, 2008; vertebrates, Johnson *et al.*, 2012), we emphasize  
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48 112 examples in wild vertebrate hosts, a group largely underrepresented in previous syntheses  
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50 113 on the intersection of life-history and host responses to parasitism (e.g., Michalakis and  
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52 114 Hochberg, 1994; Agnew *et al.*, 2000). The review is structured in eight sections. In the first  
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3 115 section, we introduce the theory and empirical evidence supporting the existence of a slow-  
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5 116 fast continuum of life-history variation in vertebrates. In the second section, which is  
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7 117 related to the field of ecoimmunology (see Brock *et al.*, 2014), we briefly discuss how the  
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9 118 position of hosts along the slow-fast continuum can help predict the type and strength of  
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11 119 host immune defences (for more detailed coverage refer to previous reviews, e.g., Lee  
12  
13 120 (2006), Martin *et al.* (2006), Tieleman (2018), and Albery and Becker (2020)). In the third  
14  
15 121 section, we discuss how life-history **constrains** the speed of recovery of host populations  
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17 122 after short-term disturbances such as disease outbreaks. In the fourth section, we focus on  
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19 123 active demographic compensation, a process particularly relevant for the persistence of host  
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21 124 populations impacted by emerging infectious diseases. We define the types of active  
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23 125 demographic compensation in the context of infectious diseases and discuss how these  
24  
25 126 responses could be modulated by host life histories, introducing a simple theoretical model  
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27 127 to illustrate how life-history strategies can be predictive of the magnitude of the negative  
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29 128 effects of disease-induced mortality on populations exhibiting density-dependent  
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31 129 compensation. In the fifth section, we discuss how host life-history strategies could  
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33 130 modulate the rapid evolution of mechanisms of resistance (i.e., the ability of a host to limit  
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35 131 or reduce parasite burden) or tolerance (i.e., the ability of a host to limit the negative effects  
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37 132 of a given parasite burden). In the sixth section, we briefly review the integration of host  
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39 133 life-history, community assembly, and infectious disease. In the seventh section, we discuss  
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41 134 how the insights of the previous sections can inform the monitoring and control of  
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43 135 infectious diseases in wildlife. In the eighth and concluding section we provide pointers for  
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45 136 future directions for the incorporation of LHT in disease ecology.  
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3 138 **SECTION 1: LIFE-HISTORY TRADE-OFFS AND THE SLOW-FAST**

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5 139 **CONTINUUM OF LIFE-HISTORY VARIATION**

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8 140 The pervasiveness of life-history trade-offs (i.e., beneficial change in one life-history trait  
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10 141 has a negative impact on another trait) has been central to the development of classical  
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12 142 LHT (Stearns, 1989a). The idea of these trade-offs is grounded in the “principle of  
13  
14 143 allocation” of time and energy (Cody, 1966), such that organisms have a limited amount of  
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16 144 time and energy to expend, and natural selection acts as a force operating on the allocation  
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18 145 of resources to different functions (e.g., growth, reproduction, locomotion, immune  
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20 146 function) to maximize fitness (Ricklefs and Wikelski, 2002; Lee, 2006). The most  
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22 147 prominent and well-supported life-history trade-offs involve survival and reproduction  
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24 148 (Stearns, 1989a; Lebreton, 2006; Healy *et al.*, 2019). The covariation among traits related  
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26 149 to survival and reproduction are structured along a major axis of life-history variation  
27  
28 150 termed the slow-fast life-history continuum (Fig. 1): species at the fast end of the  
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30 151 continuum are characterized by high fecundity per time unit (e.g., annual fecundity), early  
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32 152 age at first reproduction, and short lifespan, while the opposite is expected for species at the  
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34 153 slow end (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016).

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36 154 It has been proposed that the concept of the slow-fast life-history continuum should  
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38 155 be restricted to the pattern of covariation in raw (i.e., size-uncorrected) life-history traits  
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40 156 sharing the dimension of time (Jeschke and Kokko, 2009; Gaillard *et al.*, 2016). Empirical  
41  
42 157 evidence supports the existence of this “raw” slow-fast continuum in mammals and birds  
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44 158 (Herrando-Pérez *et al.*, 2012; Gaillard *et al.*, 2016), while in amphibians and reptiles a  
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46 159 comprehensive analysis on the subject is still lacking (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016; but see Fig. 2 in  
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48 160 Herrando-Pérez *et al.* (2012) which suggests the existence of the continuum in these taxa).

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3 161 In contrast, for fish species, annual fecundity appears to covary positively with pace of life  
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5 162 metrics, although for a given position on the slow-fast continuum the interspecific variation  
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7 163 in annual fecundity is notoriously high (see Fig. 2 in Herrando-Pérez *et al.* (2012)). Theory  
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9 164 to better understand this counterintuitive “slow-type survival with fast-type reproduction”  
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11 165 strategy observed in several fish species is beginning to emerge (see Wright *et al.*, 2020). It  
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13 166 is also worth noting that resources can be allocated to facets of reproduction other than  
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15 167 fecundity, such as offspring quality and parental investment, a situation that might lead to a  
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17 168 lack of covariation between fecundity and pace of life metrics in some ectotherms (Healy *et*  
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19 169 *al.*, 2019). How this deviation from the classical slow-fast continuum modulates the effect  
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21 170 of life histories on host responses to infectious disease is still an untapped question.  
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## 30 172 **SECTION 2: HOST LIFE-HISTORY AND IMMUNE DEFENCES**

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32 173 The principle of allocation and the ubiquity of parasites suggest that immune defences  
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34 174 should covary with the position of a species on the slow-fast life-history continuum, with  
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36 175 fast-living species trading investment in immune defence for growth and reproduction (Lee,  
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38 176 2006; Martin *et al.*, 2006). In contrast, the longer lifespan of slow-living species means that  
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40 177 they: 1) may encounter more individual infections during their lifetime, increasing the  
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42 178 benefits of allocating resources to immune defences; and 2) may encounter a wider  
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44 179 range/diversity of infections (e.g., Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2019), creating selective pressures for  
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46 180 adaptive (specific, less self-damaging) immunity (Lee, 2006; Woodhams *et al.*, 2016).  
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51 181 The differential allocation of energy and resources to immunity between fast-living  
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53 182 and slow-living species suggests that when exposed to the same parasite and under similar  
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3 183 environmental conditions, individuals from species at different positions along the slow-  
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5 184 fast life-history continuum should exhibit different susceptibilities to acquiring infection  
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7 185 and developing disease (Joseph *et al.*, 2013). There is evidence of this relationship in two  
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9 186 recent experimental studies in amphibians. In the first study, Johnson *et al.* (2012)  
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11 187 experimentally exposed individuals of 13 amphibian species to the trematode *Ribeiroia*  
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13 188 *ondatrae*. They showed that fast-living species were more prone to infection and the  
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15 189 development of lesions than slow-living species. In the second study, using a standardized  
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17 190 challenge of 20 North American amphibian species, Gervasi *et al.* (2017) found that  
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19 191 individuals from fast-living species were more susceptible to lethal *B. dendrobatidis*  
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21 192 infection.  
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27 193 Empirical evidence also reveals that the relative importance of coarse immunity  
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29 194 components, which differ in terms of energetic investment (e.g., innate vs adaptive  
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31 195 immunity), tend to vary along the slow-fast continuum in vertebrates, with fast-living  
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33 196 species favouring components that can be less costly such as innate immunity and  
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35 197 behavioural mechanisms of resistance/tolerance (Fig. 1; Lee 2006; Tieleman *et al.*, 2005;  
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37 198 Martin *et al.*, 2006; Previtalli *et al.*, 2012; Sears *et al.*, 2015; Woodhams *et al.*, 2016; but see  
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39 199 Tieleman (2018) for mixed empirical support for a link between host life-history and host  
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41 200 immunity in birds).  
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46 201 Although we have highlighted empirical evidence supporting the covariation of  
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48 202 immunity with host life-history strategies (i.e., fast-living species tend to invest less in  
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50 203 immunity and to favour less costly mechanisms of resistance/tolerance), there is little  
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52 204 robust evidence to support the generality of these patterns in vertebrates or other taxa  
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54 205 (Albery and Becker, 2020). Given the complexity of the vertebrate immune system (Brock  
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3 206 *et al.*, 2014) and its high responsiveness to environmental conditions (e.g., food  
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5 207 availability, temperature, microbial environment; Sandland and Minchella, 2003; Palacios  
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7 208 *et al.*, 2011), providing robust validation to these LHT predictions is not a trivial task. Such  
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10 209 validations could represent a major advance in the study of wildlife diseases, allowing  
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12 210 improvements in forecasting host susceptibility to novel parasitic infections and assisting  
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14 211 the design of disease mitigation strategies (e.g., mass vaccination or habitat management  
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16 212 targeting behavioural resistance/tolerance mechanisms, Hettyey *et al.*, 2019).  
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23 214 **SECTION 3: HOST LIFE-HISTORY CONSTRAINS POPULATION RECOVERY**  
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25 215 **AFTER A DISEASE OUTBREAK**

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28 216 The ability of populations to recover from short-term disturbances such as disease  
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30 217 outbreaks depends on their demographic resilience (i.e., the inherent ability of a population  
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32 218 to prevent a decrease in size after a disturbance; reviewed in Capdevila *et al.* (2020)). An  
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34 219 important prediction in the context of infectious diseases is that, all else being equal, a  
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36 220 population of a slow-living species would require a longer time to recover in size after a  
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38 221 disease outbreak than a population of a fast-living species (Lebreton, 2006; Capdevila *et*  
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40 222 *al.*, 2020; see Benhaïem *et al.* (2018) for an example in mammalian hosts). This arises  
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42 223 because the maximum population growth rate, which sets the upper limit of the speed of  
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44 224 recovery, is expected to decrease towards the slow end of the life-history continuum (Niel  
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46 225 and Lebreton, 2005; Lebreton, 2006). Capdevila *et al.* (2020) introduced an analytical  
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48 226 framework to study demographic resilience and its components that can be used to provide  
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50 227 further empirical support to the above-mentioned prediction. This approach, however, is  
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52 228 based on the analysis of density-independent, time-invariant matrix population models and  
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3 229 does not consider changes in vital rates over time (Capdevila *et al.*, 2020). In the following  
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5 230 sections, we show that compensatory changes in vital rates over time are important in  
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7 231 determining the resilience of host populations to emerging and endemic infectious diseases,  
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10 232 especially considering that parasites often operate as long-term sustained perturbations  
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12 233 (e.g., endemic infection dynamics).  
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18 235 **SECTION 4: HOST LIFE-HISTORY INFLUENCES THE MECHANISM OF**  
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20 236 **ACTIVE DEMOGRAPHIC COMPENSATION**  
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23 237 Active demographic compensation (defined as the change in one or more demographic  
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25 238 rates [e.g., survival, recruitment] to compensate for a reduction in that, or another,  
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27 239 demographic rate) determines the capacity of a population to counteract the detrimental  
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29 240 effects of infectious diseases. We use “active” to differentiate this concept from Capdevila  
30  
31 241 *et al.* (2020)’s definition of demographic compensation which focuses on changes in  
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33 242 demographic structure rather than changes in the vital rates. We identify two general  
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35 243 mechanisms of active demographic compensation in response to infectious disease: 1) a  
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37 244 non-specific response that arises from the effect of parasitic infection on host population  
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39 245 density (i.e., density-dependent compensation); and 2) an adaptive plastic response of  
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41 246 individual hosts to infection (i.e., parasite-induced plasticity of life-history traits).  
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49 248 **The role of density-dependent processes in active demographic compensation**  
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52 249 Early theoretical studies showed that density-dependent compensation could be a key  
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54 250 demographic mechanism to offset disease impacts on population growth rate, an idea that  
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3 251 was supported by empirical evidence in invertebrate hosts (Anderson and May 1981).  
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5 252 Essentially, for a parasite to regulate a host population, disease-induced mortality needs to  
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7 253 be additive (i.e., any individual that dies from the disease would have survived if the  
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10 254 disease was not present) rather than compensatory (i.e., any individual that dies from the  
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12 255 disease would have died from other causes if the disease was not present) to other natural  
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14 256 sources of density-dependent mortality (Jolles *et al.*, 2006). For example, in overcrowded  
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16 257 populations, parasite infection may primarily remove individuals that otherwise would die  
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18 258 due to causes linked to overcrowding (e.g., food or space limitations), resulting in  
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20 259 negligible differences in net survival rates between infected and uninfected populations  
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22 260 (Kistner and Belovsky, 2014). Additionally, a reduction in population size can boost  
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24 261 recruitment in a density-dependent fashion, compensating for the reduced survival of  
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26 262 infected hosts (e.g., Anderson and May, 1981; Ohlberger *et al.*, 2011; McDonald *et al.*,  
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28 263 2016; Rogowski *et al.*, 2020). In a population of susceptible hosts, density-dependent  
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30 264 compensatory responses can lead to effective compensation (i.e., no change in population  
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32 265 size) or even overcompensation (i.e., increase in population size; reviewed in Schröder et  
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34 266 al. (2014)). To our knowledge, however, there is only a single demonstration of density-  
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36 267 dependent overcompensation in this context, involving a protozoan parasite and a larval  
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38 268 mosquito host (Washburn *et al.*, 1991).  
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45 269 The demographic buffering hypothesis states that to alleviate negative effects of  
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47 270 environmental stochasticity on the long-run population growth rate, vital rates with the  
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49 271 largest contribution to the population growth rate (i.e., vital rates exhibiting a high  
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51 272 elasticity) should be buffered against environmental variation (reviewed in Hilde *et al.*  
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53 273 (2020)). This means that vital rates with a high elasticity should be canalised (i.e., are  
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3 274 insensitive to environmental variation). From this hypothesis, McDonald *et al.* (2016)  
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5 275 proposed that vital rates with high elasticity could also be buffered against internal  
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7 276 pressures, exhibiting weak dependence on local population density. This knowledge can  
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10 277 help predict the type of density-dependent compensatory mechanisms likely to occur in a  
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12 278 host population. In the context of host-parasite systems, this hypothesis suggests that, in  
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14 279 slow-living species, recruitment should be more sensitive than adult survival to local  
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17 280 population density and density-dependent recruitment should be more commonly observed  
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19 281 as a mechanism of compensation for infectious diseases (McDonald *et al.*, 2016). This  
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21 282 contrasts with fast-living species, where recruitment is expected to be less sensitive to  
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23 283 population density than adult survival and, therefore, density-dependent compensatory  
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25 284 recruitment would be expected to be less effective and thus less commonly observed.  
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27  
28 285 Instead, in fast-living species, as adult survival is expected to be more sensitive to  
29  
30 286 population density, the increased mortality rates due to disease are more likely to be  
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33 287 compensatory rather than additive. In a rare test of these LHT predictions, McDonald *et al.*  
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35 288 (2016) found that density-dependent compensatory recruitment contributed to the  
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37 289 persistence of a badger (*Meles meles*) population naturally infected with the bacterium  
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39 290 *Mycobacterium bovis* (Fig. 2a). This response is in accordance with the above-mentioned  
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42 291 LHT predictions, as badgers exhibit a slow life-history strategy (McDonald *et al.*, 2016).  
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48 293 *Life-history strategies and host population depression due to parasite-induced mortality*

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51 294 We use a susceptible-infected disease model to theoretically explore how life-history  
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53 295 modulates the negative effects of disease on host populations exhibiting density-dependent  
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55 296 compensation. The purpose of this analysis is to illustrate that distinguishing between slow  
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3 297 and fast-living life-history strategies can help predict the magnitude of the negative effects  
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5 298 of disease-induced mortality on host populations. The models we analyse here are similar to  
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7 299 those used in previous studies of disease-induced depression of host populations and the  
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9 300 effects of life-history on disease dynamics (e.g., Anderson and May, 1981; De Leo and  
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11 301 Dobson, 1996; Lloyd-Smith *et al.*, 2005; Bolzoni *et al.*, 2008, Han *et al.*, 2015). The key  
12  
13 302 contribution of our analysis is that, in addition to examining how variation in demographic  
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15 303 and infection rates between slow- and fast-living species affect disease dynamics (e.g., De  
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17 304 Leo and Dobson, 1996; Bolzoni *et al.*, 2008; Han *et al.*, 2015), we also directly compare  
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19 305 how structural assumptions regarding the location of density-dependence affect the  
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21 306 negative impacts of disease on slow- and fast-living species.  
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27 307 Consider a host population with some density of susceptible hosts  $A_S$  and infected  
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29 308 hosts  $A_I$ . Assume that hosts become infected through density-dependent transmission,  
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31 309 where increasing host density increases host contact rate (Anderson and May, 1981;  
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33 310 McCallum, 2001; see Fig. S2 for frequency-dependent transmission). Also assume that  
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35 311 infected hosts suffer disease-induced mortality at some rate  $\alpha$  ( $\text{yr}^{-1}$ ) and infected hosts can  
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37 312 recover at some rate  $\gamma$  ( $\text{yr}^{-1}$ ). We model these processes as  
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$$\begin{aligned}
 \frac{dA_S}{dt} &= f(A_S + A_I)[A_S + A_I] - g(A_S + A_I)A_S - \beta A_I A_S + \gamma A_I \\
 \frac{dA_I}{dt} &= \beta A_I A_S - [g(A_S + A_I) + \gamma + \alpha]A_I
 \end{aligned}
 \tag{1}$$

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52  
53 316 where  $\beta A_I$  is the force of infection ( $\text{yr}^{-1}$ ). The function  $f(A_S + A_I)$  defines the per capita  
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55 317 host reproductive rate as a function of total host population density  $A_S + A_I$ . Consistent  
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3 318 with the demographic buffering hypothesis, we assume that the per capita reproductive rate  
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5 319 of fast-living species is canalized and density-independent such that  $f(A_S + A_I) = a$ . In  
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7  
8 320 contrast, the per capita reproductive rate of slow-living species is predicted to be less  
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10 321 canalized and to exhibit density-dependence (e.g., McDonald *et al.*, 2016) and we assume  
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12 322 that it takes the form  $f(A_S + A_I) = a - s[A_S + A_I]$  (Gurney and Nisbet, 1998), where  $s$  is  
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15 323 the strength of density-dependence. The function  $g(A_S + A_I)$  defines the per capita  
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17 324 mortality rate of a host as a function of host density. For fast-living species, the per capita  
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19 325 mortality rate can vary with host density and we consider the form  $g(A_S + A_I) = \mu + s[A_S$   
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22 326  $+ A_I]$  (Anderson and May, 1981). The per capita mortality rates of slow-living species, on  
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24  
25 327 the other hand, are predicted to be canalized (e.g., McDonald *et al.*, 2016) such that per  
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27 328 capita mortality rate is density-independent,  $g(A_S + A_I) = \mu$ . In what follows, we refer to  
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29 329 the ‘fast model’ as the model with density-dependence in per capita mortality and the ‘slow  
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31 330 model’ as the model with density-dependence in per capita reproductive rate.

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34 331 In addition to where density-dependence operates, another distinguishing feature of  
35  
36 332 fast and slow-living species are the magnitudes of their per capita mortality and  
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38 333 reproductive rates in the absence of density-dependence. Slow-living species tend to be  
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41 334 long-lived (low  $\mu$ ) with low reproductive rates (low  $a$ ), while fast-living species tend to be  
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44 335 short-lived (high  $\mu$ ) with high reproductive rates (high  $a$ ) (Gaillard *et al.*, 2016). This well-  
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46 336 known life-history trade-off is reflected in the model in the host’s fundamental recruitment  
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49 337 number, which under the assumptions of equation 1 is  $R_{0,\text{host}} = \frac{a}{\mu}$ .  $R_{0,\text{host}}$  defines the  
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51 338 expected number of new hosts produced by a host over its lifetime when density-dependent  
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54 339 processes are absent. A host can obtain the same reproductive number by trading-off  
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56 340 between  $a$  and  $\mu$ . In this way, fast-living and slow-living species may have the same

341 fundamental recruitment number, but using contrasting strategies (e.g., low  $\alpha$ , low  $\mu$  vs.  
 342 high  $\alpha$ , high  $\mu$ ). Here we consider a slow-living species that lives on average ten years (  
 343  $\mu = 0.1 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ ) and a fast-living species that lives on average half a year ( $\mu = 2 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ ).

344 When a parasite successfully invades it will depress the host population below its  
 345 parasite free equilibrium density, which is  $A_{\text{parasite free}}^* = \frac{\alpha - \mu}{s}$  for both the slow and fast  
 346 model. How does the amount of host depression depend on the life-history strategy of the  
 347 host? To answer this question, we varied both the disease-induced mortality rate  $\alpha$  and the  
 348 host fundamental recruitment number  $R_{0,\text{host}}$  for the slow and fast model and compared  
 349 how much host equilibrium density was depressed in the presence of the parasite relative to  
 350 the parasite free equilibrium. Following Anderson and May (1981), we defined population  
 351 depression as  $1 - A_{\text{parasite present}}^*/A_{\text{parasite free}}^*$ , where  $A_{\text{parasite present}}^*$  is the total equilibrium  
 352 population density in the presence of the parasite. Zero indicates no population depression  
 353 from disease, and a value closer to one indicates a higher population depression.

354 To adequately compare population depression between the two life-history  
 355 strategies, we also need to consider  $R_0$  of the parasite. This describes the expected number  
 356 of infected individuals produced over the lifetime of an average infected host in a fully  
 357 susceptible host population. The proportion of a host population infected by a parasite  
 358 increases with increasing  $R_0$  (Keeling and Rohani, 2008) and will affect the percentage of  
 359 the host population that experiences disease-induced mortality. Parasite  $R_0$  for the slow  
 360 model is  $R_{0,\text{parasite,slow}} = \frac{A_{\text{parasite free}}^* \beta}{\alpha + \gamma + \mu}$  and for the fast model is  $R_{0,\text{parasite,fast}} =$   
 361  $\frac{A_{\text{parasite free}}^* \beta}{\alpha + \gamma + \mu + sA_{\text{parasite free}}^*}$ . When  $R_{0,\text{parasite}} > 1$ , the parasite can invade and transmission can be  
 362 sustained in a host population whose density is at  $A_{\text{parasite free}}^*$ . As the value of  $A_{\text{parasite free}}^*$

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3 363 will vary between the slow and fast model, so will parasite  $R_0$ . To account for this, we  
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5 364 ensured that parasite  $R_0$  was the same for the slow and fast model for any parameter set by  
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8 365 adjusting the transmission parameter  $\beta$  for the slow model once disease-induced mortality  
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10 366  $\alpha$  and  $R_{0,\text{host}}$  had been chosen. Biologically, this means that we assumed that parasites of  
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12 367 slow-living species generally had a higher transmission rate than those of fast-living  
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14 368 species. This assumption is reasonable given that 1) slow-living species generally have a  
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17 369 lower population density and a larger body size than fast-living species (Han *et al.*, 2015),  
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19 370 and 2) transmission rate  $\beta$  scales positively with body size under the assumption of density-  
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21 371 dependent transmission (De Leo and Dobson, 1996; but see Joseph *et al.*, 2013).

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25 372 Our analysis shows that, given the same parasite  $R_0$  and host fundamental  
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27 373 recruitment number  $R_{0,\text{host}}$ , the parasite depressed the population of slow-living species  
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29 374 more than fast-living species (Fig 3a,b). For both life-history strategies, population  
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31 375 depression was maximized for intermediate levels of disease-induced mortality  $\alpha$  and  
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33 376 tended to increase with increasing host fundamental recruitment number (Fig. 3a,b). The  
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35 377 unimodal relationship between disease-induced mortality  $\alpha$  and population depression is an  
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37 378 inevitable consequence of the fact that population depression has to be zero when  $\alpha = 0$   
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39 379 and when  $\alpha$  gets high enough that the parasite can no longer persist. Increasing the host  
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41 380 fundamental recruitment number in our model, on the other hand, increases equilibrium  
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43 381 host density, which increases transmission efficiency and increases population depression.  
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45 382 However, when the host fundamental recruitment number gets high enough, host births can  
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47 383 eventually compensate for disease-induced mortality and population depression will  
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49 384 decrease (Anderson and May, 1981).  
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3 385           There are two non-exclusive explanations for the comparatively stronger population  
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5 386   depression in slow-living species. First, despite ensuring identical parasite  $R_0$  values for the  
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7 387   slow and fast model, differences in intrinsic mortality rate or reproductive rate between fast  
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10 388   and slow-living species, for example, can directly affect equilibrium parasite prevalence. If  
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12 389   the slow model had higher disease prevalence than the fast model, this could explain the  
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14 390   increased population depression. In Fig. 3c,d we show that the opposite occurred in most  
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17 391   cases, i.e., the equilibrium prevalence was generally higher for the fast model compared to  
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19 392   the slow model, given comparable parameters. Second, the stronger depression for slow-  
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21 393   living species could be due to either the location of density-dependence (i.e., host survival  
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23 394   vs host reproduction) or the differences in mortality rate between the two life-history  
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25 395   strategies. If we ignore the biological implausibility and set the mortality rate  $\mu$  to be the  
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27 396   same for the slow and fast model, the stark differences in population depression are largely  
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29 397   removed (Fig. S1). This indicates that the differences in population depression between the  
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31 398   slow and fast models are driven largely by differences in mortality rate between the two  
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33 399   life-history strategies, and not by the location of density-dependence.

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38 400           We can further understand this result by considering how a proportional change in  
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40 401   mortality rate proportionally affects  $R_{0,\text{host}}$  (i.e., the elasticity of  $R_{0,\text{host}}$  with respect to  $\mu$ ).  
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42 402   Specifically, we can write the elasticity as  $\frac{\partial R_{0,\text{host}}}{R_{0,\text{host}}} = -T\partial\mu$ , where  $T = 1/\mu$  is the average  
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44 403   lifespan of the host (Lebreton 2005). When hosts have a short lifespan (i.e.,  $T$  is small),  
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46 404   consistent with a fast life-history strategy, a small change in host death rate  $\mu$  given by  $\partial\mu$   
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48 405   will have a small proportional change on  $R_{0,\text{host}}$ . In contrast, when hosts have a long  
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50 406   lifespan (i.e.,  $T$  is large), consistent with a slow life-history strategy, a small change in host  
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52 407   death rate  $\mu$  will have a large proportional change on  $R_{0,\text{host}}$ . Because equation 1 assumes

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3 408 that the parasite affects host population dynamics by modifying mortality from  $\mu$  to  $\mu + \alpha$   
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5 409 for infected hosts, the above elasticity analysis suggests that, for a slow- and a fast-living  
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7 410 species with the same values of  $R_{0,host}$ , the proportional impact of disease will be larger for  
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9 411 the slow-living species (small  $\mu$ ) than for the fast-living one (large  $\mu$ ). This result is  
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11 412 unchanged for frequency-dependent transmission (Fig. S2).  
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15 413 As a final note, this simple model only considers a host with a single life stage.  
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17 414 When hosts have multiple life stages (e.g., juvenile and adult) that are differentially  
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19 415 affected by a parasite, the location of density-dependence can interact in more complex  
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21 416 ways with underlying host and parasite parameters determining the extent of population  
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23 417 depression in fast and slow-living species. For example, in a slow-living species where  
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25 418 juveniles are substantially less susceptible to infection than adults, disease-induced  
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27 419 mortality in adults could lead to density-dependent increases in per capita reproductive  
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29 420 rates and a proportional increase in juvenile population density in the presence of disease.  
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31 421 However, in a species with density-dependence in juvenile mortality, this type of  
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33 422 compensation would be harder to obtain. These predicted patterns provide an interesting  
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35 423 future direction to explore at the intersection of disease ecology and LHT.  
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#### 47 **The role of life-history plasticity in active demographic compensation**

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49 427 Disease-associated risk can induce plastic changes in life-history traits that can potentially  
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51 428 result in active demographic compensation. For example, in the Tasmanian devil  
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53 429 (*Sarcophilus harrisii*), females from populations decimated by a transmissible tumour  
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3 430 decreased their age at first reproduction and produced more offspring, a response that  
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5 431 partially offset the long-term impact of the disease and allowed persistence of Tasmanian  
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7 432 devil populations (Jones *et al.*, 2008; Lachish *et al.*, 2009; Lazenby *et al.*, 2018). Although  
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9 433 a reduced population density due to infectious disease could potentially induce plasticity in  
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11 434 life-history traits, several empirical studies in vertebrates indicate that cues pertaining to a  
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13 435 parasite (e.g., antigens) or infected conspecifics are enough to trigger plasticity in life-  
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15 436 history traits (Wedekind, 2002; Bonneaud *et al.*, 2004; Velando *et al.*, 2006; Hanssen,  
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17 437 2006; Pompini *et al.*, 2013; Sköld-Chiriach *et al.*, 2019). We argue that this evidence  
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19 438 reinforces the traditional idea of the existence of a density-independent plastic response of  
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21 439 hosts to the increased risk of death or reduced fecundity associated with a parasitic  
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23 440 infection (Stearns, 1989b).

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29 441 In animals, empirical demonstrations of parasite-induced plasticity in life-history  
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31 442 traits were traditionally restricted to invertebrates (e.g., Michalakis and Hochberg, 1994;  
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33 443 Agnew *et al.*, 2000), but evidence is accumulating that this occurs across all vertebrate  
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35 444 classes as well (Fig. 2b-f; Table S1). Despite being well described at the individual level, it  
36  
37 445 is unclear how parasite-induced plasticity of life-history traits affects host demography and  
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39 446 long-term host-parasite dynamics in vertebrates or other taxa. Like the results in  
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41 447 invertebrates (Agnew *et al.*, 2000), examples from wild vertebrates support theoretical  
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43 448 expectations that the most common type of parasite-induced plasticity in life-history are  
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45 449 associated with reproduction. First, LHT predicts that if parasitism reduces an individual's  
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47 450 residual reproductive value (which is a measure of future reproductive opportunities) due to  
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49 451 reduced fecundity, reduced survival, or chronic disease, selective benefits should exist for  
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51 452 individuals that can divert resources from self-maintenance to increase their current  
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3 453 reproductive effort, in a “terminal investment” strategy to maximize fitness (Minchella,  
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5 454 1985; Forbes, 1993; Sorci *et al.*, 1996; Hanssen, 2006; Schwanz, 2008). Second, for  
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7 455 individuals that have not reached sexual maturity, reducing the age of first reproduction  
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9 456 (i.e., diverting resources from growth to reproduction) should also enhance host fitness  
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11 457 since the chances of successful reproduction before either death or sterility are increased  
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13 458 (Stearns, 1989b; Hochberg *et al.*, 1992; Michalakis and Hochberg, 1994). Also, in  
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15 459 vertebrates with complex life cycles, parasites can induce changes in the timing of life-  
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17 460 history transitions and niche shifts (e.g., hatching time in fish and amphibians) that permit  
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19 461 hosts to escape stage-specific parasitic infection (Warkentin *et al.*, 2001; Wedekind, 2002;  
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21 462 Pompini *et al.*, 2013).

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26 463 It is worth noting that infected hosts do not always exhibit increased reproductive  
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28 464 effort (Duffield *et al.*, 2017). First, the direct negative effects of infectious disease can  
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30 465 inhibit reproduction (Richner, 1998). Second, if the prospects of future reproduction are not  
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32 466 diminished (e.g., CDV in spotted hyenas; Benhaïem *et al.*, 2018), it would be more  
33  
34 467 efficient to reallocate resources to immune defences rather than to reproduction (but see  
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36 468 Perrin *et al.*, 1996). Third, the activation of the immune system is costly, and to sustain an  
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38 469 immune response, hosts may need to reallocate resources away from reproduction (Ilmonen  
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40 470 *et al.*, 2000). Lastly, even if an infectious disease reduces a host’s residual reproductive  
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42 471 value, investing in immunity could pay off. For instance, using a theoretical evolutionary  
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44 472 model of a sexually-transmitted disease producing sterility in females, Johns *et al.* (2019)  
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46 473 showed that, even though terminal investment evolved under most scenarios, when  
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48 474 immunity was highly cost-effective in delaying sterility, infected females increased  
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50 475 immune response at the expense of reproductive effort.  
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3 476 It is unclear how plasticity in host life-history traits covaries with the position of a  
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5 477 species on the slow-fast continuum (but see Fig. 1), highlighting the urgent need for  
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7 478 theoretical and empirical development of this subject. In a general context, empirical  
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9 479 evidence shows that, in contrast to mammals with an intermediate to fast life-history  
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11 480 strategy (e.g., Tasmanian devils, wild boars), slow-living mammals are not able to bring  
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13 481 forward the onset of reproduction as a mechanism to compensate for an extrinsic cause of  
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15 482 increased mortality rate (see Servanty *et al.* (2011) and references therein).  
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26 485 **SECTION 5: HOST LIFE-HISTORY AND EVOLUTIONARY RESPONSES TO**  
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28 486 **INFECTIOUS DISEASES**  
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31 487 Parasites could also drive rapid evolutionary changes in host life-history traits (Stearns *et*  
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33 488 *al.*, 2000; Koella and Restif, 2001; but see Steiner and Tuljapurkar, 2012). Indeed, parasites  
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35 489 are ubiquitous in nature and exert selective pressures influencing the evolution of host-life  
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37 490 history strategies and maintaining plasticity of host life-history traits (Hochberg *et al.*,  
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39 491 1992; Koella and Restif, 2001). This rapid evolution of host life-history traits could lead to  
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41 492 evolutionary rescue, i.e., when adaptive evolutionary change halt population decline and  
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43 493 prevents extinction (Carlson *et al.*, 2014). Yet, we are unaware of any empirical  
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45 494 demonstration of rapid evolutionary change of life-history traits (e.g., fecundity, age at first  
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47 495 reproduction) in response to parasitism in vertebrate hosts (but see below for examples of  
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49 496 rapid evolution of tolerance/resistance mechanisms). The distinction between rapid  
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51 497 evolution of life-history traits and active demographic compensation in response to  
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3 498 infectious disease is of practical relevance because evolutionary responses are expected to  
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5 499 be more hard-wired and slower to reverse than density-dependent and plastic responses,  
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7 500 and could alter population dynamics and resilience to other stressors (e.g., extreme climatic  
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9 501 events) even after the parasite has disappeared from the host population.  
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13 502         Additionally, rapid adaptive evolutionary changes of resistance or tolerance  
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15 503 mechanisms can have important effects on host-parasite dynamics (Duffy and Sivars-  
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17 504 Becker, 2007), allowing evolutionary rescue in susceptible hosts (e.g., Gignoux-Wolfsohn  
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19 505 *et al.*, 2019). There are several examples of rapid evolution of resistance or tolerance  
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21 506 mechanisms in wild vertebrates, including amphibians (Savage and Zamudio, 2016), birds  
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23 507 (Bonneaud *et al.*, 2011), and mammals (Epstein *et al.*, 2016; Gignoux-Wolfsohn *et al.*,  
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25 508 2019). This rapid evolution is more likely to arise if the genetic variants involved in the  
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27 509 response to infectious disease are from pre-existing genetic variation rather than from the  
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29 510 recruitment of *de novo* mutations (Barrett and Schluter, 2008; Bonneaud *et al.*, 2011;  
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31 511 Hedrick, 2013). For example, populations of little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*)  
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33 512 experienced a dramatic and rapid decline due to white-nose syndrome (one monitored  
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35 513 colony declined by 98% between 2009-2015) but then started to recover slowly. Gignoux-  
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37 514 Wolfsohn *et al.* (2019) reported that this recovery was associated with rapid evolution that  
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39 515 occurred as a soft selection at multiple loci in genes linked to hibernation behaviour. These  
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41 516 authors concluded that this occurred from standing genetic variation because the short  
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43 517 timescale of fungal infection, mortality, and recovery processes makes selection of novel  
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45 518 mutations very unlikely (Gignoux-Wolfsohn *et al.*, 2019).  
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53 519         Our current knowledge about the genetic architecture of resistance and tolerance  
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55 520 and the central role of standing genetic variation in the evolvability of host responses to  
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3 521 parasitic infection leads to two important predictions that remain to be empirically tested in  
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5 522 vertebrate hosts. First, at the intraspecific level, resistance and tolerance are less likely to  
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7 523 evolve rapidly in small, isolated populations where small effective population size ( $N_e$ )  
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9 524 increases the risk of resistance/tolerance allele loss due to genetic drift and decreases  
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11 525 selection effectiveness in response to infectious disease (Eimes *et al.*, 2011). This  
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13 526 prediction is supported by information from taxa other than vertebrates. For instance, in  
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15 527 plants, individuals from highly connected populations can exhibit higher levels of disease  
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17 528 resistance making those populations less susceptible to parasite-driven extinction (Jousimo  
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19 529 *et al.*, 2014; Carlsson-Granér and Thrall, 2015). Second, at the interspecific level,  
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21 530 covariation between life-history and species' genetic characteristics likely determines the  
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23 531 speed of the evolution of parasite resistance and tolerance. Small-sized species with fast life  
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25 532 histories usually have higher genetic diversity than large, slow-living species (Wooten and  
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27 533 Smith, 1985; McCusker and Bentzen, 2010; Eo *et al.*, 2011). In addition, because of their  
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29 534 short generation times, species at the fast end of the life-history continuum evolve at a  
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31 535 faster rate than those at the slow end (Bromham, 2011) and have higher non-synonymous to  
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33 536 synonymous substitution rate ratios (reflecting selection efficiency due to large  $N_e$ ) (Figuat  
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35 537 *et al.*, 2016). **These two predictions suggest** that fast-living species should benefit from a  
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37 538 higher capacity for rapid evolution than slow-living species in response to infectious  
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39 539 disease emergence. In contrast, Bruns *et al.* (2015) provided theoretical evidence that long-  
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41 540 lived hosts can evolve resistance more rapidly than short-lived hosts when the likelihood of  
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43 541 exposure to parasites and, therefore, the strength of selection for resistance, increases with  
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45 542 longevity. Testing these theoretical expectations is a major challenge but would allow us to  
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3 543 better predict the susceptibility of species and populations to the emergence of infectious  
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5 544 diseases.

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7 545 In addition to evolution, rapid changes in host life-history traits or  
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10 546 resistance/tolerance mechanisms can be attributed to parasite-induced epigenetic variation  
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12 547 (Gómez-Díaz *et al.*, 2012). To date, the role of epigenetic mechanisms on host responses to  
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14 548 parasitism remains poorly understood. Available evidence shows that parasite-induced  
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16 549 changes in DNA methylation (an epigenetic mechanism) can occur within the sequence of  
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18 550 protein-coding genes involved in host immunity and can also affect genes regulating a  
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20 551 broad range of molecular and intracellular processes (Zhang *et al.*, 2016; Sagonas *et al.*,  
21  
22 552 2020). Methylation is a strong predictor of lifespan and aging (Lowe *et al.*, 2018;  
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24 553 Anastasiadi and Piferrer, 2020) and partially regulates fertility in vertebrates (e.g., Woods  
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26 554 *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, parasite-induced methylation changes could produce aberrant DNA  
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28 555 expression, which might alter individual phenome, eventually influencing compensatory  
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30 556 responses. Depending on the extent of the germline reprogramming, epigenetic marks  
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32 557 driven by parasite infection could be retained and could be transmitted from one generation  
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34 558 to the next, allowing the transgenerational inheritance of resistance/tolerance mechanisms  
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36 559 or life-history traits in some organisms (Greer *et al.*, 2011; Bošković and Rando, 2018).

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48 562 **SECTION 6: FROM POPULATIONS TO COMMUNITIES: INTEGRATING HOST**  
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50 563 **LIFE-HISTORY, COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY, AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

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53 564 Life-history traits can be further considered at the scale of ecological communities. The  
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55 565 position of a species along the slow-fast life-history continuum can covary with both their

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3 566 epidemiological potential (i.e., host competence, which is defined as the capacity of a host  
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5 567 to maintain and transmit a parasite) and their position within communities (i.e., assembly  
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7 568 order). Thus, LHT offers an intriguing opportunity to more mechanistically link  
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10 569 epidemiological and ecological frameworks in the study of disease, particularly for multi-  
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12 570 host parasites.

15 571         One arena in which this topic has begun to receive more attention is in the study of  
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17 572 how changes in community diversity influence parasite transmission and disease risk.  
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19 573 Debate over whether biodiversity losses should consistently lead to higher disease risk  
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21 574 (e.g., the dilution effect) has prompted efforts to understand transmission within complex  
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23 575 multi-host communities from a more mechanistic perspective (e.g., Ostfeld and Keesing,  
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25 576 2012). When life-history traits covary with aspects such as colonization ability, competitive  
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27 577 dominance, or extinction risk, species composition may be predictable along gradients of  
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29 578 species richness, disturbance regime, productivity, or community age. In amphibian  
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31 579 communities, for instance, Johnson *et al.* (2013) reported up to a 78% decrease in  
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33 580 trematode parasite transmission with an increase in amphibian host diversity. This result  
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35 581 was due to the non-random assembly of host communities: fast-living species with high  
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37 582 colonization abilities tended to be the most competent hosts for the trematode. Because  
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39 583 these species predominated in low-richness communities, parasite transmission tended to  
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41 584 decline with community diversity. As these species were increasingly accompanied or  
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43 585 replaced by lower-competence hosts at higher levels of species richness, the overall  
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45 586 infection competence of the community decreased. If communities were instead assembled  
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47 587 at random with respect to species composition (in laboratory experiments), there was no  
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49 588 such relationship between species richness and parasite transmission (Johnson *et al.*, 2019;  
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3 589 but see Becker *et al.*, 2014). This highlights the importance of host life-history  
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5 590 characteristics in affecting both interspecific variation in host infection competence as well  
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7 591 as patterns of realistic assembly in ecological communities, which together could be used to  
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10 592 more broadly consider landscape-level transmission dynamics.  
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19 595 **SECTION 7: FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE: HOST LIFE-HISTORY AND**  
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21 596 **MITIGATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES IN WILDLIFE**  
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24 597 We argue that a better understanding of the relationship between host life-history and  
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26 598 disease dynamics can improve the accuracy of disease risk analysis and inform mitigation  
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28 599 efforts at different stages of parasite invasion (*sensu* Langwig *et al.*, 2015).  
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32 600 Disease risk analysis focuses on characterizing the potential disease hazards to an  
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34 601 animal, a population, or a species prior to their occurrence (Sainsbury and Vaughan-  
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36 602 Higgins, 2012; Jakob-Hoff *et al.*, 2014). Risk largely depends on the adaptive capacity of  
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38 603 the host population/species, which we define as its capacity to cope with, or respond to, an  
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40 604 infectious disease. Because life-history permeates all components of host adaptive capacity  
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42 605 (Jakob-Hoff *et al.*, 2014), life-history traits could be used to identify species at greater risk  
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44 606 and prioritize surveillance efforts (Grogan *et al.*, 2014).  
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48 607 During the epizootic phase of parasite invasion, a rapid assessment of life-history  
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50 608 traits can help to identify those host species at greater risk and guide resource allocation  
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52 609 accordingly. For example, an initial, coarse assessment might prioritize naïve slow-living  
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54 610 species, populations of which are more likely to be impacted more severely by infectious  
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3 611 disease (Fig. 3a,b). Also, given the greater capacity for an adaptive immune response, LHT  
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5 612 suggests that vaccine development would be more effective for slow-living species. LHT  
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7 613 insights can help refine initial assessments. For example, mitigation decisions in fast or  
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10 614 slow-living species might change depending on whether juveniles, adults or both life stages  
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12 615 are affected. Parasite-driven adult mortality will have a greater impact on the population  
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14 616 dynamics of slow-living than fast-living species, and high rates of parasite-driven juvenile  
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16 617 mortality can limit the efficacy of compensatory recruitment in slow-living species  
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19 618 (Valenzuela-Sánchez *et al.*, 2017).

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22 619 After the epizootic phase, fast-living host species might be managed by facilitating  
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24 620 host-parasite co-existence by reducing non-disease stressors to indirectly reduce additive  
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26 621 mortality (Scheele *et al.*, 2019b). Conversely, slow-living species with slower recovery  
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28 622 might be managed more directly, by improving recruitment through habitat manipulation  
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30 623 (e.g., Haydon *et al.*, 2002) or by population supplementation through the release of captive-  
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32 624 bred or translocated individuals (e.g., Gerber *et al.*, 2019; Mendelson *et al.*, 2019).

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36 625 Importantly, while conservation plans intuitively seek to protect species at greater  
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38 626 risk of extinction, in a disease context the protection of one species will often require  
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40 627 managing additional species (Dobson, 2004). Life-history theory could help to predict the  
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42 628 potential and relative importance of other species to act as a disease reservoir (Han *et al.*,  
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44 629 2020), enabling the causative parasite to persist (Gog *et al.*, 2002; Haydon *et al.*, 2002;  
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46 630 Plourde *et al.*, 2017). Empirical evidence shows that fast-living species commonly have a  
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48 631 higher host competence (Johnson *et al.*, 2012; Joseph *et al.*, 2013; Plourde *et al.*, 2017;  
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50 632 **Albery and Becker, 2020**). This likely arises due to the lower investment of fast-living  
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53 633 species on immune defences, the adaptation of parasites to locally abundant hosts, or both  
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3 634 (Joseph *et al.*, 2013; Albery and Becker, 2020). Therefore, locally abundant fast-living  
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5 635 species could be targeted to protect a more vulnerable species at risk, pre-emptively or  
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7 636 reactively (Canessa *et al.*, 2019a; Martel *et al.*, 2020). A recent study presented theoretical  
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9 637 evidence that challenges the idea that fast-living species will invariably have a higher host  
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11 638 competence. Using age-structured, susceptible-infected models, Silk and Hodgson (2020)  
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13 639 showed that the demographic host competence (i.e., the ability of host populations to  
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15 640 sustain endemic prevalence) of slow-living species can be similar or even higher (especially  
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17 641 in the case of density-dependent parasite transmission) than that of fast-living species.  
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19 642 Disentangling how immune and nonimmune mechanisms (e.g., demography, behaviour,  
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21 643 density-dependence) of host competence interact at the population level seems to be a  
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23 644 critical step to better understand the relationship between host competence and life history  
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25 645 in multi-host parasite systems.

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31 646 We foresee two major barriers to the use of LHT to inform wildlife disease  
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33 647 mitigation. First, relatively few proven, feasible options exist for disease control in wild  
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35 648 vertebrates (e.g., Garner *et al.*, 2016). General trade bans for disease prevention (Shea *et*  
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37 649 *al.*, 2014) or culling for outbreak control (Carter *et al.*, 2009; Mysterud *et al.*, 2018) are  
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39 650 more likely to be focused on the potential of species to act as vectors of parasite entry than  
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41 651 on long-term disease dynamics (Pavlin *et al.*, 2009). Actions deployed during the invasion  
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43 652 phase are likely to be broad-scope measures applied to a wide range of potential hosts and  
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45 653 vectors within a landscape or ecological setting (e.g., culling; Gortazar *et al.*, 2014). The  
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47 654 second barrier is the scarcity of life-history data for many threatened species (Conde *et al.*,  
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49 655 2019). Understanding long-term demographic processes requires long-term data. Managers  
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51 656 can respond to such uncertainty by delaying actions until such knowledge is accumulated  
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3 657 (but risking parasite spread during this period) (Grantham *et al.*, 2009; Wintle *et al.*, 2010),  
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5 658 or by making decisions under uncertainty and assessing their effectiveness adaptively (e.g.,  
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7 659 Shea *et al.*, 2014). Such assessments should be faster and more reliable for fast-living  
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9 660 species with shorter generation times and larger cohorts, and hence larger sample sizes.  
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13 661 Despite these limitations, disease risk assessments and mitigation plans generally  
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15 662 are conducted with a limited knowledge of the system and depend on expert opinion and  
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17 663 extrapolation (Canessa *et al.*, 2019b). Therefore, we encourage scientists and practitioners  
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19 664 to incorporate knowledge about broad LHT-disease relationships into expert assessments to  
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21 665 narrow the decision space (Wintle *et al.*, 2010), even in species where life-history data  
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23 666 might be limited.  
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## 30 668 **SECTION 8: CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

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33 669 Host life-history characteristics strongly influence host responses to parasitism at different  
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35 670 levels of organization, from individuals to communities. While we highlight several  
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37 671 empirical examples supporting LHT predictions about host responses to infectious disease  
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39 672 in vertebrates, most theoretical expectations lack robust empirical validation. Addressing  
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41 673 this challenge is critical for the advancement of theory and practice in infectious disease  
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43 674 ecology. We have highlighted several mechanisms that allow host populations to  
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45 675 compensate for an increased mortality or reduced fertility due to infectious disease, and  
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47 676 how life-history can constrain these responses. While our capacity to disentangle these  
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49 677 mechanisms in wild populations has been limited to date, new opportunities are arising to  
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51 678 deal with this problem. These include the integration of experimental and observational  
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3 679 approaches (e.g., Washburn *et al.*, 1991; Rogowski *et al.*, 2020) including through new  
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5 680 analytical tools, such as integrated population models, that incorporate multiple data types  
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8 681 and processes occurring at different levels of organization (e.g., McDonald *et al.*, 2016;  
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10 682 Wilber *et al.*, 2016). Although we focused this review on interspecific differences in host  
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12 683 life histories, the life-history traits of a species are not strictly static: within and among  
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14 684 population variation in life-history traits can depend on biotic or abiotic environmental  
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17 685 conditions. How the intraspecific variation in life-history traits influence host responses to  
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19 686 parasitism remains poorly understood, but it probably accounts for some of the  
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22 687 interpopulation variation in disease impacts that we observe in nature (e.g., Stephenson and  
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24 688 Cable, 2015). Accordingly, efforts to quantify trait distributions within communities which  
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26 689 capture both intraspecific and interspecific variation in key life-history traits are essential to  
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28 690 better understand the importance of host life-history on complex multi-host parasite  
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31 691 systems. LHT is a rich source of information that has not been fully applied to meeting the  
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33 692 challenges of wildlife disease mitigation. We suggest that applying information gleaned  
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35 693 from broad LHT-disease relationships (considering extrapolation in species where life-  
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37 694 history data might be limited or non-existent) can contribute significantly to disease risk  
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40 695 assessment and the identification of innovative mitigation strategies to address disease  
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42 696 threats to wildlife.  
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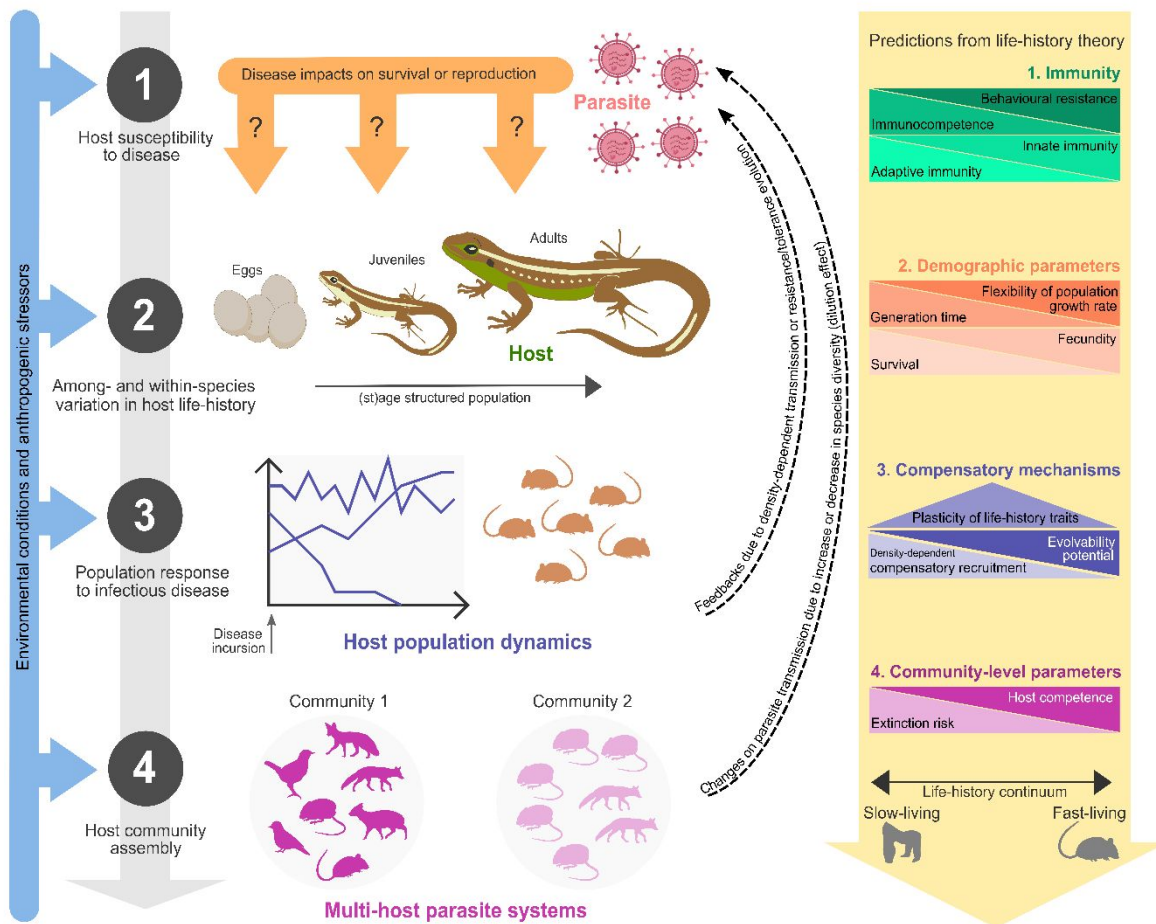
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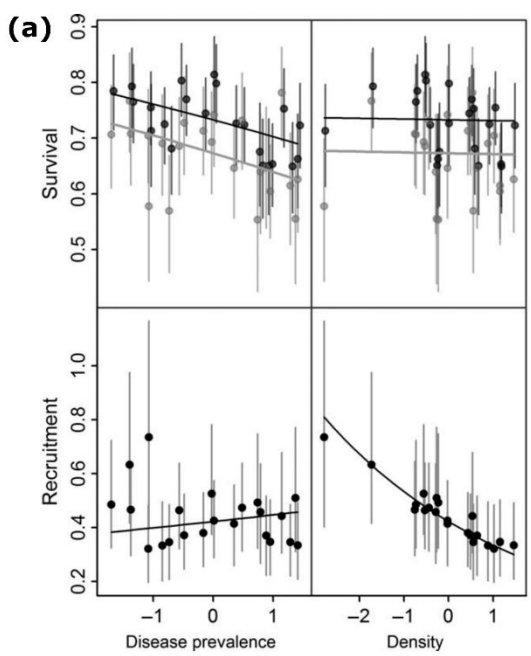
----- Figures -----

**Figure 1**



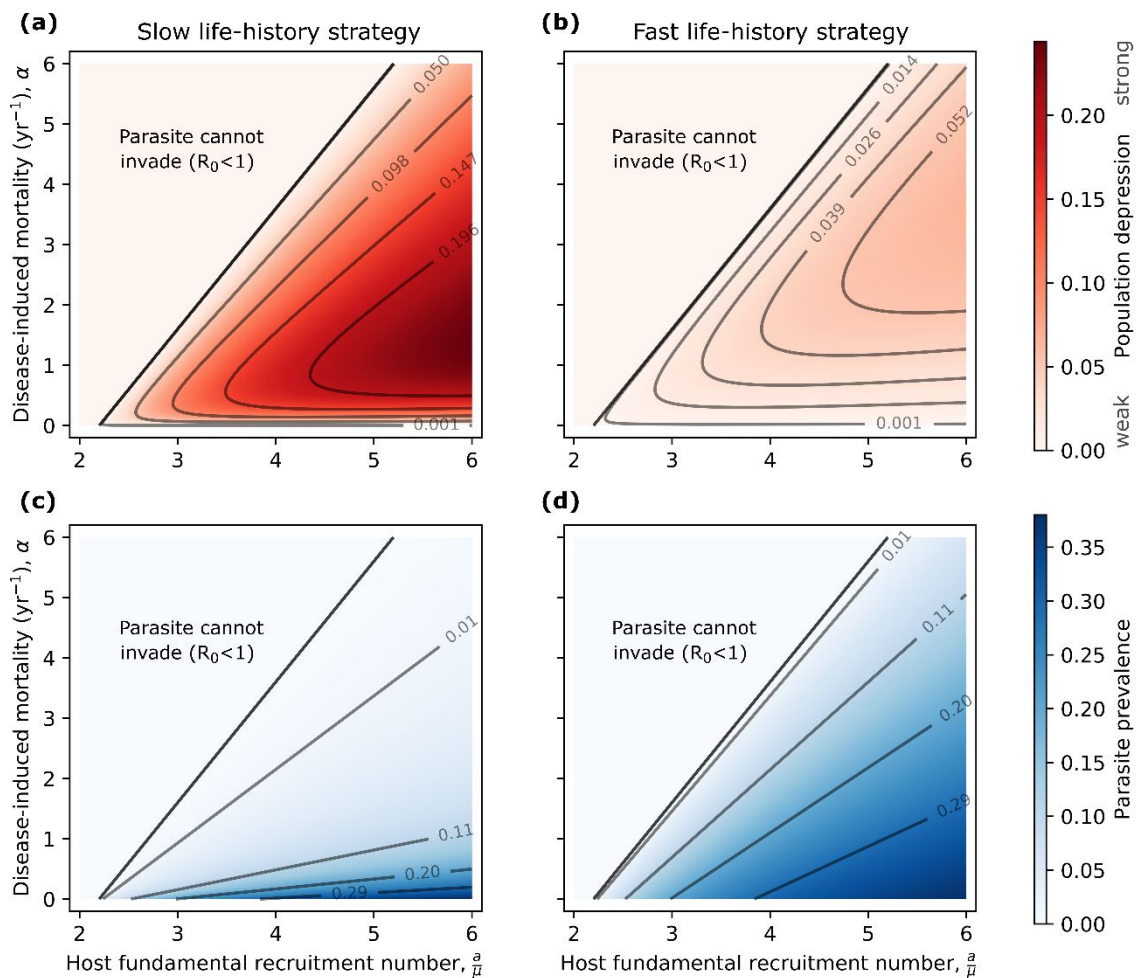
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Figure 2



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Figure 3



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6 1098 **Figure 1** Host life-history characteristics affect the host-parasite interaction at different  
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8 1099 levels of organization, from individual-level susceptibility, to population-level responses to  
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10 1100 host community assembly. Life-history theory predicts different outcomes of parasitic  
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12 1101 infection across these organizational levels, which are related to the position of the host  
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14 1102 species (or populations) along the slow-fast continuum of life-history variation. Note that  
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16 1103 several of these predictions lack robust empirical validations, and some have not been  
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18 1104 tested at all (see main text). For example, we speculate that host species with intermediate  
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20 1105 life-history strategies should exhibit higher plasticity of life-history traits. This is because  
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22 1106 species on the fast end of the life-history continuum are expected to have low plasticity in  
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24 1107 fecundity parameters due to the high canalization of recruitment-related traits. Species on  
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26 1108 the slow end, in contrast, are expected to have a low canalization of recruitment-related  
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28 1109 traits. However, physical constraints imposed by their reproductive systems (e.g., large size  
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30 1110 of the offspring compared to the size of the uterus in slow-living mammals or large eggs  
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32 1111 compared to the size of the ovaries and oviducts in slow-living amphibians) and a  
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34 1112 potentially costly immune response against infection could limit the potential for active  
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36 1113 demographic compensation through increased reproductive effort. Importantly, fully  
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38 1114 understanding the effects of infectious disease relies on understanding a range of factors  
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40 1115 (e.g. parasite transmission, environmental effects) that depend on the system evaluated.  
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51 1117 **Figure 2** Empirical examples of density-dependent compensation (a) and plasticity in life-  
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53 1118 history traits (b-f) in response to infectious disease in vertebrates. In (a) the correlation of  
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55 1119 adult survival and recruitment with disease prevalence and host population density in the  
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3 1120 badger–*Mycobacterium bovis* system is shown. The dark grey and light grey lines in the top  
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5 1121 panels of this figure represent the survival of males and females, respectively. Density-  
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7 1122 dependent compensatory recruitment allowed the long-term persistence of this badger  
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9 1123 population with endemic *M. bovis* infection (adapted from McDonald *et al.* [2016]). (b)  
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11 1124 *Troglodytes aedon* females experimentally exposed to *Salmonella enterica* LPS increased  
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13 1125 the amount of yolk per unit of egg mass and food provisioning to nestlings (photo: Mylthon  
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15 1126 Jiménez-Castillo). (c) *Sarcophilus harrisii* females from populations with the transmissible  
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17 1127 Devil facial tumour disease have an earlier onset of reproduction and more pouch young  
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19 1128 (photo: Rodrigo Hamede). (d) *Litoria verreauxii alpine* individuals experimentally infected  
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21 1129 with *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* have more spermatid cell bundles and a larger  
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23 1130 proportion of spermatozoa bundles (males), and larger ovaries and oviducts (females)  
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25 1131 (photo: Matt West). (e) *Zootoca vivipara* females naturally infected with Hematozoa  
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27 1132 exhibited a larger relative clutch mass and higher maternal investment per young (photo:  
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29 1133 Matthieu Berroneau). (f) *Coregonus* sp. eggs exposed to water-borne cues from  
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31 1134 *Pseudomonas fluorescens* or conspecific infected eggs hatched earlier (photo: Paul Vecsei).  
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33 1135 References and study details (b-f) can be found in the Appendix S2 in Supporting  
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35 1136 Information.

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43 1137 **Figure 3** Life-history strategies and host population depression due to parasite-induced  
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45 1138 mortality. (a,b) We used equation 1 to compute the equilibrium total host density when the  
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47 1139 parasite was absent and when the parasite was present and depressed the host population.  
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49 1140 We calculated population depression as  $1 - A_{\text{parasite present}}^*/A_{\text{parasite free}}^*$ , where zero  
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51 1141 indicates no population depression. We varied the host fundamental recruitment number  
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53 1142  $R_{0,\text{host}} = \frac{a}{\mu}$  between 2 and 6. To do this, we held intrinsic mortality  $\mu$  fixed at  $0.1 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  for

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3 1143 the slow-living species and at  $2 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  for the fast-living species and chose the reproductive  
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5 1144 rate  $a \text{ yr}^{-1}$  to ensure the host fundamental recruitment numbers were the same between  
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7 1145 hosts. We varied disease-induced mortality rate  $\alpha$  between 0 and  $6 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ . The transmission  
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9 1146 parameter  $\beta$  was fixed at  $2 \text{ yr}^{-1}$  for fast-living species and varied for slow-living species  
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11 1147 such that  $R_{0,\text{parasite,fast}} = R_{0,\text{parasite,slow}}$ . The other parameters were  $s = 1$  and  $\gamma = 0.4 \text{ yr}^{-1}$ .  
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13 1148 We also varied the strength of density-dependence  $s$  between 0.1 and 1 and  $\gamma$  between 0.1  
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15 1149 and 4 and the qualitative results were unaffected (not shown). The color indicates the  
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17 1150 magnitude of population depression, gray lines and numbers give specific contours of  
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19 1151 population depression, and the black line indicates where  $R_{0,\text{parasite},\cdot} = 1$ , to the left of  
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21 1152 which the parasite could not invade the host population. (c,d) Same as (a,b), except parasite  
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23 1153 prevalence is plotted for the two life-history strategies. See the main text for details on  
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25 1154 parameter names.  
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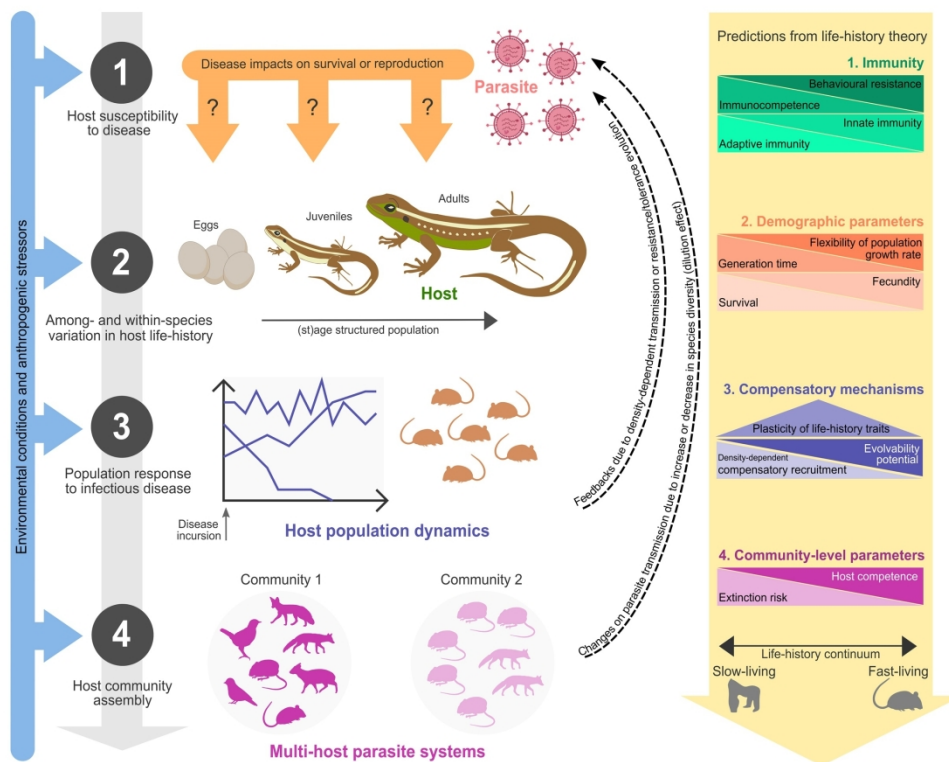


Figure 1

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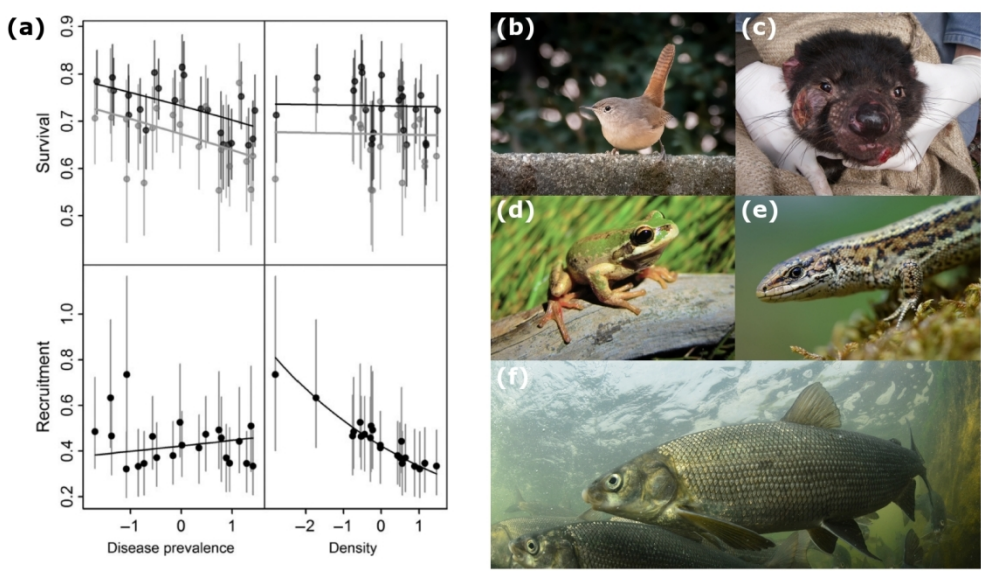


Figure 2

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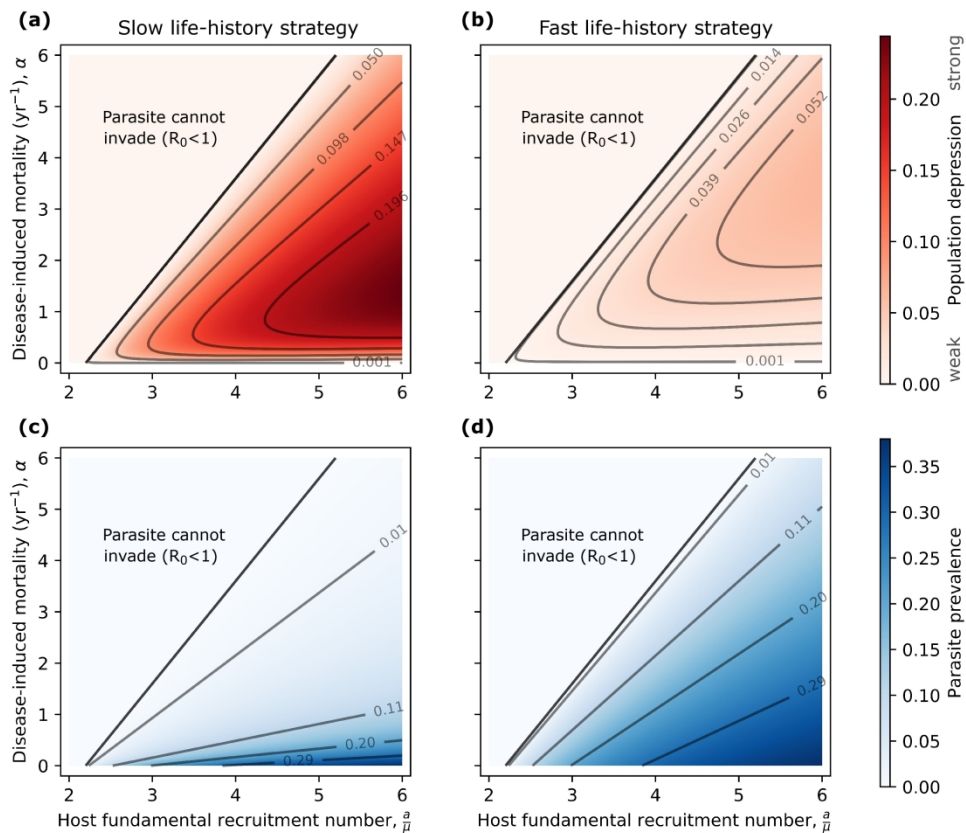


Figure 3

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