THE EFFECT OF FEMALE CONDITION ON PARENTAL CARE IN THE EUROPEAN STARLING *(STURNUS VULGARIS)*

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ABSTRACT

Every organism has a limited amount of energy that can be expended towards growth, personal maintenance, and reproduction. Life history theory predicts that an increased allocation of energy in one area results in a reduction of energy available to others. We tested this prediction of life history theory by manipulating the body condition of female European Starlings *(Sturnus vulgaris)* and assessing the effects on parental care and reproductive success during the 2002 breeding season. Female body condition was reduced by clipping wing feathers to increase the energy cost of flight. We found that nest visitation rates by both parents at experimental nests tended to be lower than those at control nests. In addition, young raised at experimental nests fledged at significantly lower masses than those raised at control nests. This suggests that females compensated for their handicapped condition by decreasing reproductive energy expenditure.