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# Impact of group size and social composition on group vocal activity and acoustic network in a social songbird

M.S.A. Fernandez <sup>1,2</sup>, C. Vignal <sup>1</sup>, H.A. Soula<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Univ Lyon, UJM-Saint-Etienne, CNRS, Neuro-PSI/ENES UMR9197, France

<sup>2</sup> EPI BEAGLE INRIA, Villeurbanne, France

<sup>3</sup> INSERM U1060 INSA, Villeurbanne, France

Correspondence:

M.S.A. Fernandez

marieferndez@gmail.com

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## 1 **Abstract**

2

3 In social species individuals living in the same group may synchronize activities such as  
4 movements, foraging or anti-predator vigilance. Synchronization of activities can also be observed  
5 between partners especially during breeding and can be crucial for breeding success.

6 Vocalizations are behaviours that can be coordinated between individuals, but simultaneous  
7 vocalizations in groups have most of the time been considered as a noise that does not bear any  
8 information.

9 Indeed little is known about the structure and function of vocal communications involving a network  
10 of individuals. How the individual vocal activity participates in the resulting communal sound, and  
11 in return how the group influences individual vocal activity, are questions that remain to be studied.

12 Zebra finches are social monogamous songbirds that form lifelong pair-bonds. In the wild, zebra  
13 finches are typically found in small groups, with the pair as the primary social unit, and gather in  
14 'social' trees where both females and males produce vocalizations. Here we investigated in the  
15 laboratory the influence of group size and composition on general vocal activity and synchrony, as  
16 well as the influence of pair-bond and spatial location on finer characteristics of  
17 dyads vocal interactions. We used a set-up that locked the birds at fixed spatial positions of our  
18 choosing to control the proximity network and allowed us an individual tagging of most of the  
19 vocalizations. We used an in-house software suite that automatically detects vocalizations from  
20 hours of passive recording.

21 We show that zebra finches groups synchronize their general vocal activity with waves of collective  
22 vocalizations, which depend both on the group size and composition. The acoustic network is  
23 shaped by pair-bonds at different time scales. Birds preferentially vocalize closely in time  
24 (synchrony) or directly after (turn-taking) their partner when it is present and then the nearest  
25 neighbour when the partner is not available.

## 26 **Introduction**

27 In social species, many activities are synchronized between individuals living in the same group.  
28 Group members maintain group cohesion during movements and foraging (Agetsuma, 1995;  
29 Beauchamp, 1992; Blanc & Thériez, 1998; Blanc, Thériez, & Brelurut, 1999; Boyd & Bandi, 2002;  
30 Chivers, 1974; Conradt, 1998; Côte, Schaefer, & Messier, 1997; Daan & Slopsema, 1978;  
31 Gillingham & Klein, 1992; Linnane, Brereton, & Giller, 2001; McMahon & Evans, 1992;  
32 Rasmussen, 1985; Rook & Huckle, 1995; Ruckstuhl, 1998, 1999; Ruckstuhl & Neuhaus, 2001;  
33 Saino, Fasola, & Waiyaki, 1995; Schenkeveld & Ydenberg, 1985; Tayler, 1953; Tremblay &  
34 Chérel, 1999; Wilson, Wilson, & McQuaid, 1986). Individuals may also coordinate activities such  
35 as anti-predator vigilance and feeding (Gerkema & Verhulst, 1990; Kavanagh, 1978; Rook &  
36 Penning, 1991). Activities can also be synchronized between partners of a pair. Pairs in many  
37 long-term monogamous species show an increase in their breeding success over time, and this  
38 could be attributed to a better coordination of partners (Black & Hulme, 1996; Forslund & Pärt,  
39 1995). Partners can also coordinate foraging activities, and can synchronize their nest visits to  
40 feed the chicks (Bebbington & Hatchwell, 2015; Lee, Kim, & Hatchwell, 2010; Mariette & Griffith,  
41 2012, 2015; van Rooij & Griffith, 2013). When both partners incubate, their hatching success can  
42 increase by synchronizing foraging trips (Coulson, 1966; Davis, 1988) or coordinating incubation  
43 bouts (Spoon, Millam, & Owings, 2006).

44

45 Vocalizations are behaviours that can be coordinated between individuals. Territorial songbirds  
46 vocally compete by answering each other, sometimes matching their song-types and using song-  
47 overlap as a signal of escalation (Langemann, Tavares, Peake, & McGregor, 2000). Some  
48 monogamous birds use coordinated vocal duets for territory defense, mate guarding, pair-bond  
49 maintenance (Farabaugh, 1982; Hall, 2004) or parental care (Boucaud, Mariette, Villain, & Vignal,  
50 2015; Elie et al., 2010). Some group vocal productions have also been identified as organized  
51 signals bearing messages, like the communal vocalizations of some social mammals that  
52 communicate on spacing (Bornean gibbons, *Hylobates muelleri*, (Mitani, 1984); wolves, *Canis*

53 *lupus*, (Harrington & Mech, 1979); (Frommolt, 1999)) or group size (female lions, *Leo leo*,  
54 (McComb, Packer, & Pusey, 1994). But most of the time, group vocal productions have been  
55 considered as by-products of individuals' simultaneous but not necessarily coordinated  
56 vocalizations. For example, this noisy sound can result from the activity of up to thousands of  
57 individuals in choruses of birds (Burt & Vehrencamp, 2005), insects (Greenfield, 1994), frogs (M.  
58 E. Bates, Cropp, Gonchar, & Knowles, 2010; Jones, Jones, & Ratman, 2009; Marshall, 2003;  
59 Simmons, Bates, & Knowles, 2009), as well as in fish communities (D'spain & Berger, 2004;  
60 Locascio, 2004; Locascio & Mann, 2005; Mann, 2003), colonies of nesting birds (Adret-  
61 Hausberger, 1982; Mathevon, 1997) or breeding marine mammals (Schusterman, 1978; Southall,  
62 Schusterman, & Kastak, 2003). This sound resulting from a group of individuals vocalizing  
63 simultaneously has mainly been viewed as a source of noise pollution constraining the pairwise  
64 communications (Aubin & Jouventin, 1998; Gerhardt & Klump, 1988). But this group sound with no  
65 clear identifiable message might bear information on the structure of the underlying social  
66 network (McGregor & Horn, 2014).

67

68 Not much is known about the structures and functions of vocal communications involving a  
69 network of individuals. More specifically, little is known about the dynamics of pairs and group  
70 vocal exchanges at an individual-level resolution. How the individual vocal activity participates in  
71 the resulting communal sound, and in return how the group influences individual vocal activity, are  
72 questions that remain to be studied. Yet, we know that the group, as a communication network, is  
73 composed of several signalers and receivers sharing the same active signaling space, which  
74 implies that it can interfere with pairwise vocal exchanges. Eavesdropping is defined as extracting  
75 information from signaling interactions while not being the main recipient, and seems to occur in  
76 many species (McGregor & Dabelsteen, 1996). In birds for example, it has been shown that  
77 eavesdroppers can respond to vocal exchanges even if they were not part of it initially (Mennill,  
78 Ratcliffe, & Boag, 2002). Audience effects show that the presence of other conspecifics can

79 influence a sender's behavior (Doutrelant, McGregor, & Oliveira, 2001; Evans & Marler, 1994;  
80 Hector, Seyfarth, & Raleigh, 1989; Matos & McGregor, 2002; Plath, Blum, Schlupp, & Tiedemann,  
81 2008). The communication behaviour of male zebra finches can be modified by the individuals that  
82 are listening, and by the nature of the social relationships between them (Vignal, Mathevon, &  
83 Mottin, 2004).

84 The zebra finch (*Taeniopygia guttata*) is a social species native to Australia and is monogamous.  
85 This songbird forms lifelong pair-bonds (Zann, 1996), and partners are inseparable even outside of  
86 the breeding season. In the wild, zebra finches are usually found in small groups, and the pair is  
87 the primary social unit (McGowan, Mariette, & Griffith, 2015). This species extensively uses  
88 acoustic communication during social interactions: groups gather in 'social' trees near watering  
89 points or feeding areas (Zann, 1996) in which they produce a background sound composed of  
90 calls and songs. Some studies have started to focus on vocal dynamics in this species (Elie,  
91 Soula, Mathevon, & Vignal, 2011; Fernandez, Mariette, Vignal, & Soula, 2016; Gill, Goymann, Ter  
92 Maat, & Gahr, 2015; Perez, Fernandez, Griffith, Vignal, & Soula, 2015; Villain, Fernandez,  
93 Bouchut, Soula, & Vignal, 2016). Because of the amount of accumulated knowledge on both  
94 behavioral and neurobiological aspects of its acoustic communication, the zebra finch is an  
95 interesting model to study communal vocalization and its relation to the social structure of the  
96 group.

97

98 Here we hypothesized that the organization of group vocal activity might reveal some aspects of  
99 group structure, such as group size and composition. Using the zebra finch as a study species, we  
100 investigated the impact of group size and composition on proxies of the group vocal activity and  
101 synchrony. We also tested the influence of pair-bonds and spatial location on finer characteristics  
102 of dyads vocal interactions. One common difficulty encountered when studying an acoustic  
103 network is to determine the identity of the caller and thus to obtain an individual tagging of  
104 vocalizations. Also, when we want to assess the acoustic network it might be relevant to control

105 the spatial proximity between individuals. To overcome both of these issues we used a set-up that  
106 first locked the birds in a fixed spatial network of our choosing and allowed us an individual tagging  
107 of all vocalizations. We used an in-house software suite that automatically detects vocalizations  
108 from hours of passive recording. Our setup also allows for an automatic removal of non-  
109 vocalizations (wings or cage noise) using classification.

110 We built groups of identical sex-ratio but that varied in group sizes and social structures  
111 (percentage of paired / unpaired birds). We recorded these groups' vocal activity during several  
112 hours on several days, and analyzed the vocal sequences resulting from these recordings.

## 113 **Materials and Methods**

114

### 115 *Subjects and Housing Conditions*

116 We used 88 adult zebra finches (*Taeniopygia guttata*) in this study: 44 males and 44 females. All  
117 birds came from our breeding colony. Before the experiment, unpaired males and unpaired  
118 females were housed with individuals of the same sex, and female-male pairs were housed  
119 separately in cages (all cages dimensions: 40 X 40 X 40 cm) equipped with perches and a pool for  
120 environmental enrichment. All birds were kept under the same environmental conditions:  
121 temperature between 24 and 26 °C, light conditions of 14:10 h light-dark, water, seeds and  
122 cuttlefish bones ad libitum and supplemented with salad once a week. As zebra finches are  
123 opportunistic breeders, all conditions were reunited for them to breed (water restriction is needed  
124 to be in non-breeding condition (Prior, Heimovics, & Soma, 2013). However they did not have  
125 access to nest material so they were not breeding at the time of the recording.

126

### 127 *Recording Protocol*

128

129 The experiment took place from March to May 2014 and from January to February 2015. The day  
130 before the experiment, each bird was moved from the rearing room to the experimental room  
131 (sound attenuating chamber, 2.22 m height x 1.76 m width x 2.28 m length, Silence Box model B,  
132 Tip Top Wood, France) and was placed in a cage (40 X 40 X 25). Microphones (Audio Technica  
133 AT803), connected to a recorder (zoom R16), were placed on top of each cage, above the head of  
134 the bird and facing downwards, which is the best position to minimize the variability in vocalization  
135 amplitude due to the orientation of the bird's head, and thus maximize vocalization detection  
136 (Brumm & Zollinger, 2011). On each recording day, we recorded vocal exchanges during a long  
137 period (three to six hours between 10 am and 4 pm).



138

### 139 *Group Composition*

140

141 We recorded 35 groups of different sizes (two, four, or eight individuals) and different social  
142 compositions (0%, 50%, or 100% of paired birds). Table 1 gives the number of recorded groups  
143 per group size and composition, as well as the number of repetitions for each group, and the total  
144 number of hours of recording for each combination. We organized the cages so that all birds can  
145 be in visual contact with each member of the group (Figure 1). We defined the distance between  
146 two birds as one if the two birds' cages were neighbour, two if the two birds' cages were separated  
147 by one cage, etc. Pair mates were always put in neighbouring cages to reduce stress. In 4-bird  
148 groups, two males were always located in diagonal and two females in diagonal. In 8-bird groups,  
149 the positions of males and females were defined at random.

150

### 151 *Vocalization Extractions*

152 Vocalizations were extracted from recordings using in-house softwares. These programs were  
153 written in python ([www.python.org](http://www.python.org)) by authors H.A.S. and M.S.A.F using open-source libraries.  
154 Briefly, vocalization detection consisted of a pipeline of five stages. The first process was a simple  
155 threshold-based sound detection based on a high-pass filtered energy envelope (1024 samples  
156 FFT; 441 Hz sampling; cut-off frequency: 500Hz). During the second stage, each event above the  
157 threshold was reconstructed in order to maintain an amplitude range of 90% compared to the  
158 maximum amplitude. Thus, each event was either lengthened or shortened to obtain the same  
159 amplitude range during the event. This technique allows a good estimate of a vocal event's  
160 duration. The third stage simply merged overlapping event segments. Together, the three first  
161 stages produced start, end, and duration values for each sound event detected in the recording.  
162 The accuracy of these three first steps was tested in (Elie et al., 2011).

163 The fourth stage removed double vocalizations - vocalizations produced by one bird and recorded  
164 by its microphone but also recorded by the microphones of all other birds of the group - by using  
165 energy and delay differences: to attribute a vocalization to a bird, our program detects  
166 vocalizations for each microphone. Then we apply the following algorithm: for each vocalization A  
167 (start= $s_A$ , end= $e_A$ ) we look if other vocalizations were detected at the same period in other  
168 microphones. If for a vocalization B (start =  $s_B$ ) we have  $s_B > s_A$  but  $s_B < e_A$  (B is starting after A but  
169 is overlapping A) we look if the energy of vocalization B is higher than the energy of A. If this is the  
170 case we keep both vocalizations. If not, we remove B (because B is likely to be A recorded in  
171 another microphone). We do this for all vocalizations by eliminating them and/or associate them  
172 with a track (hence a bird). Thus, when a vocalization was produced without overlap with another  
173 vocalization, our program has a success rate of 100 % (see corresponding tests in supplementary  
174 figure 1, a human listener would make more mistakes because the time delay between two  
175 microphones is very low, i.e. few milliseconds). The main problem occurs when a vocalization B  
176 overlaps a vocalization A ( $s_B < e_A$ ), and when B is weaker on its microphone B than A is on the  
177 microphone A. In that case our program considers that B is the same vocalization as A, and thus  
178 the vocalization B is lost. We have quantified this type of error. The overlapping vocalizations  
179 represent around 11% of the total number of vocalizations. We have a 46% error rate on  
180 overlapping vocalizations, i.e. the software makes a mistake when attributing the overlapping  
181 vocalizations in 46% of the cases (percentages computed over 1200 vocalizations over eight  
182 randomly chosen groups). Thus the errors due to overlapping vocalizations increases the final  
183 error rate by 5%.

184 This step effectively tagged uniquely each sound event to an individual. The fifth and last stage  
185 removed cage or wings noises using a machine learning process. We trained a supervised  
186 classifier using a data set composed of 4500 random extracted sounds from all of our data. Each  
187 sound was classified by one expert (M.S.A.F.) as “vocalization” or “non- vocalization”. The  
188 classification was performed on the spectrogram of the sounds reduced to 50ms: the idea was to

189 reduce the quantity of information in term of time and frequency, and sample this information in  
190 such a way that we got the same amount of information for each vocalization (short or long). The  
191 spectrogram matrix was first reduced to the frequencies of interest – between 500Hz and 6kHz.  
192 Then two cases appeared: if the vocalization duration was longer than 50 ms, we extracted 50 ms  
193 in the middle of the sound event. If duration was lower than 50 ms, we padded with zero to obtain  
194 a 50ms sound event with the relevant event in the middle. The spectrogram was then flattened to  
195 obtain a one dimensional vector. We trained a Random Forest classifier (Breiman, 2001) using  
196 1500 sounds as a training set. The validation set was composed of the remaining 3000 sounds.  
197 This classifier had an overall rate of error below 10%.

198

199 Our vocalization extraction yielded over 1,730k vocalizations (840k for females and 890k for  
200 males) over a total of 441 hours of recording. Supplementary Figures 2(a) and 2(b) show the  
201 histograms of vocalization durations for all extracted vocalizations for each sex. These distributions  
202 are composed of two modes that likely represent the two main types of vocalizations produced by  
203 zebra finches in this context (Zann, 1996): distance calls i.e. the longer and louder calls given by  
204 zebra finches, consisting of a harmonic series modulated in frequency as well as amplitude, and  
205 tet or stack calls i.e. softer and shorter calls than distance calls, around 50ms (Zann, 1996). Song  
206 syllables are also represented in this histogram because they could not be removed from the  
207 dataset (see above). We estimated several parameters of the distribution using a sum of two  
208 Gaussians:

$$P(d) = a N(\mu_1, \sigma_1^2) + (1 - a) N(\mu_2, \sigma_2^2)$$

209 where  $N(\mu, \sigma^2)$  is the normal Gaussian distribution with mean  $\mu$  and variance  $\sigma^2$ . The fit was made  
210 on the duration histogram (time step=10ms on 0-1s interval) with the least square method.

211 Note that individual song syllables (for males) are not discriminated in one category and can be of  
212 any duration. Female and male short calls (tet or stack) have similar duration (first mode at 52 ms).

213 Consistent with the literature, distance calls are shorter in males (120 ms) compared to females  
214 (149 ms) (Supplementary Table 1).

215 Because we were interested only in the dynamic of the vocal exchanges, we decided to pool all  
216 vocalizations types together in the following analyses.

217

## 218 *Data Analysis*

219

220 We separated the analysis into four parts described below: general vocal activity and  
221 vocalization rate autocorrelation (analysis of long-term vocal dynamics), and the dyads cross-  
222 correlation and turn-taking transitions analysis (analysis of short-term vocal dynamics).

223

### 224 *General vocal activity*

225 We computed the main vocal activity metrics namely the number of vocalizations per time unit for  
226 each individual. We also defined a burst as a period where the total vocal activity (for all individuals  
227 in the group) was 10% higher than the average vocal activity (taken on the whole recording day).

228 To find the bursts we split the time into six minutes bins with an overlap of one minute. Thus, a  
229 burst could not last less than 5min. We then analyzed the number of bursts per hour and the total  
230 vocalizations rate in bursts only.

231

### 232 *Vocalization rate autocorrelation*

233 The vocalization rate autocorrelation gives information about the presence of cycles in the group  
234 general vocal activity. For example, it could tell if the variation of vocalization rate presents  
235 patterns over time, i.e. waves of collective vocalizations.

236 We split the time into 180s bins (3min) with an overlap of 90s (1min30) and counted the total  
237 number of vocalizations in each bin. We then computed the autocorrelation  $AC(T)$  of this signal  
238 with the following formula:

$$239 \quad ac(T) = \text{mean}[(S(t) - \text{mean}(S))(S(t+T) - \text{mean}(S))],$$

240 with the normalization step we have:  $AC(T) = ac(T)/ac(0)$ .  $t$  is the time bin number,  $S(t)$  is the total  
241 number of vocalizations in the bin  $t$ , and  $T$  is the time lag value, between 0 and 80 min.

242 A peak at time  $T$  in the autocorrelation curve means that the vocalization rate activity presents a  
243 cycle of duration  $T$ .

244

#### 245 *Cross-correlation*

246 We assessed the vocal temporal synchrony between two birds by computing the cross-correlation  
247 at  $T=500$  ms. To do that we split the time into 500 ms bins, and each bird signal was one if the bird  
248 vocalized within this period, and zero if not. We computed the cross-correlation ( $CC(T)$ ) of the two  
249 birds' signals with the following formula:

$$250 \quad cc = \text{mean}[(S_{\text{bird1}}(t) - \text{mean}(S_{\text{bird1}}))(S_{\text{bird2}}(t) - \text{mean}(S_{\text{bird2}}))],$$

251 with the normalization step we have:  $CC(T) = cc(t) / (SD(S_{\text{bird1}}) * SD(S_{\text{bird2}}))$

252 Where  $S_{\text{bird1}}$  and  $S_{\text{bird2}}$  the two birds vocal signals as functions of  $t$  (time).

253 For each day of recording we computed cross-correlations for all possible dyads of birds. Two  
254 birds having a high cross-correlation value were two birds that were regularly vocalizing closely in  
255 time together (within 500ms).

256 We compared cross-correlation between paired/unpaired and neighbour/non-neighbour birds.

257

258 *Turn-taking transitions probability*

259 In this analysis, we kept only the sequence of callers' identity (without temporal aspect), i.e. the  
260 turn-taking. Vocal sequences were obtained with the caller's identity in their order of vocalizing  
261 (e.g. ABCA was a sequence of four vocalizations, produced successively by the bird A, then bird  
262 B, bird C and finally bird A). We compared the mean transition probabilities for each dyad of birds:  
263 between bird A and bird B, the mean transition probability is  $(\text{prob}(A \rightarrow B) + \text{prob}(B \rightarrow A)) / 2$ . We  
264 compared this measure between paired/unpaired and neighbour/non-neighbour birds.

265

266

267 *Statistics*

268 All statistical tests were performed using R software (R Core Team, 2014). Linear mixed models  
269 were built with the lmer function ('lme4' R package (D. Bates, Maechler, Bolker, & Walker, 2014))  
270 and generalized mixed models were built with the glmer function ('lme4' R package). Models  
271 outputs from Anova ('car' library) and summary functions are presented.

272

273 *Model validation*

274 Before being interpreted each model was checked, paying particular attention to their residuals.  
275 For models with Poisson family, overdispersion was tested, and if the model presented  
276 overdispersion we used a negative binomial model. The model validity was also checked with the  
277 plotresid function from the 'RVAideMemoire' package before interpreting the model results. When  
278 possible, the variance of the data explained by the models was quantified and a conditional  
279 coefficient of determination was calculated with 'r.squaredGLMM' function ('MuMIn' R package).

280

281 *Model selection*

282 We chose to build biologically relevant models and we kept the full model as recommended by  
283 Forstmeier & Schielzeth (2011).

#### 284 *Model estimates and confidence intervals*

285 When possible we added information about the quantification of the biological effect given by the  
286 models. Confidence intervals were computed with the "confint.merMod" function of the lme4  
287 package, with the Wald method.

288

#### 289 *Vocal activity*

290 - Number of vocalizations

291 We chose to use the number of vocalizations (NVoc) as the response variable (seen as a count)  
292 and we added the recording duration (RecordingDuration) as an offset because all recordings did  
293 not last the same time. It was not possible to test the interaction between the group size  
294 (GroupSize) and the percentage of pairs in the group (PercentPair) because by definition we did  
295 not have a complete crossover design. The other interactions were tested because they were  
296 biologically relevant (BirdSex \* GroupSize and BirdSex \* PercentPair). As a bird could be recorded  
297 in several groups, we added the random factor GroupID/BirdID (group identity / bird identity),  
298 which took into account the group and the bird in the group. We also had repetitions of recording  
299 for each group so we added the repetition number (RepetitionNb) as a random factor:

300 NVoc ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* (GroupSize + PercentPair),  
301 random=GroupID/BirdID, RepetitionNb

302

303 We used a negative binomial model as the model using a Poisson distribution presented over-  
304 dispersion. The interaction between BirdSex and GroupSize was significant, so we separated the  
305 dataset into three subsets (for the three group sizes).

306

- 307 - Number of bursts: We counted the number of bursts and tested the influence of the group  
308 size and percentage of pairs on this metric. We built a generalized Poisson model with the  
309 recording duration as offset. As for the previous model, it was not possible to test the  
310 interaction between the percentage of pairs and the group size because we did not have a  
311 complete crossover design. The random factors were the group identity and the repetition  
312 number.

313  $\text{NumberOfBurst} \sim \text{offset}(\log(\text{RecordingDuration})) + \text{GroupSize} + \text{PercentPair}, \text{random}=\text{GroupID},$   
314  $\text{RepetitionNb}$

- 315
- 316 - Vocalization rate in bursts: We measured the overall vocalization rate in the bursts (for each  
317 burst, the vocalization rate was the total number of vocalizations produced by all individuals  
318 divided by the duration of this burst). We tested the influence of the group size and  
319 percentage of pair. We built a mixed linear model, and as for the previous model, it was not  
320 possible to test the interaction between the percentage of pairs and the group. The random  
321 factors were the group identity and the repetition number.

322

323  $\text{VocRateBurst} \sim \text{GroupSize} + \text{PercentPair}, \text{random}=\text{GroupID}, \text{RepetitionNb}$

324

325 *Vocalizations rate autocorrelation*

326 We looked at the difference in the time lag of vocalization rate autocorrelation between different  
327 group compositions (0%, 50%, 100% of pairs). We detected the secondary maximum peak of each  
328 curve from each recording session (the first peak is at 0). For that we used the function  
329 'find\_peaks\_cwt' from the 'signal' python library. We built the following model for each group size:

330  $\text{AutocorrelationTimeLag} \sim \text{PercentPair} \text{ random}=\text{GroupID}, \text{RepetitionNb}.$

331

332 *Cross-correlation*



333 We first build the following general model:

334  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{GroupSize} + \text{PercentPair} + \text{Paired}$ , random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2.

335 Explanatory variables had different number of levels depending on group size: the distance  
336 between two birds was always 1 for the 2-bird groups, it was either 1 or 2 for the 4-bird groups,  
337 and it could be 1, 2, 3, or 4 for the 8-bird groups. Also, the percentage of pairs could only be tested  
338 in the 4-bird and 8-bird groups. We thus decided to split the dataset into three sets (one for each  
339 group size).

340 We built the following mixed linear models. The variable Paired was "yes" if the bird was paired  
341 with another bird in the group, and "no" otherwise. The random factors were the group identity, the  
342 repetition number, and the two birds' identities.

343

344 Group size=2:  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{Paired}$ , random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2.

345

346 Group size=4: We could not test the interaction between the Paired and Distance variables,  
347 because pairs were always at a distance of 1. It was also not possible to test the interaction  
348 between Paired and PercentPair because in groups with 100% of pairs, all birds were paired, and  
349 the opposite in groups of 0% pairs.

350  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{PercentPair} + \text{Paired} + \text{Distance} + \text{PercentPair:Distance}$ ,

351 random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2.

352

353 Group size=8: The model structure was the same as for the 4-bird groups model above.

354  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{PercentPair} + \text{Paired} + \text{Distance} + \text{PercentPair:Distance}$ ,

355 random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2.

356

357 We build a second model that included only the data from distance = 1:

358  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{PercentPair} * \text{Paired} + \text{SameSexDyad} + \text{SameSexDyad:Paired}$ ,

359 random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

360 The variable SameSexDyad is 'yes' if the corresponding dyad is two females or two males, and 'no'  
361 if the corresponding dyad is one male and one female.

362

363

364 For the 8-bird groups, the interaction between PercentPair and Distance was significant. We  
365 focused on groups with 50% and 100% of pairs in order to test the interaction between PercentPair  
366 and Paired:

367  $\text{CrossCorr} \sim \text{PercentPair} * \text{Paired} + \text{Distance} + \text{PercentPair}:\text{Distance},$

368 random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

369

370

371 *Turn-taking transitions probability*

372 We compared the mean transition probabilities between paired/unpaired and neighbours/non-  
373 neighbours dyads of birds. As all pairs were set up as neighbours, we had only three possibilities  
374 for each dyad of birds in a group with these parameters: UnPaired and NonNeighbour, UnPaired  
375 and Neighbour, Paired and Neighbour. As the intrinsic random probability of jumping from a caller  $i$   
376 to a caller  $j$  depended on the group size ( $1/4$  for 4-bird groups and  $1/8$  for 8-bird groups), we  
377 studied separately the different group sizes. We had not enough data to compute this metrics on  
378 the 2-bird groups. We used the following model for 4-bird and 8-bird groups:

379  $\text{MeanTransitionProba} \sim \text{PercentPair} + \text{PairedNeighb}, \text{random}=\text{GroupID}, \text{RepetitionNb}, \text{Bird1}, \text{Bird2}$

380 with PairedNeighb a variable with the three possible levels: UnPaired and NonNeighbour,  
381 UnPaired and Neighbour, Paired and Neighbour.

382

383

384 **Results**

385 ***Effect of Group Size and Composition on Long-Term Vocal Dynamics***

386

387 *Individual vocalization rate and burst vocalization rate increase with group size*

388 The group size had an effect on the individual vocalization rate: each bird vocalized more when in  
389 a larger group. The individual vocalization rate in 8-bird groups was 1.57 times [1.09;2.27] higher  
390 than the individual vocalization rate in 2-bird groups. The individual vocalization rate in 4-bird  
391 groups was intermediate between the 2-bird and 8-bird groups, but the differences between the 8-  
392 bird vs 4-bird and 4-bird vs 2-bird groups were not significant (Figure 2a, Table 2).

393 The number of bursts was higher in large groups than in small groups. The number of bursts was  
394 1.27 times [1.03;1.55] higher in 4-bird groups than in 2-bird groups, and 1.47 times [1.22;1.80]  
395 higher in 8-bird groups than in 2-bird groups (Figure 2b, Table 3). The overall vocalization rate in  
396 bursts was also higher when the group size increased (Figure 2c, Table 3).

397

398 *Individual vocalization rate decreases when the percentage of pairs increases in the*  
399 *group.*

400 In 8-bird groups, we found that the percentage of pairs had an effect on the individual vocalization  
401 rate: the individual vocalization rate was lower in groups composed of 100% of pairs than in  
402 groups composed of unpaired birds only. In 8-bird groups, the individual vocalization rate was 1.35  
403 times [1.01;1.82] lower in 100% pairs groups than in 0% pairs groups (Figure 3a, Table 2).

404

405 *Waves of collective vocalizations have shorter cycles in groups only including*  
406 *unpaired birds*

407 A peak at time T on the autocorrelation curve means that the vocalization rate activity presents a  
408 cycle of duration T. Groups' compositions (0%, 50%, 100% of pairs) were compared at different  
409 time lag T (Figure 3b for 8-bird groups, Table 4).

410 In 8-bird groups, the vocalization rate autocorrelation in 0% pairs groups presented a peak at  
411 around 36min +/- 13min (mean +/- sd). In 50% pairs groups, the peak was around 46 min +/- 14  
412 min, and in 100% pairs groups the peak was around 61min +/- 15min. The time lag tended to be  
413 significant between 0% and 100% pairs groups (Figure 3b, Table 4), suggesting that 0% pairs  
414 groups had shorter cycles of collective vocalizations than 50% and 100% pairs groups.

415

416 In 4-bird groups, the vocalization rate autocorrelation in 0% pairs groups presented a peak at  
417 around 47min +/- 15min (mean +/- sd). In 50% pairs groups, the peak was around 58 min +/- 13  
418 min, and in 100% pairs groups the peak was around 60min +/- 11min. We found no significant  
419 difference between groups (Figure 3b, Table 4).

420

### 421 ***Effect of Pair-Bonds and spatial proximity on Short-Term Vocal Dynamics***

422

423 *Vocal synchrony is higher within pairs and decreases with the distance between*  
424 *individuals*

425 We compared cross-correlation between paired/unpaired and neighbour/non-neighbour birds. Two  
426 birds showed a high cross-correlation value if they usually vocalized (or stayed silent) closely in  
427 time (within 500ms) (i.e "vocal synchrony"). The full model showed no effect of group size or  
428 percentage of pairs on dyads' cross-correlation (Table 5). We then split the dataset by group size  
429 (see Methods). First, in 2-bird groups, paired and unpaired birds did not differ in cross-correlation  
430 (Table 5, Figure 4a). In 4-bird groups, the cross-correlation of a dyad was significantly higher if the

431 birds were paired, and decreased with the distance (Figure 4b, Table 5). There was no effect of  
432 the percentage of pairs in 4-bird groups. Finally, in 8-bird groups, the cross-correlation also  
433 decreased with the distance (Figure 4c). At distance = 1, the cross-correlation between two paired  
434 birds was higher than between two unpaired birds (unpaired female/male dyads or same sex  
435 unpaired dyads, Supplementary Figure 3, Table 5). The cross-correlation between two paired birds  
436 was lower in groups composed of 50% of pairs than in groups composed of 100% of pairs (Table  
437 5, Figure 4d). The detailed results on the cross-correlation for each group of 8 birds with 100% of  
438 pairs are presented in Supplementary Figure 4.

439

440 *Turn-taking transitions probability is higher within pairs, and is higher between*  
441 *neighbours.*

442 We compared the mean transition probabilities between two birds when paired/unpaired and  
443 neighbour/non-neighbour. Two birds showed a high mean transition probability if they usually  
444 vocalized one after the other. Figure 5 shows the distributions of mean transition probabilities  
445 between two birds (paired/unpaired and neighbour/non-neighbour). For both group sizes (4 birds  
446 and 8 birds), the mean transition probabilities were higher for UnPaired – Neighbour birds than for  
447 UnPaired – NonNeighbour, and even higher for Paired – Neighbour birds. In other words, two  
448 paired birds were more likely to vocalize one after the other than two unpaired birds. Within the  
449 unpaired birds, two neighbour birds were more likely to vocalize one after the other than two non-  
450 neighbour birds. The statistical results are presented in Table 6.

## 451 **Discussion**

452

453 In this article, we showed that the organization of group vocal activity reveals some aspects of  
454 group structure (such as group size and composition) and group acoustic network. On a long-term  
455 scale (several minutes to an hour), zebra finches groups synchronize their general vocal activity  
456 with waves of collective vocalizations that increase with group size and whose cycles' duration  
457 increases with the percentage of pairs in the group. We also showed that the group influences  
458 individual vocal activity, with individual vocalization rates increasing with group size and  
459 decreasing with the percentage of pairs in the group. On a short-term scale (a few seconds),  
460 acoustic interactions are shaped by pair-bonds and distance, as birds preferentially vocalize at the  
461 same time (synchrony) or directly after (turn-taking) their partner when it is present, and the  
462 nearest neighbour when the partner is not available.

463

464 Our setup allowed automatically detecting and extracting vocalizations from hours of passive  
465 recording depicting a 'basal' social situation. Our system is able to extract a lot of individual  
466 vocalizations (a bit less than 2M for all experiments combined) with individual tagging. We  
467 retrieved a bimodal distribution of duration (well predicted by a sum of two Gaussian) that may  
468 relate to the two main types of calls uttered in that context: tets/stacks and distance calls (as well  
469 as song syllables).

470

471 First, on a long-term scale (several minutes to an hour), we saw that large groups have a higher  
472 burst rate, and a higher vocal activity within these bursts. This bursting activity can be compared to  
473 other waves of collective behaviour (G. Fernandez, Capurro, & Reboreda, 2003; Pays et al.,  
474 2007). For example, in Defassa waterbuck, (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa*), waves of collective  
475 vigilance against predators emerge from group members synchronizing scanning and non-  
476 scanning bouts and are triggered by allelomimetic effects, i.e. each individual copying its

477 neighbour's behaviour (Pays et al., 2007). Focusing on a short-term scale (a few seconds), we  
478 saw that neighbouring birds are more likely to vocalize together within a short time window and  
479 one after the other. Some individuals could initiate bursts and then neighbours would vocalize as  
480 well, triggering waves by an allelomimetic effect. With this hypothesis, the higher bursting activity  
481 observed in large groups would be the consequence of the observed increase of the individual  
482 vocalization rate. This could be due to a driving effect, because in larger groups there are more  
483 individuals to interact with. In killer whales (*Orcinus orca*), an increase of the production of some  
484 vocalization types has been described during socializing and beach-rubbing activities, also  
485 corresponding to periods when the group size increases (Ford, 1989). In savanna elephants  
486 (*Loxodonta africana*), it has been shown that the group vocal activity increases when the group  
487 size increases (Payne, Thompson, & Kramer, 2003).

488 One alternative hypothesis to the allelomimetic effect would be that group members exchange  
489 information during group vocal interactions. In black-capped chickadees (*Poecile atricapillus*),  
490 dawn choruses can be seen as an interactive communication network. In a recent study, males'  
491 dawn chorus singing behaviour was examined by determining the level of song frequency  
492 matching between neighbours: male black-capped chickadees were observed having a high level  
493 of matching with their neighbours and they also match other individuals simultaneously and  
494 sequentially (Foote, Fitzsimmons, Mennill, & Ratcliffe, 2010).

495 If allelomimetic effects structure group vocal activity, the bursting activity of the group would  
496 correlate with the mean individual vocalization rate in the group. To test this prediction, recordings  
497 on more groups are needed. On the other hand, if group vocal activity is an information exchange,  
498 the group would display strategies to maintain communication efficacy in response to noise. To  
499 test this prediction, recordings of groups subjected to background noise playbacks and measures  
500 of the response of the group vocal dynamics are needed.

501 As highlighted above, in our study two birds at short distance are more likely to vocalize together

502 (or stay silent together) within a short time window, but this is even more likely if they are paired. In  
503 4-bird groups, neighbour birds were always one male and one female, thus we cannot conclude if  
504 the difference of cross-correlation observed is due to the distance or to the intersexual nature of  
505 the dyad. Also, we chose to put pairs in neighbour cages to avoid the stress of separation. This is  
506 why we could not test whether pairs would show the same behaviour when at longer distance.  
507 However the results show that unpaired birds being located at short distance are less likely to  
508 vocalize together within a short time window than paired birds at this same distance. In many  
509 taxonomic groups, a likely candidate for directing signals to a specific individual is relative signal  
510 timing, that is, close temporal association (McGregor, Otter, & Peake, 2000; Naguib, 1999). In  
511 African elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), it has been shown that females are more likely to produce  
512 rumbles shortly after rumbles from other group members. Also, an affiliative relationship with a  
513 caller has a strong influence on the probability of a rumble response, whereas the relative  
514 dominance rank and reproductive state has no effect (Soltis, Leong, & Savage, 2005). Another  
515 study showed that in Squirrel Monkeys (*Saimiri Sciureus*), mutually preferred partners exchange  
516 chucks more often and with shorter latencies of response than other individuals (Biben, Symmes,  
517 & Masataka, 1986). This result is also consistent with recent studies on zebra finches groups: Ter  
518 Maat et al. (2014) show that paired males and females recorded in groups communicate using  
519 bilateral stack calling, Gill et al. (2015) show that zebra finches calls occur non-randomly in vocal  
520 interactions. Also, Stowell et al. (2016) developed a model that reflects fine details of zebra finches  
521 vocal interactions networks, and that especially models the timing and influence strengths between  
522 individuals in a group. They showed that within-pair vocal interactions were dominant in the group  
523 calling network.

524 The analysis of the transition probabilities between callers also shows that two birds at short  
525 distance were more likely to vocalize one after the other. This result on the preferred turn-taking is  
526 even stronger if birds are paired. Studies on mammal and bird species with different levels of  
527 social coordination show that the social structure of the species relate to different dynamics in their



528 vocal interactions. A recent study shows that in the European starling, the direct and general social  
529 context, as well as the individual history, and the internal state of the caller can influence the  
530 dynamics of vocalizations in time and structure (Henry, Craig, Lemasson, & Hausberger, 2015). In  
531 our study, we set up the cages in a way that each bird was able to see the whole group, but it was  
532 perhaps less easy for a bird to get the visual signals from a bird located far away. If neighbour  
533 birds could exchange more visual signals, they might be more likely to answer each other's  
534 vocalizations. In human conversation, changes in gazing is one of the signs used to guide  
535 conversational turn-taking (Gérard, 1987; Hauser, 1992).

536

537 The vocalization rate was lower for the 8-bird groups containing only paired birds than for 8-bird  
538 groups containing only unpaired birds. This is consistent with a previous study (Elie et al., 2011)  
539 that described zebra finch groups' communal vocalizations (without identification of the callers).  
540 Birds involved in a pair-bond could answer preferentially to their partner and less to other members  
541 of the group. On the contrary, unpaired birds would have no initial preference and would interact  
542 with more birds in the group ("driving effect" suggested above).

543 Additionally, the autocorrelation analysis showed that the vocal cycling pattern differed with group  
544 composition. Groups of eight unpaired birds have shorter cycles that peak around 36min, with a  
545 more consistently cycling activity. This is consistent with the previous study from Elie et al. (2011)  
546 showing that groups of zebra finches comprising less pairs had shorter vocal cycles.

547

548 In larger groups, pairs were more likely to be vocally synchronized in groups containing only pairs  
549 than in groups also containing unpaired birds. This could be explained by the fact that, in groups  
550 containing unpaired birds, more birds are available for interaction, whereas in groups containing  
551 only pairs, each bird may be busy interacting with its own partner as suggested above (Biben et  
552 al., 1986; Soltis et al., 2005).

553 This last result is not observed in intermediate group sizes. One reason could be that 4-bird groups  
554 with 50% of pairs are actually composed of one unique pair, one unpaired male and one unpaired  
555 female. The number of unpaired birds potentially available is thus smaller than in 8-bird groups of  
556 50% of pairs (composed by two pairs, two unpaired females and two unpaired males).

557 For this same metric, groups of two birds showed no difference between paired or unpaired birds.  
558 In these dyads, birds had only one other individual to interact with. Because zebra finches are  
559 gregarious birds that use vocal interactions to find and keep social contact (Perez, Fernandez,  
560 Griffith, Vignal, & Soula, 2015; Zann, 1996), they might interact with whoever is available when  
561 placed in dyads.

562 In this study we decided to keep all vocalizations types together because among all vocalizations  
563 types that zebra finches can produce, in the conditions of our experiment (non-breeding birds and  
564 cages at short distances) only three of them were produced: tets, distance calls and songs with a  
565 clear bimodal distribution of durations. Separating vocalizations according to duration did not  
566 change our results. However it would probably be interesting to study the vocal dynamics by  
567 separating the different vocalization types, because the dynamic of vocal exchange could change  
568 according to call type, as suggested by (Gill et al., 2015).

569 Also, constraining the birds in one location can be seen as a limitation. Using this protocol we are  
570 able to study the acoustic network by constraining the position (in addition to be able to tag  
571 individual vocalization more easily). Of course, these position constraints will affect calling  
572 dynamics and cannot describe neither situations like group gathering in a social tree, nor  
573 interaction contexts like agonistic or physical affiliative behaviours, foraging, etc. So, constraining  
574 the spatial position of individuals may have direct and indirect effects on vocal dynamics (Elie et  
575 al., 2011). A recent study used devices mounted on the birds to assign vocalizations in bird groups  
576 (Gill et al., 2015). This method allows for the study of free-ranging networks of birds in different  
577 contexts (agonistic and affiliative behaviours, foraging, and different breeding conditions), and has

578 the advantage of investigating the calling behaviour of birds behaving freely in a social group.  
579 However, it does not give the spatial position of each bird, which can also have an impact on the  
580 vocal dynamics. New technologies need to be explored to be able to control for these different  
581 aspects at the same time.

582 Here we show that zebra finches groups synchronize their general vocal activity with waves of  
583 collective vocalizations, which depend on group size and group composition. Furthermore, at a  
584 finer level we show that the group vocal activity is structured by the presence of pairs in the group.  
585 Thus we demonstrate that from the acoustic network measured at the individual level we can  
586 extract information about the social network.

587

588

589 **Figures legends**

590

591 **Figure 1: Schematic of the protocol.**

592 Groups of 2, 4, and 8 birds were built, with one bird per cage and one microphone on the top of  
593 each cage. Pair mates were put in neighbour cages to reduce stress (distance=1).

594

595 **Figure 2: Impact of group size on long-term vocal dynamics** (a) Effect of group size on

596 individual vocalization rates. (b) Effect of group size on burst rate (number of bursts per hour). (c)

597 Effect of group size on vocalization rate in bursts. Boxes are median, first and third quartiles (Q1

598 and Q3 respectively). The upper whisker is located at the \*smaller\* of the maximum x value

599 and  $Q3 + 1.5$  Inter Quartile Range (IQR), whereas the lower whisker is located at the \*larger\* of

600 the smallest x value and  $Q1 - 1.5$  IQR. Individual points more extreme in value than  $Q3 + 1.5$  IQR

601 are plotted separately at the high end, and those below  $Q1 - 1.5$  IQR are plotted separately on the

602 low end. \*:  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*:  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*:  $P < 0.0001$

603

604 **Figure 3: Impact of the percentage of pairs on the long-term vocal dynamics**

605 (a) Effect of group composition (0%, 50%, and 100% of pairs in the group) on individual

606 vocalization rates in 8-bird groups. (b) Autocorrelation of the number of vocalizations (time

607 step=3min, overlap=1.5min). Boxes are median, first and third quartiles (Q1 and Q3 respectively).

608 The upper whisker is located at the \*smaller\* of the maximum x value and  $Q3 + 1.5$  Inter Quartile

609 Range (IQR), whereas the lower whisker is located at the \*larger\* of the smallest x value and  $Q1 -$

610  $1.5$  IQR. Individual points more extreme in value than  $Q3 + 1.5$  IQR are plotted separately at the

611 high end, and those below  $Q1 - 1.5$  IQR are plotted separately on the low end.. \*:  $P < 0.05$

612

613 **Figure 4: Vocal cross-correlation between two birds**

614 (a) Effect of pair-bonds on cross-correlation in 2-bird groups, (b) Effect of pair-bonds and distance  
615 (1, 2) on cross-correlation in 4-bird groups, (c) Effect of pair-bonds and distance (1, 2, 3, 4) on  
616 cross-correlation in 8-bird groups, (d) Effect of pair-bonds and group composition (% of pairs) on  
617 cross-correlation in 8-bird groups. Boxes are median, first and third quartiles (Q1 and Q3  
618 respectively). The upper whisker is located at the \*smaller\* of the maximum x value and  $Q3 + 1.5$   
619 Inter Quartile Range (IQR), whereas the lower whisker is located at the \*larger\* of the smallest x  
620 value and  $Q1 - 1.5$  IQR. Individual points more extreme in value than  $Q3 + 1.5$  IQR are  
621 plotted separately at the high end, and those below  $Q1 - 1.5$  IQR are plotted separately on the  
622 low end. \*:  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*:  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*:  $P < 0.0001$ .

623

#### 624 **Figure 5: Vocal transition probabilities between two birds**

625 Distribution of the average vocal transition probability in (a) 4-bird groups, (b) 8-bird groups. \*:   
626  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*:  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*:  $P < 0.0001$ .

627

628 **Supplementary Figure 1: Detection and attribution of calls to individuals.** We tested the  
629 detection and attribution of vocalizations to individuals in the three possible positions of a bird in the  
630 room (i.e. one angle and two edges, the remaining cages being symmetrical). We put one bird in a  
631 cage and recorded it, and repeated the recording in the three possible positions. We had a success  
632 rate of 100% over 240 calls produced (containing tets/stacks and distance calls). The figure  
633 provides the sonograms (in green/yellow) and oscillograms (in red) from the 8 microphones for two  
634 examples of vocalizations.

635

636 **Supplementary Figure 2: Histograms of all female and male vocalizations' durations of this**  
637 **study.** (a) Female vocalizations' durations, (b) Male vocalizations' duration. Tets/stacks and  
638 distance calls were detected (resp. first and second peaks) for each sex. Songs were also  
639 automatically detected but split so each syllable was considered as a vocalization.

640

641 **Supplementary Figure 3: Vocal cross-correlation between two birds at distance 1 in 8-bird**  
642 **groups.**

643 Effect of sex and pair-bond on cross-correlation at distance 1 in 8-bird groups. Boxes are median,  
644 first and third quartiles (Q1 and Q3 respectively). The upper whisker is located at the \*smaller\* of  
645 the maximum x value and  $Q3 + 1.5 \text{ Inter Quartile Range (IQR)}$ , whereas the lower whisker is  
646 located at the \*larger\* of the smallest x value and  $Q1 - 1.5 \text{ IQR}$ . Individual points more extreme in  
647 value than  $Q3 + 1.5 \text{ IQR}$  are plotted separately at the high end, and those below  $Q1 - 1.5 \text{ IQR}$  are  
648 plotted separately on the low end. NS: non-significant, \*\*\*:  $P < 0.0001$ .

649

650 **Supplementary Figure 4: Acoustic networks for each group in 8-bird groups with 100% of**  
651 **pairs.** Nodes are individuals ( $P_i$  states for individual in pair i). Edges thickness is an affine function  
652 of the average vocal cross-correlation on the four recording days for each dyad.

653

654

655 **Tables legends**

656 **Table 1:** Number of groups for each social composition

657 For each group size and composition, we give the number of groups recorded (i.e. groups with  
658 different birds, X= impossible group social composition). In brackets is the number of recording  
659 days for each group. The third element is the total number of hours recorded for each combination.

660

661 **Table 2:** Statistical results of the impact of group composition on individual vocal activity.

662 The full model is presented. Then each group size is analyzed separately and each model is  
663 provided. NVocN stands for the number of vocalizations in groups of N birds.

664  $R^2$  value, which represents the conditional coefficient of determination of the model, is indicated  
665 for each model ('r.squaredGLMM' function of 'MuMIn' R package). The table presents the results

666 from the summary of the model.

667

668 **Table 3:** Statistical results of the impact of group composition on bursts activity

669  $R^2$  value, which represents the conditional coefficient of determination of the model, is indicated  
670 for each model ('r.squaredGLMM' function of 'MuMIn' R package). The table presents the results  
671 from the summary of the model.

672

673 **Table 4:** Statistical results of the impact of group composition on the autocorrelation of the number  
674 of vocalizations over time

675  $R^2$  value, which represents the conditional coefficient of determination of the model, is indicated  
676 for each model ('r.squaredGLMM' function of 'MuMIn' R package). The table presents the results  
677 from the summary of the model.

678

679 **Table 5:** Statistical results of the impact of group composition on vocal cross-correlation

680 The full model is presented. Then each group size is analyzed separately and each model is  
681 provided. CrossCorrN stands for the cross-correlation values in groups of N birds.

682  $R^2$  value, which represents the conditional coefficient of determination of the model, is indicated  
683 for each model ('r.squaredGLMM' function of 'MuMIn' R package). The table presents the results  
684 from the summary of the model.

685

686 **Table 6:** Statistical results of the impact of group composition on vocal mean transitions  
687 probabilities.

688 Groups with four and eight birds are analyzed separately, and each model is provided.

689 MeanTransitionProbaN stands for the mean transition probability values in groups of N birds.

690  $R^2$  value, which represents the conditional coefficient of determination of the model, is indicated  
691 for each model ('r.squaredGLMM' function of 'MuMIn' R package). The table presents the results

692 from the summary of the model.

693

694

695 **Supplementary Table 1:** Results on the estimation of vocalization duration parameters.

696 We used a sum of two Gaussians and the fit was made on the duration histogram (time

697 step=10ms on 0-1s interval) with the least square method.

698



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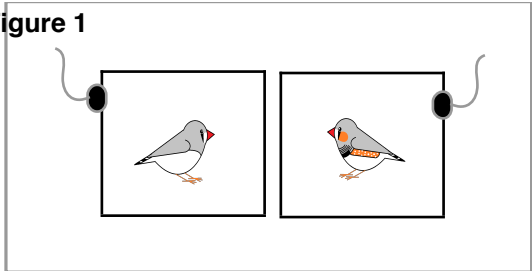


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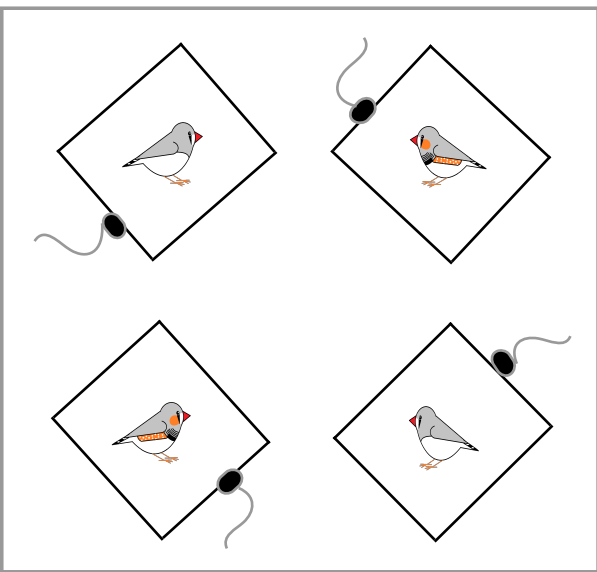
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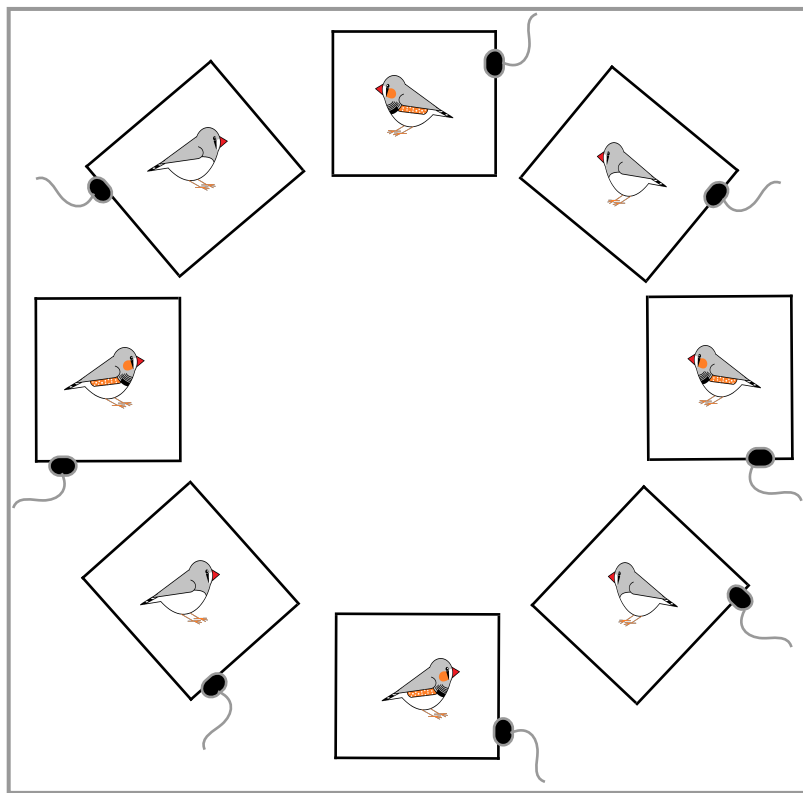
Figure 1



Group size = 2



Group size = 4



Group size = 8

Figure 2

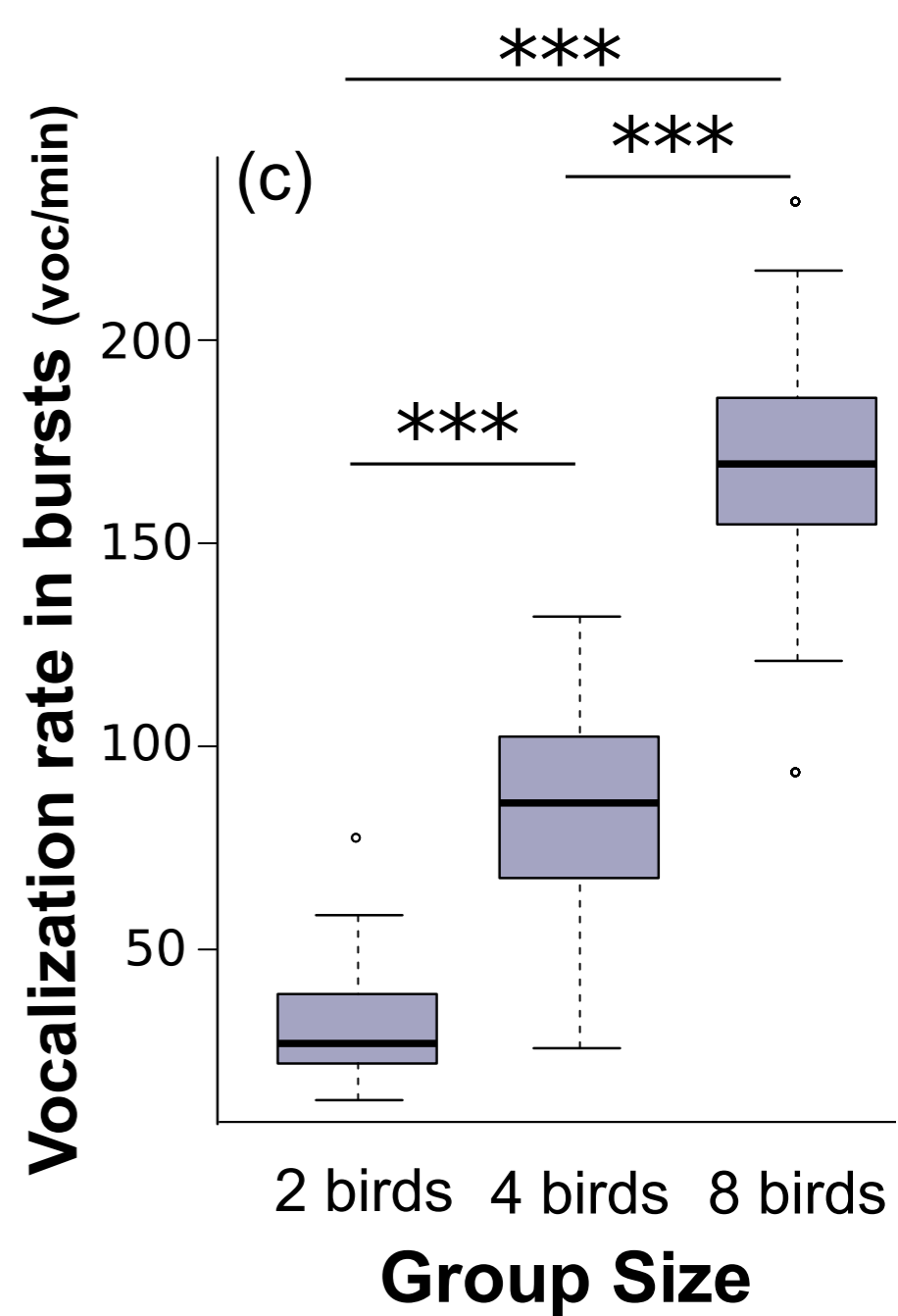
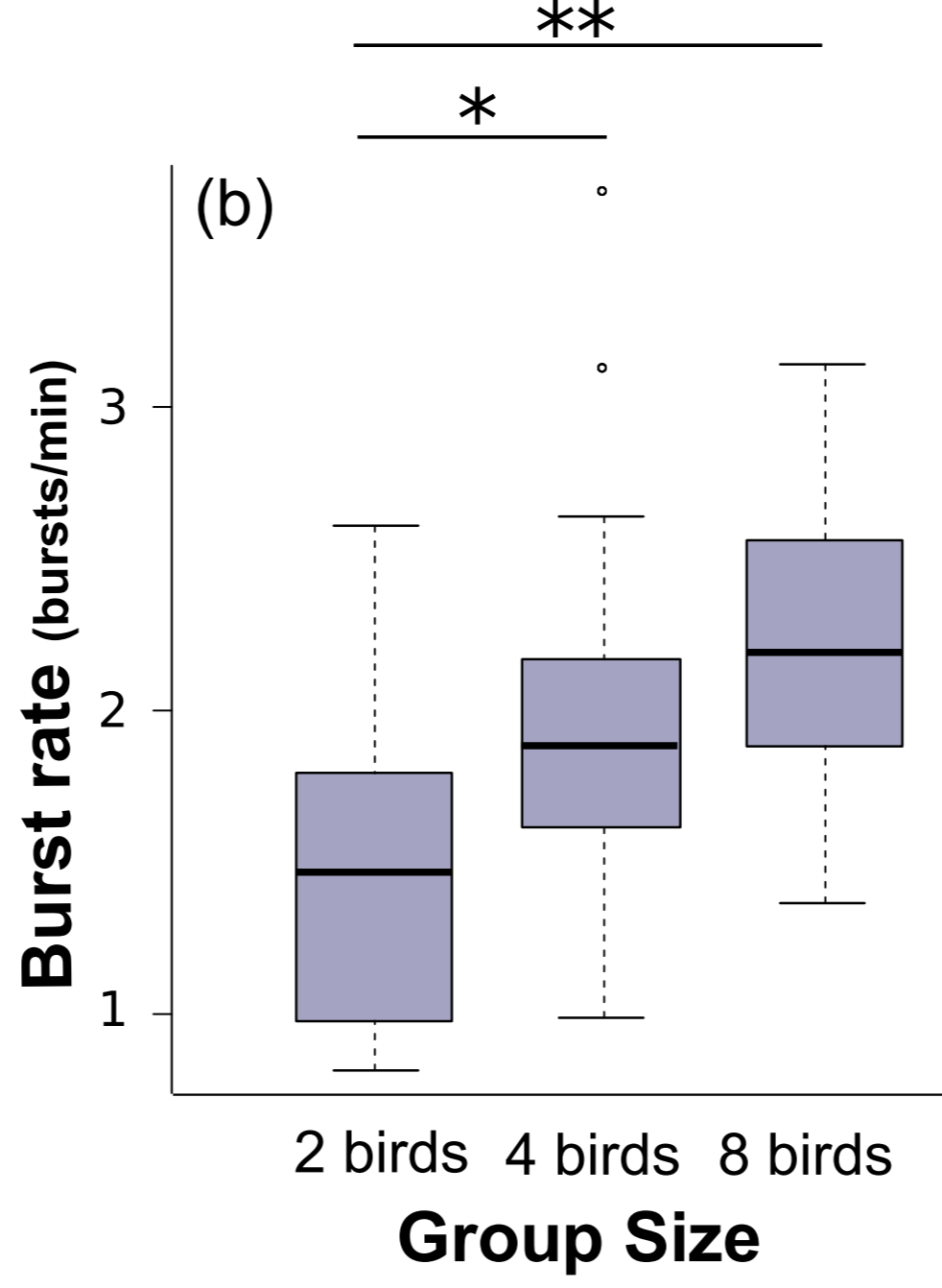
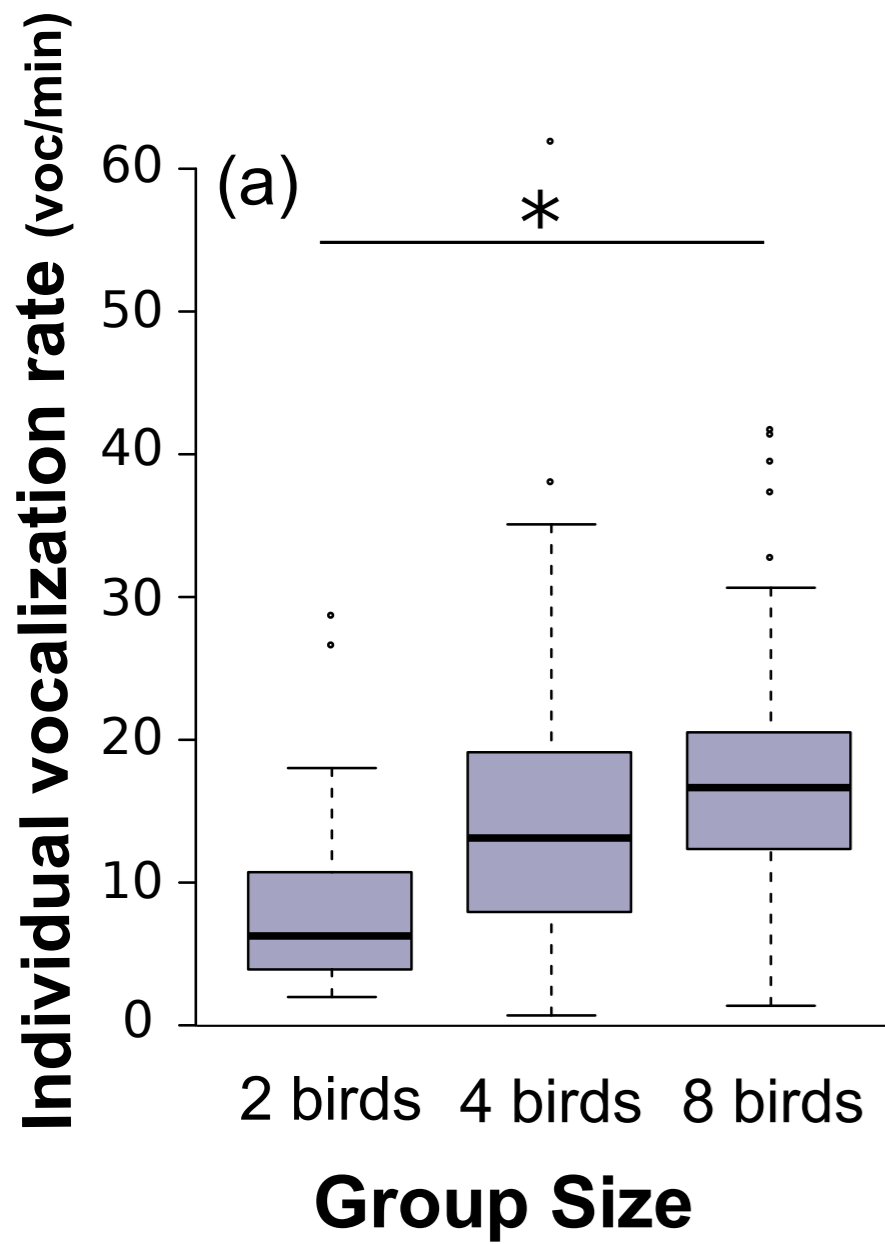
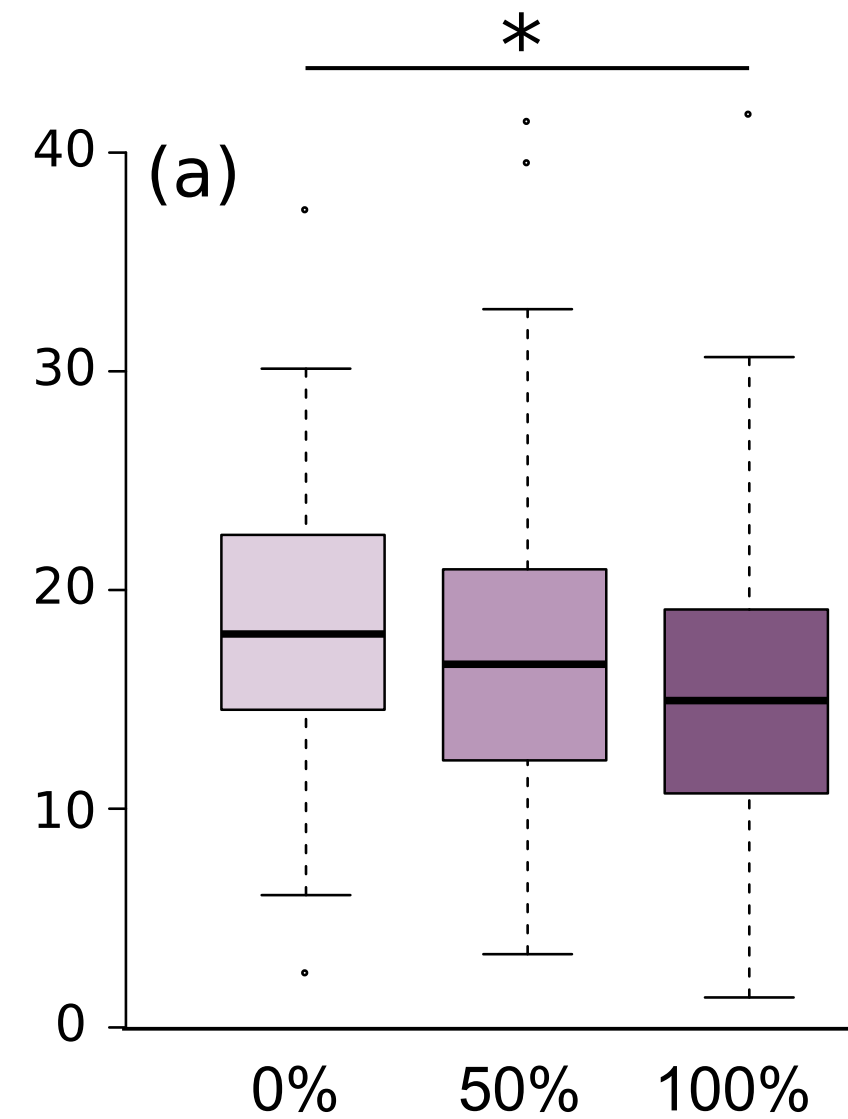


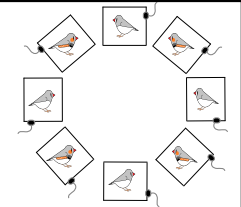
Figure 3

Individual vocalization rate (voc/min)



0% pairs  
50% pairs  
100% pairs

8 birds



Autocorrelation  
(number of vocalizations, dt=180sec)

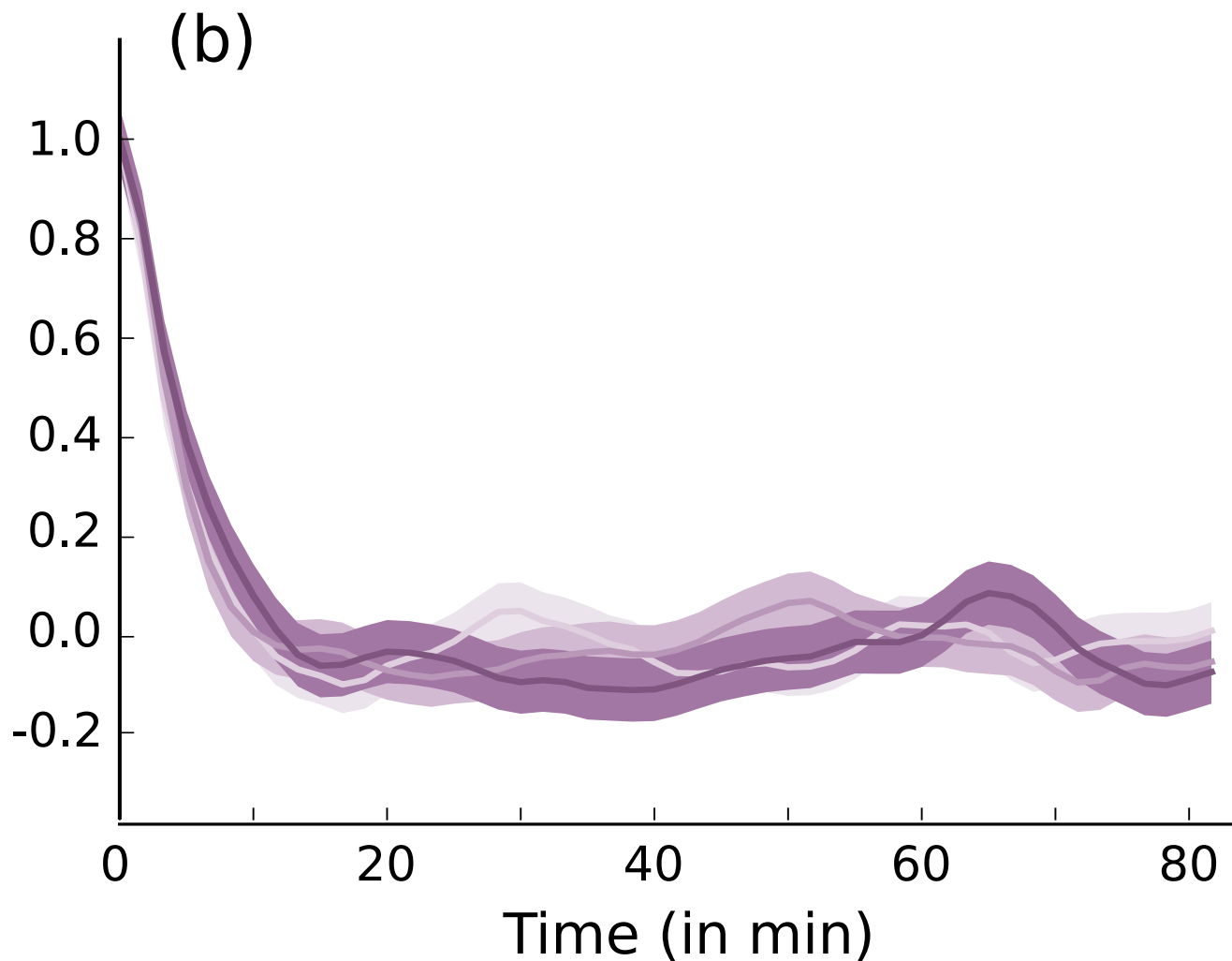


Figure 4

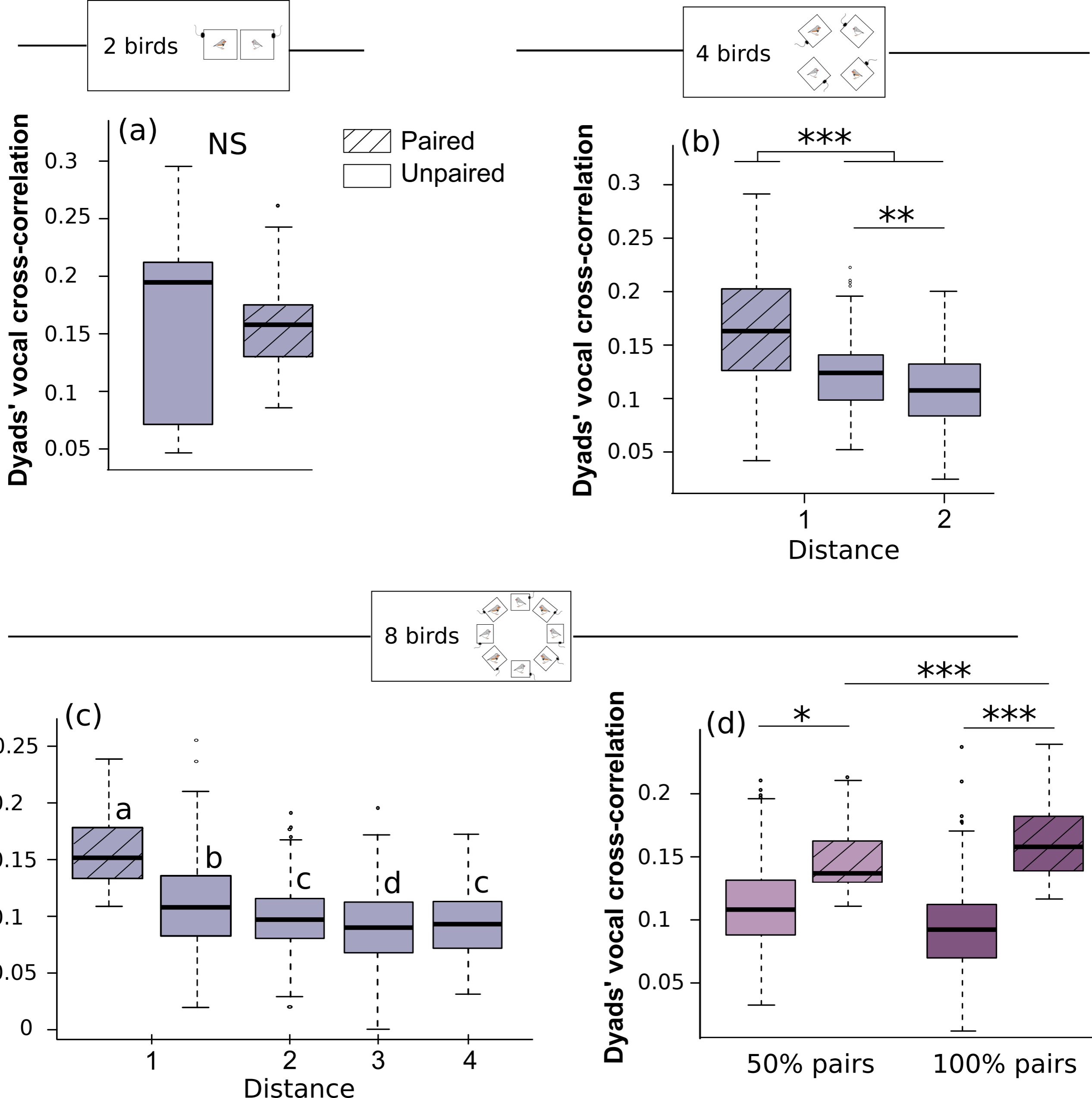
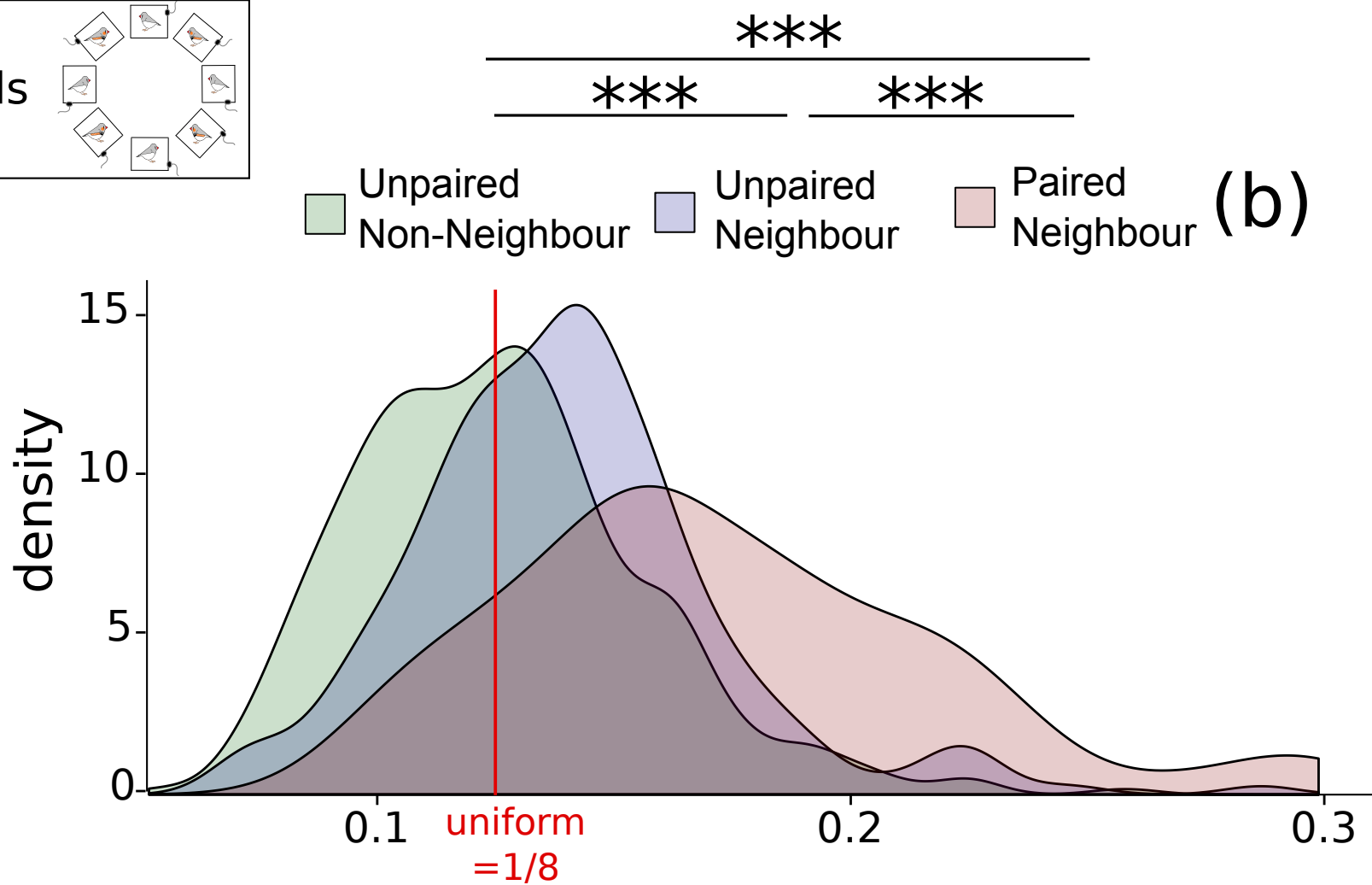
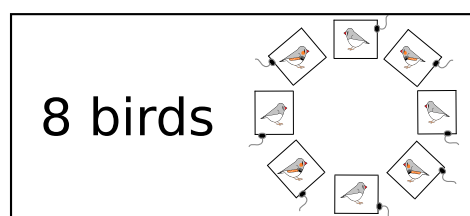
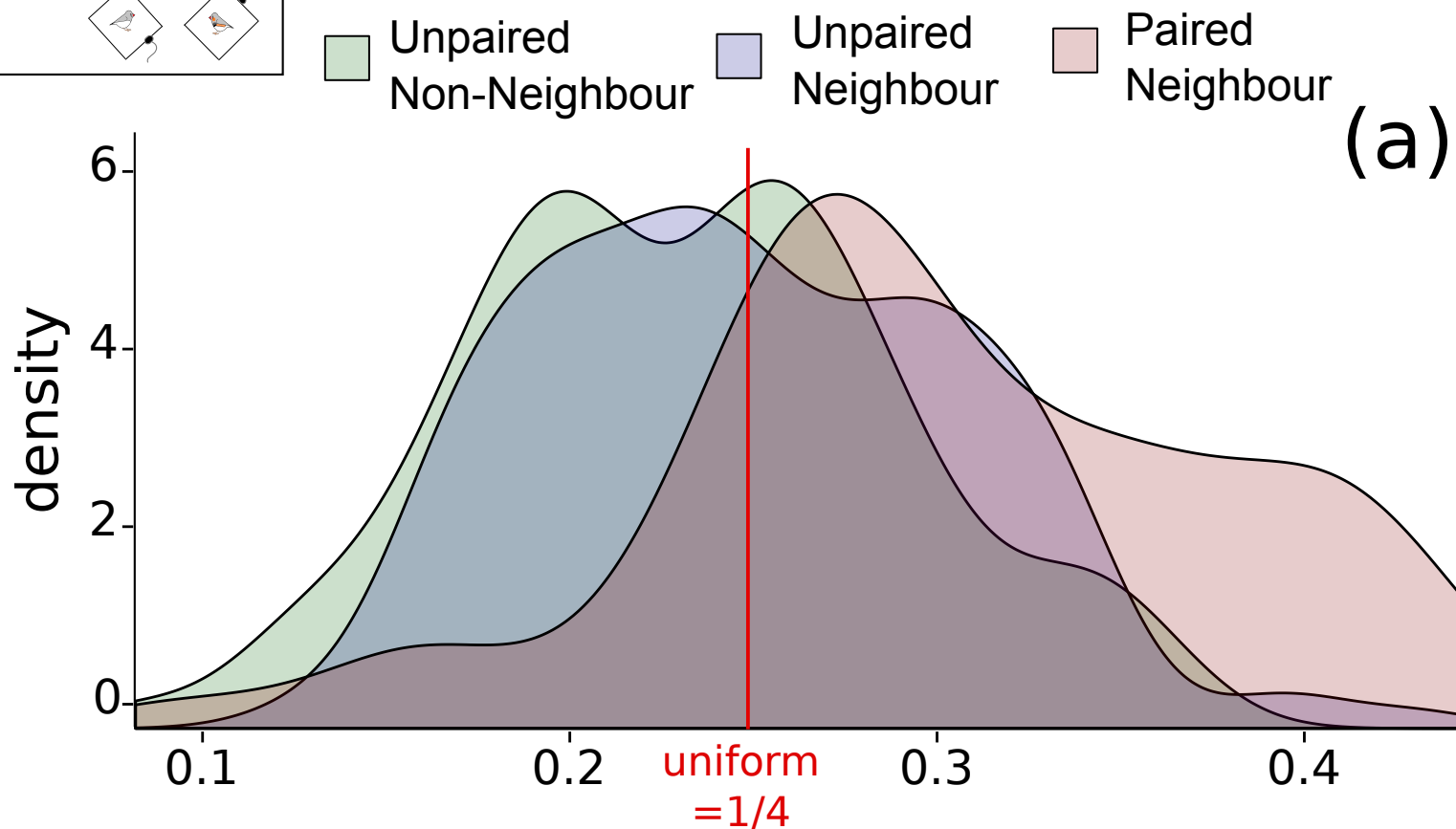
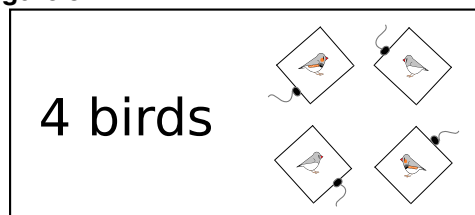


Figure 5



Average of transition probabilities between 2 birds

**Ethical Note**

Experiments were performed under the authorization no. 42-218-0901-38 SV 09 (ENES Laboratory, Direction Départementale des Services Vétérinaires de la Loire) and were in agreement with French and European legislation regarding experiments on animals.



**Table 1**

group size	0% paired	50% paired	100% paired
2	6 (1) -36h	X	4 (2) + 7(1) - 89h
4	3 (4) - 46h	3 (4) - 42h	3 (4) - 86h
8	3 (4) - 45h	3 (4) - 36h	3 (4) - 46h

**NVoc ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* ( GroupSize + PercentPair ), random=GroupID/BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.10291	0.3208
BirdID : GroupID	0.06534	0.2556
RepetitionNB	0.0263	0.1622
Residual	0.9343	0.9666

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.3475	0.1887	12.436	<0.0001
BirdSexM	-0.2145	0.1671	-1.284	0.1991
GroupSize4	0.1904	0.1741	1.094	0.2742
GroupSize8	0.4565	0.1856	2.46	0.0139
PercentPair50	-0.0538	0.2071	-0.26	0.7951
PercentPair100	-0.2098	0.1556	-1.349	0.1774
BirdSexM : GroupSize4	0.4405	0.1715	2.568	0.0102
BirdSexM : GroupSize8	0.2524	0.1656	1.524	0.1275
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	-0.0016	0.1460	-0.011	0.991
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.0810	0.1243	0.652	0.5145

*Pairwise comparisons (Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	zvalue	pvalue
GroupSize4 - GroupSize2	0.1904	0.1741	1.094	0.517
GroupSize8 - GroupSize2	0.4565	0.1856	2.46	0.0368
GroupSize8 - GroupSize4	0.2662	0.1604	1.66	0.22

**NVoc2 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair, random=GroupID/BirdID**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID/BirdID	0.05774	0.2403
Residual	1.10656	1.0519

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	1.93702	0.25458	7.609	<0.0001
BirdSexM	-0.06731	0.35642	-0.189	0.85
PercentPair100	0.29708	0.31197	0.952	0.341
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	-0.22783	0.43006	-0.53	0.596

**NVoc4 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair,  
random=GroupID/BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID/BirdID	0.05626	0.2372
GroupID	0.16096	0.4012
RepetitionNB	0.04658	0.2158
Residual	0.92949	0.9641

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.73556	0.29264	9.348	<0.0001
BirdSexM	0.07808	0.17659	0.442	0.658
PercentPair50	-0.30736	0.38237	-0.804	0.421
PercentPair100	-0.41704	0.31717	-1.315	0.189
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	0.29995	0.24969	1.201	0.23
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.22832	0.21404	1.067	0.286

**NVoc8 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair, random  
BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
BirdID	0.06748	0.2598
GroupID	0.01339	0.1157
RepetitionNB	0.01741	0.1319
Residual	0.91694	0.9576

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.8465	0.1334	21.329	<0.0001
BirdSexM	0.0618	0.1281	0.483	0.6293
PercentPair50	-0.0706	0.1624	-0.435	0.6635
PercentPair100	-0.2993	0.1526	-1.961	0.0499
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	-0.1042	0.1823	-0.571	0.5677
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.0981	0.1718	0.571	0.5678



**n=GroupID,**

### NumberOfBursts ~ GroupSize + PercentPair, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.00	0.00
RepetitionNB	0.001042	0.03228

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	zvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-3.6733	0.1169	-31.409	<0.0001
GroupSize4	0.2460	0.1096	2.243	0.0248
GroupSize8	0.3916	0.1232	3.177	0.0014
PercentPair50	0.0215	0.1023	0.21	0.8335
PercentPair100	-0.0437	0.0828	-0.528	0.5971

#### Pairwise comparisons (Tukey adjustment):

Contrast	Estimate	SE	zvalue	pvalue
GroupSize4 - GroupSize2	0.24605	0.10969	2.243	0.06196
GroupSize8 - GroupSize2	0.39161	0.12325	3.177	0.00411
GroupSize8 - GroupSize4	0.14556	0.08293	1.755	0.17993

### VocalizationRateBurst ~ GroupSize + PercentPair, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb

R<sup>2</sup><sub>c</sub> = 0.89

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID (intercept)	230.1	15.17
RepetitionNB (intercept)	171.3	13.09
Residual	326.6	18.07

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	50.083	9.111	10.37	5.497	2.31 e-04
GroupSize4	41.308	6.538	47.1	6.318	<0.0001
GroupSize8	121.479	7.248	40.89	16.76	<0.0001
PercentPair50	-2.459	8.458	31	-0.291	0.7731
PercentPair100	-6.119	6.189	40.05	-0.989	0.3287

#### Pairwise comparisons (Tukey adjustment):

Contrast	Estimate	SE	zvalue	pvalue
GroupSize4 - GroupSize2	41.308	6.538	6.318	<0.0001
GroupSize8 - GroupSize2	121.479	7.248	16.76	<0.0001
GroupSize8 - GroupSize4	80.171	6.567	12.208	<0.0001

**NbVoc ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* ( GroupSize + PercentPair ), random=GroupID/BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.10291	0.3208
BirdID : GroupID	0.06534	0.2556
RepetitionNB	0.0263	0.1622
Residual	0.9343	0.9666

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.3475	0.1887	12.436	<0.0001
BirdSexM	-0.2145	0.1671	-1.284	0.1991
GroupSize4	0.1904	0.1741	1.094	0.2742
GroupSize8	0.4565	0.1856	2.46	0.0139
PercentPair50	-0.0538	0.2071	-0.26	0.7951
PercentPair100	-0.2098	0.1556	-1.349	0.1774
BirdSexM : GroupSize4	0.4405	0.1715	2.568	0.0102
BirdSexM : GroupSize8	0.2524	0.1656	1.524	0.1275
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	-0.0016	0.1460	-0.011	0.991
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.0810	0.1243	0.652	0.5145

*Pairwise comparisons (Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	zvalue	pvalue
GroupSize4 - GroupSize2	0.1904	0.1741	1.094	0.517
GroupSize8 - GroupSize2	0.4565	0.1856	2.46	0.0368
GroupSize8 - GroupSize4	0.2662	0.1604	1.66	0.22

**NbVoc2 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair, random=GroupID/BirdID**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID/BirdID	0.05774	0.2403
Residual	1.10656	1.0519

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	1.93702	0.25458	7.609	<0.0001
BirdSexM	-0.06731	0.35642	-0.189	0.85
PercentPair100	0.29708	0.31197	0.952	0.341
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	-0.22783	0.43006	-0.53	0.596

**NbVoc4 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair,  
random=GroupID/BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID/BirdID	0.05626	0.2372
GroupID	0.16096	0.4012
RepetitionNB	0.04658	0.2158
Residual	0.92949	0.9641

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.73556	0.29264	9.348	<0.0001
BirdSexM	0.07808	0.17659	0.442	0.658
PercentPair50	-0.30736	0.38237	-0.804	0.421
PercentPair100	-0.41704	0.31717	-1.315	0.189
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	0.29995	0.24969	1.201	0.23
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.22832	0.21404	1.067	0.286

**NbVoc8 ~ offset(log(RecordingDuration)) + BirdSex \* PercentPair,  
random=GroupID, BirdID, RepetitionNb**

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
BirdID	0.06748	0.2598
GroupID	0.01339	0.1157
RepetitionNB	0.01741	0.1319
Residual	0.91694	0.9576

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	2.8465	0.1334	21.329	<0.0001
BirdSexM	0.0618	0.1281	0.483	0.6293
PercentPair50	-0.0706	0.1624	-0.435	0.6635
PercentPair100	-0.2993	0.1526	-1.961	0.0499
BirdSexM : PercentPair50	-0.1042	0.1823	-0.571	0.5677
BirdSexM : PercentPair100	0.0981	0.1718	0.571	0.5678







**8 birds: Autocorrelation ~ PercentPair, random=GroupID**

R2c = 0.25

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	24.97	4.997
Residual	184.78	13.594

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	42.1250	4.8704	5.9960	8.649	1.32.e-03
PercentPair50	0.9739	6.9954	6.3350	0.139	0.8936
PercentPair100	13.1045	6.6521	6.7760	1.970	0.0908

**4 birds: Autocorrelation ~ PercentPair**

R2c = 0.02

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	52.125	3.888	13.408	13.408	<0.0001
PercentPair50	3.500	5.498	0.637	0.637	0.528
PercentPair100	5.250	4.918	1.068	1.068	0.292







Table 5

### CrossCorr ~ GroupSize + PercentPair + Paired, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

R2c = 0.79

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	1.482e-02	0.121738
Bird1ID	3.734e-03	0.061110
Bird2ID	3.124e-03	0.055896
RepetitionNB	5.266e-05	0.007257
Residual	6.564e-03	0.081021

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.3488	0.0511	35.3	-26.389	<0.0001
GroupSize4	0.0201	0.0539	27	0.374	0.708
GroupSize8	-0.0067	0.0596	24.8	-0.114	0.916
PercentPair50	-0.0621	0.0681	19.5	-0.913	0.381
PercentPair100	-0.0841	0.0500	24.4	-1.681	0.111
PairedYes	0.1892	0.0101	1109	18.564	<0.0001

### CrossCorr2 ~ Paired, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

R2c = 0.87

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	1.671e-04	0.0129
Bird1ID	0.0195	0.1398
Bird2ID	0.0113	0.1065
RepetitionNB	0.0000	0.0000
Residual	0.0047	0.0686

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.2680	0.0669	11.963	-18.934	<0.0001
Paired	0.0014	0.0403	1.781	0.035	0.976

**CrossCorr4 ~ PercentPair + Paired + Distance + PercentPair:Distance,  
random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2**

R2c = 0.70

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.0035	0.0593
Bird1ID	0.0051	0.0719
Bird2ID	0.0043	0.0660
RepetitionNB	0.0000	0.0000
Residual	0.0075	0.0871

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.3184	0.0487	10.46	-27.075	<0.0001
PercentPair50	-0.0476	0.0696	10.91	-0.684	0.5081
PercentPair100	-0.0496	0.0589	12.38	-0.842	0.4156
PairedYes	0.1565	0.0244	139.36	6.398	<0.0001
Dist2	-0.0653	0.0240	210.69	-2.715	0.0071
PercentPair50:Dist2	0.0246	0.0341	209.11	0.723	0.4707
PercentPair100:Dist2	0.0512	0.0308	202.26	1.662	0.0980

*Pairwise comparisons Paired \* Dist (Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	df	tratio	pvalue
PairedNo Dist1 - PairedYes Dist1	-0.1565	0.0252	138.15	-6.208	<0.0001
PairedNo Dist1 - PairedNo Dist2	0.0400	0.0132	208.30	3.030	0.0145
PairedYes Dist1 - PairedNo Dist2	0.1965	0.0259	143.43	7.580	<0.0001

**CrossCorr8 ~ PercentPair + Paired + Distance + PercentPair:Distance,  
random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2**

R2c = 0.74

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	1.344e-03	0.0366
Bird1ID	2.633e-03	0.0513
Bird2ID	2.182e-03	0.0467
RepetitionNB	4.229e-05	0.0065
Residual	2.774e-03	0.0526

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.3003	0.0268	7.4	-48.503	<0.0001
PercentPair50	0.0469	0.0378	7.4	1.242	0.2524



PercentPair100	0.0327	0.0358	7.7	0.913	0.3885
PairedYes	0.1042	0.0120	839.1	8.687	<0.0001
Dist2	0.0236	0.0082	930.3	-2.868	0.0042
Dist3	-0.0679	0.0088	961.6	-7.706	<0.0001
Dist4	-0.0359	0.0106	949.8	-3.384	0.0007
PercentPair50:Dist2	-0.0202	0.0121	928.9	-1.671	0.0951
PercentPair100:Dist2	-0.0144	0.0121	922.4	-1.186	0.2360
PercentPair50:Dist3	0.0208	0.0129	960.8	1.602	0.1095
PercentPair100:Dist3	0.0074	0.0131	958.1	0.566	0.5713
PercentPair50:Dist4	-0.0143	0.0155	948.6	-0.927	0.3540
PercentPair100:Dist4	-0.0245	0.0152	942.3	-1.608	0.1081

*Pairwise comparisons Dist (Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	zvalue	pvalue
Dist2-Dist1	-0.0213	0.0077	-2.767	0.0285
Dist3-Dist1	-0.0615	0.0082	-7.453	<0.0001
Dist4-Dist1	-0.0324	0.0099	-3.262	0.0056
Dist3-Dist2	-0.0401	0.0074	-5.374	<0.0001
Dist4-Dist2	-0.0110	0.0092	-1.197	0.6252
Dist4-Dist3	0.0290	0.0089	3.262	0.0059

**CrossCorr8\_Dist1 ~ PercentPair + Paired + SameSexDyad, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2**

R2c = 0.72

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	1.114e-03	0.0333
Bird1ID	2.426e-03	0.0492
Bird2ID	1.933e-03	0.0439
RepetitionNB	3.491e-05	0.0059
Residual	2.744e-03	0.0523

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.2708	0.0246	7.2	-51.575	<0.0001
PercentPair50	0.0339	0.0346	7	0.979	0.360
PercentPair100	0.0090	0.0325	7.1	0.279	0.788
PairedYes	0.1427	0.0097	793.2	14.628	<0.0001
SameSexDyadYes	0.0016	0.0035	882.7	0.477	0.634

*Pairwise comparisons Paired\*SameSexDyad(Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	df	t ratio	pvalue
Unpaired FM - Unpaired FF/MM	-0.0016	0.0035	888.17	-0.477	0.9642
Unpaired FM - Paired FM	-0.1427	0.0098	803.74	-14.529	<0.0001
Unpaired FF/MM - Paired FM	-0.1410	0.0098	804.26	-14.358	<0.0001

F: female, M: male

**CrossCorr8\_50&100%Pairs ~ PercentPair + Paired + Distance +  
PercentPair:Distance, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2**

R2c = 0.75

*Random effects:*

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.0011	0.0335
Bird1ID	0.0015	0.0396
Bird2ID	0.0015	0.0393
RepetitionNB	6.291e-05	0.0079
Residual	0.0020	0.0448

*Fixed effects:*

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.1553	0.0241	5.9	-47.799	<0.0001
PercentPair100	-0.0425	0.0320	5.9	-1.329	0.2328
PairedYes	0.0342	0.017	521.3	2.013	0.0446
Dist2	-0.0470	0.0079	610.9	-5.915	<0.0001
Dist3	-0.0510	0.0085	635.1	-5.941	<0.0001
Dist4	-0.0522	0.0098	623.7	-5.287	<0.0001
PercentPair:PairedYes	0.0850	0.0211	543.5	4.02	<0.0001
PercentPair100:Dist2	0.0260	0.0113	604.6	2.292	0.0223
PercentPair100:Dist3	0.0131	0.0123	632.1	1.068	0.2861
PercentPair100:Dist4	0.0121	0.0138	617.7	0.874	0.3825

*Pairwise comparisons Paired \* Dist (Tukey adjustment):*

Contrast	Estimate	SE	df	tratio	pvalue
Unpaired Dist1 - Paired Dist1	-0.0935	0.0112	840.74	-8.313	<0.0001

Table 6

### MeanTransitionProba4 ~ PercentPair + PairedNeighb, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

R2c = 0.70

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.0002	0.0164
Bird1ID	0.0059	0.0769
Bird2ID	0.0059	0.0769
RepetitionNB	0.0000	0.0000
Residual	0.0062	0.0791

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-1.0009	0.0320	34.9	-31.193	<0.0001
PercentPair50	0.0039	0.0460	34.6	0.085	0.9328
PercentPair100	-0.0116	0.0372	32.9	-0.313	0.7563
UnPairedNeighb	0.0243	0.0079	420.5	3.051	0.0024
PairedNeighb	0.1477	0.0106	429.8	13.914	<0.0001

#### Multiple comparisons PairedNeighb (Tukey adjustment):

Contrast	Estimate	StdError	z-value	pvalue
UnPairedNeighb - UnPairedNonNeighb	0.0243	0.0079	3.051	0.0062
PairedNeighb - UnPairedNonNeighb	0.1477	0.0106	13.914	<0.0001
PairedNeighb - UnPairedNeighb	0.1233	0.0109	11.286	<0.0001

### MeanTransitionProba8 ~ PercentPair + PairedNeighb, random=GroupID, RepetitionNb, Bird1, Bird2

R2c = 0.68

#### Random effects:

Groups Name	Variance	Std.Dev.
GroupID	0.0000	0.0000
Bird1ID	0.0248153	0.15753
Bird2ID	0.0248153	0.15753
RepetitionNB	0.0001199	0.01095
Residual	0.0279268	0.16711

#### Fixed effects:

	Estimate	Std. Error	df	tvalue	pvalue
(Intercept)	-2.154	0.0463	139.6	-46.5	<0.0001
PercentPair50	-0.0260	0.065	138.1	-0.401	0.689
PercentPair100	-0.0631	0.0608	138.7	-1.037	0.301
UnPairedNeighb	0.1013	0.0093	1862	10.85	<0.0001

**Supp Figure1**

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**Supp Figure2**

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**Supp Figure3**

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**Supp Figure4**

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