



Microbiote intestinal de *Mesonauta festivus* dans un écosystème fluvial contrasté : Influence de l'environnement, du génotype de l'hôte et des infections parasitaires

Mémoire

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Microbiote intestinal de *Mesonauta festivus* dans un écosystème fluvial contrasté : Influence de l'environnement, du génotype de l'hôte et des infections parasitaires.

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Résumé

Plusieurs facteurs modulent le microbiote intestinal des Téléostéens tels que : l'environnement, l'alimentation, l'état de santé et le génotype. Le Cichlidé drapeau (*Mesonauta festinus*) a des populations génétiques bien étudiées et prospère dans des rivières aux caractéristiques physico-chimiques radicalement divergentes, ce qui en fait un bon modèle pour l'étude de la contribution relative de ces facteurs sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote. Dans le premier chapitre, nous avons développé et testé des amorces de blocage d'amplification spécifiques au gène de l'ARNr 18S de *M. festinus*. Nos amorces de blocage ont réduit de 66 % l'abondance relative d'ADN hôte dans les échantillons et ont augmenté la détectabilité de taxons parasites potentiellement dangereux, démontrant le potentiel de la méthode. De plus, nous avons collecté des données sur les habitudes alimentaires de l'espèce et décrit brièvement les communautés Eucaryotes commensales de son microbiote intestinal. Dans le chapitre deux, nous avons collecté 167 *M. festinus* à 12 sites d'étude en Amazonie centrale. Nous avons utilisé une double approche de métabarcodage génétique des gènes de l'ARNr 16S et 18S pour caractériser la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal et inférer l'influence du génotype des hôtes et aux caractéristiques physico-chimiques de l'eau à chaque site. Entre autres, nos résultats soutiennent un impact plus important de l'apparentement phylogénétique entre les poissons que la similarité environnementale entre les sites d'étude sur la structuration du microbiote intestinal pour ce Cichlidé amazonien. De plus, nous avons détecté des infections par *Nyctoterus* sp. et lié la présence de ce parasite à une dysbiose du microbiote intestinal de l'hôte. Nous avons également détecté la présence de vers intestinaux, dont la présence avait un impact mineur sur le microbiote. Notre étude, dans un paysage fluvial hétérogène, améliore la compréhension de la relation complexe entre les poissons, leurs parasites, leur microbiote et l'environnement.

Abstract

A number of key factors can structure the gut microbiota of fish such as: environment, diet, health state and genotype. *Mesonauta festivus*, an Amazonian cichlid, is a good model organism to study the relative contribution of these factors on the community structure of fish gut microbiota. *M. festivus* has well-studied genetic populations and thrives in rivers with drastically divergent physicochemical characteristics. In chapter one, we developed and tested species-specific elongation arrest blocking primers to block the *M. festivus*, 18S rRNA SSU gene. Our elongation arrest blocking primers significantly reduced the amount of host DNA in samples by 66 %. The blocking primers increased the detectability of potentially dangerous parasitic taxa in fish gut, highlighting the potential of the method for parasitic screening. Also, we collected data on the species feeding habits and obtained data on the commensal eukaryotic communities of this species gut microbiota. In chapter two, we collected 167 *M. festivus* from 12 study sites in central Amazonia. We used dual 16S and 18S rRNA metabarcoding approaches to characterize the gut microbiota structure in light of the host fish genotypes (Genotyping-By-Sequencing) and an extensive characterization of environmental physico-chemical parameters. We documented occurrences of ciliates from the genus *Nyctoterus* sp. infecting a fish and linked its presence to a dysbiosis of the gut microbiota of the host. Moreover, we detected the presence of helminths which had a minor impact on the gut microbiota of their host. Also, our results support a higher impact of the phylogenetic relatedness between fish rather than environmental similarity between sites of study on structuring the gut microbiota for this Amazonian cichlid. Our study in a heterogeneous riverscape integrates a wide range of factors known to structure fish gut microbiota. It significantly improves understanding of the complex relationship between fish, their parasites, their microbiota, and the environment.

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Liste des abréviations, sigles, acronymes

Abréviations

ADN : acide désoxyribonucléique

ANA : Anavilhanas

ANOVA : « Analysis of Variance », Analyse de la variance

ARN : Acide ribonucléique

ARNr : Acide ribonucléique ribosomique

BAR : Barcelos

BRA : Rio Branco

CAT : Catalão

CEM : Lago do cemitério

COI : Cytochrome c oxidase subunit 1

Conc. : Concentration

JAC : Lago Janauacá

JAR : Januari

MAN : Manacapuru

NEG : Rio Negro

ID : Identifiant

LEfSe : « Linear discriminant analysis effect size », Analyse discriminante sur la taille de l'effet

PCoA : « Principal Coordinates Analysis », Analyse en coordonnées principales

PERMANOVA : « Permutational analysis of variance », Analyse permutacionnelle de la variance

PIR : Lago Pirates

SOL : Téfé-Solimões

SSU : Small subunit

SuPER : « Suicide Polymerase Endonuclease Restriction », Restriction de l'endonuclease polymérisation suicide

TEF : Lago Tefé

Sigles et acronymes

ASV : « Amplicon Sequence Variant », Variant de séquence d'amplicon

CCSAS : « CRISPR-Cas Selective Amplicon Sequencing », Séquençage sélectif des amplicons CRISPR-Cas

DGGE : Électrophorèse sur gel en gradient dénaturant

DOC : « Dissolved organic carbon », Carbone organique dissous

FAO : « Food and Agriculture Organisation », Organisation des Nations unies pour l'alimentation et l'agriculture

GPS : « Global Positioning System », Système de positionnement global

IBIS : Institut de biologie intégrative et des systèmes

LCA : « lowest common ancestor », Ancêtre commun le plus récent

LDA : « Linear discriminant analysis », Analyse discriminante linéaire

NMDS : « Non-metric multidimensional scaling », Mise à l'échelle multidimensionnelle non métrique

NS = « Not significant », Non significatif

OTU : « Operational taxonomic unit », Unité taxonomique opérationnelle

PCR : « Polymerase Chain Reaction », Réaction de polymérisation en chaîne

TGGE : « Temperature gradient gel electrophoresis », Électrophorèse sur gel à gradient de température

T-RFLP : « Terminal restriction fragment length polymorphism », Polymorphisme de longueur des fragments de restriction terminaux

Quelle chance d'avoir une si belle famille <3

Je l'aurai bien mérité cette poutine!

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J'ai eu une chance inouïe de rencontrer et de m'entourer de toutes ces personnes extraordinaires lors de mon parcours universitaire. Tous ces humains, qui ont joué un rôle central dans la réussite de mes recherches et qui ont eu un impact majeur sur la personne que je suis aujourd'hui. Au-delà du milieu professionnel, beaucoup sont devenus de très bons amis et le resteront définitivement. Sans vous tous, ce mémoire n'aurait pas une p-value inférieure à 0,05 dans mon cœur <3

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Avant-propos

L'objectif central de ce projet était de comprendre l'influence qu'ont certains facteurs biotiques et abiotiques sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de *Mesonanta festinus* dans le bassin hydrologique de l'Amazonie. Pour ce faire, nous avons premièrement développé des amorces de blocage d'amplification PCR spécifiques à la région V4-V5 du gène de l'ARNr 18S de *M. festinus*. Le développement de ces amorces visait à optimiser la détection d'espèces eucaryotes présentes en faible abondance dans les échantillons d'intestin de poisson, ce qui devrait naturellement faciliter leur détection. Deuxièmement, nous avons mis en lien des connaissances passées sur la génétique des populations de l'espèce, des données environnementales et obtenu des données sur son microbiote intestinal Eucaryote et Procaryote afin d'estimer le potentiel modulateur de chacune de ces variables sur le microbiote intestinal.

En ce sens, le premier chapitre de ce mémoire, inclus sous la forme d'un article scientifique, présente les résultats issus du développement, du testage et de l'implémentation d'amorces de blocage d'amplification spécifiques à *M. festinus*. Cet article, soumis le 14 juin 2022, est actuellement en second processus de révision par les pairs au journal *Ecology and Evolution*. Les auteurs de ce manuscrit sont Nicolas Leroux, Sidki Bouslama, François-Étienne Sylvain, Adalberto Luis Val et Nicolas Derome. Étant premier auteur et auteur correspondant de l'article, j'ai participé à toutes les étapes du projet de recherche, c'est-à-dire, au développement des amorces de blocage, au testage des amorces en laboratoire, à la production des analyses bio-informatiques et statistiques, à la rédaction du manuscrit ainsi qu'à la réponse aux commentaires issus de la révision. La version incluse dans ce mémoire est la même que celle soumise au journal puisque ce journal offre une soumission en format libre. Cependant, la police du manuscrit a été modifiée pour *Garamond* taille 12 et la bibliographie a été retirée afin d'être intégrée à la bibliographie présente à la fin du mémoire. L'article est actuellement disponible en préimpression sur *Authorea* (Leroux et al. 2022).

Le second chapitre du mémoire est également inclus sous la forme d'un article scientifique révisé par les pairs. L'article a été soumis au journal *Microbiology Spectrum* le 19 juillet 2022. Les auteurs de ce manuscrit sont Nicolas Leroux, François-Étienne Sylvain, Aleicia Holland, Adalberto Luis Val et Nicolas Derome. Ayant participé à toutes les étapes du projet, je suis également premier auteur et auteur correspondant pour cet article. En ce sens, j'ai participé

partiellement à la collecte des échantillons et le travail en laboratoire, j'ai complété les analyses bio-informatiques et les analyses statistiques et j'ai rédigé la première version du manuscrit scientifique. Encore une fois, *Microbiology Spectrum* offre la soumission en format libre, ce qui m'a permis de soumettre la même version que celle incluse dans ce mémoire. Cependant, la police du manuscrit a été modifiée pour *Garamond* taille 12 et la bibliographie a été retirée afin d'être intégrée à la bibliographie présente à la fin du mémoire.

Introduction

Le bassin amazonien

La forêt amazonienne est connue pour ses paysages naturels variés et pour sa diversité inégalée. En nombre d'espèces, on y retrouve plus de 32 000 Angiospermes (Zappi et al. 2015), 90 000 Arthropodes (Lewinsohn et Prado 2005), 700 Mammifères (Percequillo et al. 2017) et 4000 Téléostéens (Reis, Ferraris, et Kullander 2003). Cette riche faune serait en partie le résultat de multiples événements de vicariance associés à des procédés géologiques tels que la formation du fleuve Amazone lors du Pléistocène (Lynch Alfaro et al. 2015; Ribas et al. 2018; 2012). Il y a 2,5 Ma, l'Amazone transcontinentale venait tout juste de se former et de diviser le territoire en deux régions, Est et Ouest [Figure 1] (Campbell, Frailey, et Romero-Pittman 2006). L'accumulation de sédiments et l'érosion causée par l'écoulement de l'eau ont mené à la formation de milliers de lacs et rivières très connectés, favorisant la formation d'un écosystème varié et riche tel qu'il est aujourd'hui (Moreira et al. 2020).

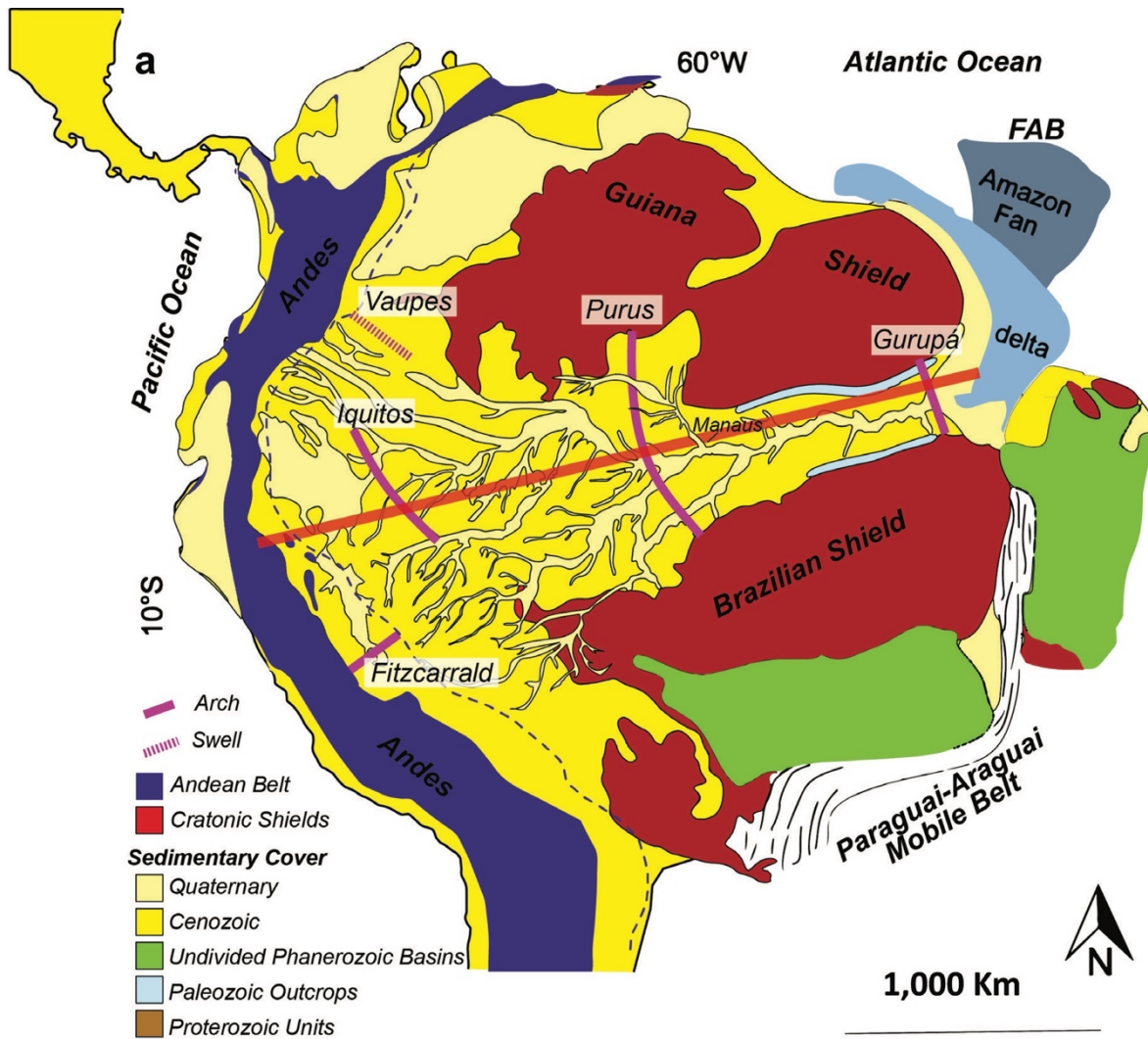


Figure 1 : Carte géologique du Nord de l'Amérique du Sud incluant les unités géologiques qui forment la zone de provenance des sédiments dans le delta sous-marin de l'Amazone et la « Fan » sous-marine. Cette figure a été adaptée de (Albert et *al.* 2018).

En résulte un bassin versant d'environ 6,9 millions de km², dont 1 million de km² sont des écosystèmes d'eau douce (Carvalho and Tavares-Dias 2017, Baia et al. 2018, de Melo Hoshino and Tavares-Dias 2019, Neves et al. 2021, Leandro Castello et al. 2013, Melack & Hess 2011) abritant près de 20 % des espèces de téléostéens dulcicoles du monde (Lévêque et al. 2008). Ces assemblages de poissons présentent des espèces aux adaptations uniques qui ont inspiré de nombreuses avancées biotechnologiques (Estrada et al. 2020; Finger et Piccolino 2011) et dont la compréhension de l'histoire évolutive est centrale à la conservation de la biodiversité mondiale (Smith et al. 2014). Entre autres, l'Amazonie propose un territoire peu perturbé afin d'étudier, *in vivo*, des processus physiologiques (Pelster et al. 2015), écologiques (Correa et al. 2015) et évolutifs complexes (Hoorn et al. 2010).

Le paysage dulcicole amazonien est dominé par trois types d'eau aux caractéristiques physicochimiques et origines très divergentes (Junk et al. 2015; Ríos-Villamizar et al. 2013; Sioli 1984). Dans le fleuve Amazone et le fleuve Solimões coule l'eau blanche Andéenne, une eau très turbide due à une grande quantité d'argile en suspension. L'eau blanche est assez productive et chargée en ions, ce qui en fait un milieu très favorable au maintien de denses populations de poissons (Hoorn et al. 1995). Au contraire, l'eau noire, dont le principal cours d'eau est le fleuve Negro (tributaire de l'Amazone), présente des caractéristiques moins accueillantes pour les organismes. Par exemple, l'eau noire a un pH est très acide à cause de sa haute concentration en acides humiques, sa concentration osmotique est presque nulle, en faisant un milieu peu productif (Hurtado et al. 2018). Pour terminer, l'eau claire, dont le principal cours d'eau est le fleuve Tapajos (tributaire de l'Amazone), présente des caractéristiques similaires à de l'eau de pluie ; peu de particules en suspension, un pH neutre et une dureté faible (Junk et al. 2015). Ces trois écosystèmes très divergents s'entrecoupent à de nombreuses localisations en Amazonie, formant des écotones, soit des zones de transition entre deux écosystèmes. Particulièrement médiatisée, l'« Encontro das Águas », la rencontre des fleuves Solimões et Negro, illustre très bien le croisement entre ces deux types d'eau aux caractéristiques contrastées [Figure 2]. Certaines études associent même ces différences à des événements de spéciation et de divergence écologique, où les grandes différences physicochimiques entre les eaux blanche et noire agiraient comme une barrière écologique pré-zygotique favorisant l'évolution divergente des poissons présents dans chaque milieu (Beheregaray et al. 2015; Cooke, Chao et Beheregaray 2012; Cooke et al. 2012; Cooke, Landguth et Beheregaray 2014).



Figure 2 : Croisement entre l'eau blanche du fleuve Solimões et de l'eau noire du fleuve Negro formant le fleuve de l'Amazonie Centrale (Copa 2011).

Le fleuve Negro et son eau noire

Écosystème fluvial unique au monde, le Fleuve Negro représente 30 % de l'eau entrante de l'Amazonie (Molinier et al. 1995). Son eau noire a des propriétés physicochimiques singulières et provient d'un système de drainage, formé par le bouclier Guyanais, qui daterait d'il y a plus d'un milliard d'années (Hurtado et al. 2018). Sa conformation actuelle, connectée avec l'Amazonie, se serait formée il y a 1 Ma suite à des événements géologiques et climatiques encore mal compris (Ribas et al. 2012; Rossetti et Valeriano 2007). La survie en eau noire représente un défi physiologique majeur pour les organismes. Pour commencer, la concentration en ions essentiels y est extrêmement faible (Na^+ , Cl^- , $\text{Ca}^{2+} < 50 \mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$) due à la faible érodibilité du craton du bouclier Guyanais (Ríos-Villamizar et al. 2013; Sioli 1984). Les poissons, hypertoniques par rapport au milieu, ont donc tendance à perdre leurs ions essentiels (Kültz 2015). *In vitro*, des poissons-zèbres meurent très rapidement dans de telles conditions (Duarte et al. 2016). Lorsqu'on considère aussi son pH acide (pHs 3.0-5.5), on obtient un environnement extrême pour toutes formes de vie (Sioli 1984). Effectivement, l'exposition à une eau acide accélère la perte d'ions sodium et réduit l'absorption de ces mêmes ions au niveau des branchies des poissons (Kwong, Kumai, et Perry 2014), amplifiant les effets néfastes de l'environnement hypotonique que représente l'eau noire.

Pourtant, cet écosystème accueille 8 % de la faune ichthyenne mondiale (Val et Almeida-Val 1995). La survie de la faune du Fleuve Negro dépendrait en partie de la présence d'une importante concentration en carbone organique dissous (DOC) dans l'eau (Duarte et al. 2016). Ces molécules de carbone sont le produit de la photodégradation et la biodégradation de l'important couvert végétal amazonien (Benner et Kaiser 2011). En effet, le DOC, particulièrement les grandes molécules très colorées, a potentiellement un effet stabilisateur sur le transport ionique branchial (Galvez et al. 2008; Wood, Al-Reasi, et Smith 2011).

Tous ces stress physiologiques, en plus des hautes températures et des épisodes d'hypoxie fréquents (Junk, Soares, et Carvalho 1983; Val, Silva, et Almeida-Val 1998), sont très contraignants pour la faune qui doit investir beaucoup d'énergie afin de survivre aux conditions environnementales de l'eau noire (Jung et al. 2020). En situation de stress, les organismes sont plus enclins à développer des pathologies tels que des infections bactériennes et parasitaires. Cette hypothèse a été confirmée chez des Téléostéens tels que le Goujon (*Gobio occitaniae*)

(Petitjean et al. 2020) et le Gobie tacheté (*Pomatoschistus microps*) (Cereja et al. 2018). La mortalité ichthyenne causée par des agents pathogènes est source d'une grande perte économique pour les communautés amazoniennes (Castro et al. 2020), groupes en conditions précaires, dépendant directement des ressources halieutiques et dont la prévalence en infections polyparasitaires intestinales est très élevée (Marques et al. 2020).

Le fleuve Solimões et son eau blanche

Antithèse de l'eau noire, l'eau blanche du fleuve Solimões tire son nom de la grande quantité de solides en suspension qu'elle transporte. Ces sédiments chargés en nutriments font de l'eau blanche une eau très turbide. Par exemple, la profondeur de Secchi, unité de mesure de la pénétrance de la lumière dans l'eau, varie entre 20 et 60 cm pour les rivières d'eau blanche tandis qu'elle est de 60 à 120 cm pour l'eau noire (Ríos-Villamizar et al. 2013). Les sédiments en suspension riches en silice proviennent de l'érosion du grès des Andes qui s'accumule dans l'eau lors son écoulement le long du bassin du Solimões (Hurtado et al. 2018). Ces sols, datant du Cénozoïque (65 Ma), sont considérablement plus jeunes et produisent un extrait de sédiments beaucoup plus important que le bouclier Guyanais (Wittmann et al. 2011). La quantité de sédiments transportée est telle qu'une « deep-sea fan », une gigantesque accumulation de sédiments, se forme à l'embouchure de l'Amazone (Rimington, Cramp, et Morton 2000). Ce fort courant allié à l'importante décharge de sédiments forment une barrière à la dispersion pour les poissons de récifs, ce qui aurait favorisé l'évolution de plusieurs espèces de poissons par allopatricité (Rocha 2003).

Aussi, la grande quantité de nutriments présents dans les sédiments de l'eau blanche y favorise la présence d'une faune ichthyenne plus dense et diversifiée que dans les rivières d'eau noire (Junk et al. 2007; Junk et al. 2011; Oberdorff et al. 2019; Saint-Paul et al. 2000). Les différences géologiques majeures entre les deux bassins versants expliquent donc une grande partie des différences physicochimiques entre l'eau noire et l'eau blanche. En effet, l'eau blanche possède des caractéristiques physicochimiques nettement plus hospitalières que l'eau noire. Elle a un pH neutre, une conductivité plus élevée et généralement moins de carbone organique dissout. Plus spécifiquement, la conductivité de l'eau blanche est de 40 à 140 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ tandis que celle de l'eau noire à 25°C est inférieure à 20 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$ (Sioli 1984; Val et Almeida-Val 1995; Ríos-

Villamizar et al. 2013; Holland et al. 2017). Ces grandes divergences physicochimiques entre les deux types d'eau mènent naturellement à des communautés ichthyennes (Junk, Mota Soares, et Bayley 2007; Junk, Wittmann, Schöngart, et al. 2015; Saint-Paul et al. 2000) et microbiennes (Peixoto et al. 2011; Sylvain et al. 2021) différentes.

La saisonnalité amazonienne

Les cours d'eau du bassin amazonien sont très connectés et subissent d'importantes fluctuations saisonnières de la courantologie (Barichivich et al. 2018; Siqueira et al. 2018; Reis et al. 2019). Lors de la saison humide, de janvier à juillet, les précipitations intenses provenant de la Cordillère des Andes provoquent une importante augmentation du niveau de l'eau. Tout dépendant du tributaire et de l'année, il y a de 3 à 15 m de dénivelé entre les saisons humides et sèches, la saison sèche étant d'août à décembre (Martinez et Le Toan 2007; Barichivich et al. 2018; Azevedo et al. 2019; Rosenqvist et al. 2020). Au fleuve Negro, le niveau de l'eau est à son maximum entre mai et juillet et à son minimum entre novembre et février (Silva et al. 2012). À titre d'exemple, les résultats de Silva et al. (2012) estiment que le dénivelé saisonnier moyen du Fleuve Negro est de 8,53 m, tandis que celui du fleuve Solimões serait d'environ 12,03 m. Selon les mêmes résultats, la hausse du niveau de l'eau est rapide et se suit d'une baisse graduelle et lente jusqu'à la saison basse.

Ainsi, l'architecture et la chimie hydrologique des lacs varient fortement entre les deux saisons, ce qui affecte tous les organismes présents (Furch et Junk 1993; Seidel et al. 2016; Azevedo et al. 2019). Lors de la saison sèche, certains lacs perdent leurs connexions aux grands affluents et forment des environnements d'eau plus stagnante et concentrée en contaminants (Phlips et al. 2008). S'en résulte un grand nombre de petits lacs peu connectés lors de la saison sèche, qui deviennent grands et très connectés lors de la saison humide, maximisant l'amplitude des différences physicochimiques entre les lacs et les rivières (Pestana et al. 2019; Richey et al. 2002). Par exemple, en 1996-1997, le territoire inondé du bassin Negro est passé d'une aire de 57 000 à 42 000 km² entre la saison humide et la saison sèche (Silva et al. 2012). De plus, le grand intrant d'eau, qui provient des précipitations, importe une abondante quantité de molécules organiques et inorganiques, tels que des contaminants, des forêts vers les cours d'eau (Azevedo et al. 2019; Bisinoti, Sargentini Júnior, et Jardim 2007; Moreira-Turcq et al. 2003; Oliveira et al. 2006). En ce sens, le paysage amazonien est modifié drastiquement lors de la saison humide,

offrant l'accès à une panoplie de nouveaux environnements favorables à la reproduction. Conséquemment, plusieurs Téléostéens amazoniens, dont certains sont élevés en aquaculture, ont évolué de manière à tirer avantage de ces variations environnementales, par exemple, le Tambaqui (*Colossoma macropomum*) par ses habitudes alimentaires et l'Arapaïma (*Arapaima gigas*) et le Brycon (*Brycon spp.*) par leurs habitudes reproductives synchrones (Castello 2008; Correa et al. 2015; Oliveira et al. 2006; Tonella et al. 2019). Ces changements comportementaux mènent indirectement à un investissement différentiel des ressources énergétiques entre les saisons, réduisant potentiellement l'investissement immunitaire et favorisant l'émergence d'infections parasitaires ou bactériennes dans les populations naturelles (Rohlenová et Šimková 2010; Simková et al. 2005). De plus, ces changements écologiques majeurs affectent la structure des communautés ichtyennes (Hurd et al. 2016; Siqueira-Souza et al. 2016), d'invertébrés (Nessimian et al. 1998), parasitaires (Dias et Tavares-Dias 2015), microbiennes (Melo et al. 2020) et mêmes virales (Vieira et al. 2016) présentes à chaque saison.

Les poissons en Amazonie

Selon les données de la FAO (2020), la consommation mondiale moyenne de poissons per capita est de 20,3 kg/an, ce qui représente une fraction des 150 kg/an que les Riberinhos, communautés riveraines de l'Amazonie, consomment (Oliveira et al. 2010). Le poisson est culturellement et économiquement central pour ces communautés qui tirent plus de 30 % de leurs revenus de la pêche artisanale (FAO, 2010). De plus, les conditions locales favorables à l'aquaculture ont récemment motivé la mise en place de nombreuses piscicultures en cage, pour l'élevage d'espèces indigènes telles que le Tambaqui (*C. macropomum*) et l'Arapaïma (*A. gigas*). Cependant, majoritairement des espèces exotiques telles que le Tilapia du Nil (*Oreochromis niloticus*) y sont cultivées (Azevedo-Santos, Rigolin-Sá, et Pelicice 2011; Watanabe et al. 2002). Au Brésil, la croissance rapide de cette forme d'exploitation se fait au détriment de la mise en place de méthodes optimisées et environnementalement éthiques (Lima Junior et al. 2018; Pelicice et al. 2017). Puisque l'aquaculture se fait généralement dans des cages qui baignent dans le milieu, l'exploitation a des impacts écologiques délétères associés à la fuite accidentelle d'espèces exotiques (Britton et Orsi 2012) et à la transmission horizontale d'agents pathogènes vers les populations naturelles (Frazer 2009). L'acquisition de connaissances fondamentales par rapport aux interactions entre ces agents pathogènes, les poissons d'élevage et les populations naturelles

est une priorité afin de conserver la diversité amazonienne tout en favorisant la croissance de l'économie locale. Un défi majeur réside dans la grande hétérogénéité spatiale et écologique du bassin Amazonien. En effet, les assemblages d'espèces variés nécessitent une compréhension avisée du contexte local de chaque région exploitée afin d'implémenter des techniques de gestion des stocks. Entre autres, comprendre l'impact qu'ont certaines variables environnementales et certains facteurs spécifiques à l'hôte devrait aider à mettre en place des mesures de conservation plus adaptées.

Les infections parasitaires ichtyennes en Amazonie

Le parasitisme figure parmi les modes de vie les plus efficaces du règne du vivant (Poulin et Morand 2000). Il résulte d'une co-évolution compétitive entre les hôtes, qui tentent désespérément de lutter contre les agents pathogènes, et les parasites, qui mènent une course aux armements afin de tirer avantage de leur hôte (Caljon et al. 2016). Ce processus réciproque et adaptatif devrait lier étroitement la génétique de l'hôte et celle de son parasite, favorisant ainsi l'évolution d'adaptations phénotypiques chez les deux camps (Woolhouse et al. 2002). Cependant, selon Mattiucci & Nascetti (2008), des espèces de Nématodes parasitaires ne co-évoluent pas spécifiquement avec un groupe taxonomique de Téléostéens. Au contraire, ces parasites auraient changé d'hôte à de multiples reprises dans l'évolution, favorisant l'accès à une plus grande diversité d'hôtes en étant moins spécifiques. En ce sens, les différents modes d'adaptations que les parasites utilisent et la grande diversité d'hôtes potentiels mènent à une immense diversité de parasites qui ont parfois des interactions très complexes et singulières avec leurs hôtes (Carlson et al. 2020; Larsen et al. 2017). Similairement, les organismes hôtes ont co-évolué avec les Bactéries afin de développer des relations mutualistes centrales à la défense contre les parasites intestinaux (Dheilly, Poulin, et Thomas 2015).

Les infections parasitaires sont omniprésentes en Amazonie. À titre d'exemple, plus de 90 % des centaines de poissons de plusieurs espèces analysés par Tavares-Dias et al. (2014, 2015) étaient parasités par *Ichthyophthirius multifiliis*, un protiste responsable de la maladie des points blancs. Bien qu'il soit présent lors des deux saisons amazoniennes, ce parasite est plus abondant en saison humide, un patron saisonnier démontré chez plusieurs espèces d'ectoparasites (Carvalho et Tavares-Dias 2017; de Melo Hoshino et Tavares-Dias 2019; Hoshino et Tavares-

Dias 2019). Au contraire, des espèces de Monogénéidés et des helminthes endoparasites semblent être plus abondantes et se reproduire en saison sèche en Amazonie (Martins et al. 2017; Schalch et Moraes 2005). Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de consensus scientifique clair par rapport à la saisonnalité des entéro-infections parasitaires ichtyennes en Amazonie (Dias et Tavares-Dias 2015; Gonçalves et al. 2016), Hoshino et Tavares-Dias (2019) ont également observés des abondances significativement plus élevées d'endoparasites lors de la saison sèche chez des poissons d'élevage et naturels. Selon ces auteurs, les précipitations réduites de la saison sèche favorisent une eutrophisation des lacs (Gonçalves et al. 2016), réduisant la qualité de l'eau et facilitant la reproduction des Nématodes, digènes et monogènes qui ont plus de facilité à se déplacer en condition de faible courant (Hoshino et Tavares-Dias 2019). Également, les endoparasites ont moins d'interactions avec l'environnement externe, ce qui fait que leur taux d'infection pourrait potentiellement être majoritairement modulé par le comportement et la capacité immunitaire de leur hôte. Cependant, les interactions immunitaires et évolutives entre les parasites intestinaux et leurs hôtes téléostéens sont très complexes et encore mal comprises (Buchmann 2012; Sitjà-Bobadilla et al. 2016). Toutes les études effectuées en Amazonie se basent sur une évaluation visuelle des poissons, or l'utilisation d'approches plus intégratives telles que des méthodes moléculaires permettrait de tracer un portrait plus précis de cette dynamique écosystémique complexe.

Les parasites intestinaux causent de lourdes pertes économiques en réduisant le taux de croissance des poissons et, dans certaines circonstances, mènent à leur mort (Longshaw et al. 2010; da Rocha 2011). Par exemple, des micro-endoparasites tels que des microsporidies, des ciliés et des flagellés sont omniprésents dans le tractus digestif des poissons (Eiras et al. 2012; Maciel et al. 2018; Matos, Corral, et Azevedo 2003). Malgré le fait qu'ils soient souvent inoffensifs pour l'hôte, certains de ces micro-endoparasites en état de dormance deviennent virulents suite à une baisse de l'immunité de l'hôte ou un stress environnemental (Sitjà-Bobadilla, Estensoro, et Pérez-Sánchez 2016). Lorsqu'on y ajoute l'immense diversité de macro-endoparasites retrouvée en Amazonie, on peut constater le défi majeur que représente l'immunité parasitaire pour ces poissons (Alves et al. 2017). Les interactions trophiques de l'espèce, sa génétique et son environnement, dont son microbiote, sont parmi les facteurs ayant le plus d'impacts sur le taux d'entéro-infections parasitaires (Choudhury et Dick 2000; Lively et Dybdahl 2000; Baía et al. 2018; Leung et al. 2018; Gaulke et al. 2019). Les espèces du haut de la

chaîne trophique sont généralement les plus affectées par les endoparasites (Choudhury et Dick 2000; Beevi et Radhakrishnan 2012). Ainsi, l'effort de recherche sur la diversité des communautés parasitaires est fortement biaisé vers les organismes de niveaux trophiques plus élevés. Pourtant, des parasites appartenant à une grande variété taxonomique, c.-à-d. des Acanthocéphales, des Nématodes, des Plathelminthes et des Protozoaires, ont déjà été observés dans l'intestin de poissons détritviores et omnivores amazoniens, c.-à-d. des Locariidés et un Cichlidé (Baia et al. 2018; Cárdenas et al. 2018).

Plusieurs études ont documenté la variation saisonnière du taux d'infection par des parasites cutanés, branchiaux et intestinaux chez des poissons amazoniens (Neves et al. 2013; Tavares-Dias et al. 2014; Dias et Tavares-Dias 2015; Gentil-Vasconcelos et Tavares-Dias 2015; Gonçalves et al. 2016; Martins et al. 2017; Negreiros, Pereira, et Tavares-Dias 2019; Hoshino et Tavares-Dias 2019; Hoshino et Tavares-Dias 2019). Cependant, il n'y a pas de documentation scientifique décrivant les différences entre les communautés parasitaires présentes en eau noire et en eau blanche amazonienne. Plusieurs espèces de poissons colonisent les deux types d'eau et font donc face à des contraintes environnementales drastiquement différentes dans les deux milieux (Beheregaray et al. 2015; Pires et al. 2015). Ces conditions antagonistes pourraient mener à des communautés parasitaires différentes dans les deux environnements. De plus, les conditions physicochimiques de l'eau noire tendent à changer entre la saison sèche et humide (Affonso, Barbosa, et Novo 2011; Seidel et al. 2016), ce qui peut affecter la concentration en certains contaminants (Azevedo et al. 2019; Bisinoti, Sargentini Júnior, et Jardim 2007) et même changer les communautés ichthyennes présentes (Castello et al. 2019; Silva et al. 2013). Une meilleure connaissance des espèces de parasite présentes et de leur prévalence dans chaque type d'eau favoriserait une meilleure gestion des mesures prophylactiques visant à lutter contre les infestations parasitaires chez les communautés riveraines. Entre autres, intégrer des données environnementales aux modèles précédents, qui se concentraient tous sur les fluctuations saisonnières, pourrait mener à des résultats très intéressants. Avec les graves répercussions sanitaires qu'ont les parasites sur les communautés riveraines amazoniennes (Marques et al. 2020), une meilleure caractérisation de la diversité parasitaire présente dans chaque type d'eau amazonien est requise. Notamment, l'utilisation d'une approche de séquençage haut débit devrait mener à l'obtention de données plus exhaustives et faciliter l'utilisation de modèles statistiques plus précis afin de mieux comprendre cette dynamique écologique complexe.

Le microbiote intestinal ichthyen

L'évolution de la symbiose entre les Bactéries et les Métazoaires a joué un rôle central dans l'histoire de la vie sur Terre (Lee et Mazmanian 2010). En effet, les Bactéries co-évoluent avec leurs hôtes eucaryotes depuis plusieurs centaines de millions d'années. Cette symbiose est maintenant bien documentée pour son rôle dans des processus physiologiques majeurs tels que l'immunité adaptative et innée (Zheng, Liwinski, and Elinav 2020), le métabolisme (Bäckhed 2011) et même le comportement (Morais, Schreiber, et Mazmanian 2020; Wang et Wang 2016). Le microbiote décrit par Round & Mazmanian (2009) représente un amalgame de microorganismes qui forment une communauté diversifiée et complexe vivant dans une niche anatomique donnée. Le microbiote comprend des micro-organismes bénéfiques, neutres ou délétères pour l'organisme hôte. Puisqu'il inclut plus de 100 fois plus de gènes codants que le génome de son hôte, le microbiome intestinal, l'ensemble des génomes qui composent le microbiote intestinal humain nous donne accès à un répertoire génique immense (Bäckhed et al. 2005; Gill et al. 2006). En ce sens, la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal est étudiée afin de développer des traitements alternatifs pour des pathologies graves chez l'humain, telles que l'obésité (Turnbaugh et al. 2009), des maladies neurodégénératives (Main et Minter 2017) et même le cancer (Gopalakrishnan et al. 2018; Li et al. 2019). Les récentes avancées moléculaires ont permis de décrire et démontrer l'importance du microbiote intestinal chez un grand nombre de Téléostéens (Dimitroglou et al. 2011; Nayak 2010; Wang et al. 2018). Par exemple, la microcommunauté complexe colonisant la lumière intestinale ichtyenne joue potentiellement un rôle important dans leur nutrition, leur croissance et la régulation de leur immunité parasitaire (Clements et al. 2014; Gaulke et al. 2019; Lara-Flores et al. 2003; Ling et al. 2020; Wang et al. 2018).

Selon Zilber-Rosenberg & Rosenberg (2008), l'holobionte, c'est-à-dire un animal ou une plante et tous les microorganismes qui y sont associés, est une entité dynamique qui évolue. Selon la théorie de l'holobionte, l'évolution agirait sur l'hologénome qui correspond à l'union du génome de l'hôte et du métagénome des micro-organismes qui y sont associés. D'un côté, le génome de l'hôte est hautement conservé et évolue lentement, et de l'autre, son métagénome est très plastique et peut évoluer rapidement afin de s'adapter à des changements environnementaux (Bordenstein et Theis 2015; Zilber-Rosenberg et Rosenberg 2008). On parle même de plasticité métagénomique, qui désigne la capacité d'un microbiote à recruter de nouvelles fonctions

(Alberdi et al. 2016). Les super-organismes résultants auraient ainsi évolué depuis des millions d'années afin de recruter des symbiotes favorables à différents contextes. Avec les avancées rapides en microbiologie (Arnold, Roach, et Azcarate-Peril 2016), ce concept évolue rapidement et fait couler beaucoup d'encre. Entre autres, des évidences de phylosymbiose, qui correspond aux relations étroites entre la structure des communautés microbiennes symbiotiques et l'historique phylogénétique de l'espèce hôte, supportent fortement la théorie évolutive de l'holobionte (Ley et al. 2008; Lim et Bordenstein 2020).

Les facteurs structurant le microbiote intestinal

La composition taxonomique et le répertoire fonctionnel du microbiote intestinal est modulé par divers facteurs biotiques et abiotiques liés à l'hôte. Entre autres, les conditions environnementales (Alberdi et al. 2016; Rosenfeld 2017; Sylvain et al. 2016; 2019), la diète (David et al. 2014; Ringø et al. 2016), l'immunité (Jia et al. 2021; Zheng, Liwinski, et Elinav 2020), l'âge (Stephens et al. 2016), le génotype (Li et al. 2017; Steury et al. 2019) et même le comportement (de Abreu et al. 2019) de l'hôte exercent une influence sur la composition de son microbiote. Ces facteurs ont déjà été étudiés de manière indépendante *in vivo* chez des espèces modèles telles que le poisson zèbre (*Danio rerio*) (Cornuault et al. 2022; Jia et al. 2021). Cependant, l'étude *in situ*, en milieu naturel, des interactions entre un hôte et son microbiote nécessite l'intégration de plusieurs de ces facteurs au sein d'un même modèle. Ce type d'étude nécessite donc l'implémentation d'un modèle expérimental élaboré et d'une bonne connaissance de l'organisme hôte afin de délivrer des résultats intéressants (Steury et al. 2019).

L'environnement est considéré comme étant un des facteurs ayant la plus grande influence sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal (Pérez et al. 2010; Steury et al. 2019). En effet, les organismes, et particulièrement les poissons, sont en contact constant avec la communauté de bactéries présente dans leur environnement. Ce microbiote environnemental représente une immense source de bactéries de laquelle l'organisme hôte peut recruter par transfert horizontal, l'intégration d'une fraction du microbiote provenant d'une source qui n'est pas apparenté à l'hôte (Lavoie et al. 2021 ; Sylvain et Derome 2017). En ce sens, deux organismes vivant dans des environnements différents devraient être en contact avec des communautés bactériennes dissimilaires, favorisant potentiellement le recrutement de deux microbiotes

intestinaux distincts. Par exemple, chez des poissons, la composition taxonomique du microbiote intestinal peut-être modulée par certains facteurs abiotiques tels qu'un changement de la salinité de l'eau (Zhang et al. 2016), la présence de microplastiques (Qiao et al. 2019), le pH de l'eau (Sylvain et al. 2016), la température de l'eau (Liu et al. 2022; C. Zhou et al. 2022) et même au fil des saisons (Al-Harbi et Uddin 2004). Également, vivre dans différents environnements impose naturellement des contraintes environnement-spécifiques à l'hôte, ce qui affecte potentiellement son métabolisme (Butt et Volkoff 2019), sa diète (Oliveira et al. 2006), son immunité (Pereira et al. 2021) et son comportement (Chellappa et al. 2009; Roepke, Ferreira, et Zuanon 2014), des facteurs connus pour avoir un impact sur son microbiote. Si l'environnement joue un rôle majeur sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal, le microbiote intestinal d'un espèce hôte devrait présenter des éléments discriminants spécifiques à un environnement donné. En ce sens, il serait fort probable que des poissons d'une même espèce vivant dans des conditions environnementales drastiquement divergentes telles que l'eau blanche et l'eau noire amazonienne présentent des microbiomes différents. Cette hypothèse a déjà été démontrée chez deux modèles amazoniens, le Cichlidé drapeau (*Mesonauta festivus*) et le Piranha noir (*Serrasalmus rhombeus*) (Sylvain et al. 2019; Sylvain et al. 2020).

Le génotype de l'hôte exerce également une influence majeure sur la structure taxonomique de son microbiote intestinal. Selon la théorie de l'holobionte, le génome de l'hôte a évolué de concert avec les microorganismes qui colonisent son intestin, favorisant une certaine inertie phylogénétique du microbiote (Rosenberg et al. 2010; Rosenberg et Zilber-Rosenberg 2018). Ley et al. (2008) ont démontré cette hypothèse en comparant les microbiomes de 60 espèces de mammifères : les espèces provenant d'un même ordre taxonomique ont tendance à avoir des microbiomes semblables entre eux. Par exemple, le Panda géant, espèce herbivore descendant des ours omnivores, présente un microbiote très semblable aux autres ours et typique d'un organisme carnivore (Ley et al. 2008; Xue et al. 2015). Tout de même, la plupart des études soulignent un rôle prépondérant de la diète de l'hôte sur la structure taxonomique de son microbiote intestinal (Delsuc et al. 2014; Ley et al. 2008; Muegge et al. 2011; Soverini et al. 2016). Également, l'hôte est connu pour avoir des récepteurs toll-like (TLRs) pouvant interagir avec les bactéries. Ces récepteurs favorisent la communication entre le cerveau et le microbiote intestinal (Burgueno et Abreu 2020; Margolis, Cryan, et Mayer 2021). L'expression des gènes codant pour ces récepteurs peut varier d'un hôte à l'autre ou d'un génotype à l'autre, favorisant le recrutement

de microbiotes intestinaux différents (Chassaing, Ley, et Gewirtz 2014). De plus, la relation de proximité entre les parents et leur descendance peut favoriser un transfert vertical du microbiote, l'intégration d'une fraction du microbiote provenant d'une source phylogénétiquement apparentée. Par exemple, des microorganismes peuvent être transmis par les parents à leur progéniture par contact lors de la naissance ou lors des soins parentaux aux nouveaux nés. Cette hypothèse a été démontrée chez l'humain (Nuriel-Ohayon, Neuman, et Koren 2016; Tamburini et al. 2016) et même chez un poisson amazonien, le Discus (*Symphysodon aequifasciata*) (Sylvain et Derome 2017). En ce sens, les microbiotes intestinaux de poissons d'une même espèce provenant de populations génétiques distinctes pourraient présenter des éléments discriminants permettant de différencier chaque population. Dans ce cas, certains taxons du microbiote intestinal pourraient même agir comme des marqueurs utiles afin de différencier des populations hologénomiques distinctes.

L'état physiologique de l'hôte est également un facteur important affectant la structure taxonomique de son microbiote intestinal. Chez l'humain, des maladies telles que l'obésité (Abenavoli et al. 2019), la dépression (Barandouzi et al. 2020), des maladies inflammatoires de l'intestin (Manichanh et al. 2012) et bien d'autres (Ding et al. 2019; Lazar et al. 2018; Zheng, Liwinski, et Elinav 2020) ont été associés à des déséquilibres du microbiote. En effet, le microbiome intestinal entretient une relation très étroite avec l'immunité de son hôte. Ainsi, des stress physiologiques, tels qu'une infection bactérienne (Li et al. 2020), parasitaire (Gaulke et al. 2019) ou virale (Ran et al. 2021), ont été associées à des modifications du microbiome intestinal de poissons. La caractérisation de ces variations structurales communautaires permet d'utiliser le microbiome comme marqueur génétique utile à la détection de ces stress (Bozzi et al. 2021; Llewellyn et al. 2014). En effet, un stress physiologique, tel que la présence d'un parasite intestinal, cause généralement une dysbiose, un déséquilibre de la structure taxonomique du microbiote de l'hôte (Fu et al. 2019; Ling et al. 2020). En ce sens, il serait possible qu'une infection parasitaire puisse favoriser la croissance de bactéries délétères synergiques au parasite ou mener au recrutement de bactéries bénéfiques à la défense immunitaire de l'hôte (Llewellyn et al. 2014; Round et Mazmanian 2009). L'utilisation d'une approche métagénomique, telle que le séquençage « shotgun », permet une identification combinée des communautés parasitaires et microbiennes présentes dans l'intestin des poissons. Ce genre d'approche intégrative est à

favoriser pour détecter des interactions entre l'hôte, son microbiote intestinal et des infections entéro-parasitaires.

L'ère de la génomique et la métataxonomie

Les avancées technologiques récentes ont bouleversé notre conception du microbiote. En effet, l'étude de la structure taxonomique du microbiote date de bien avant l'arrivée des techniques de séquençage à haut débit. Au début, le microbiote était échantillonné afin d'être cultivé et isolé sur différents milieux de culture (Gordon et Gibbons 1966). Les rares taxons bactériens capable de croître en culture étaient ainsi caractérisés morphologiquement et physiologiquement dans des conditions drastiquement différentes de leur organe d'origine (Arnold, Roach, et Azcarate-Peril 2016). Ensuite, des techniques ne nécessitant pas la mise en culture ont commencé à voir le jour. Par exemple, l'étude du polymorphisme de longueur des fragments de restriction terminaux (T-RFLP) (De Vrieze et al. 2018), l'électrophorèse sur gel à gradient de dénaturation (DGGE) (Favier et al. 2002) et l'électrophorèse sur gel à gradient de température (TGGE) (Wang et al. 2008) étaient des méthodes très utilisées au début du 21^{ième} siècle. En se basant sur l'ADN bactérien (Arnold, Roach, et Azcarate-Peril 2016), ces approches donnaient une approximation plus représentative de la vraie diversité taxonomique du microbiote. Cependant, ces méthodes archaïques sont loin d'être aussi précises et intégratives que les méthodes moléculaires actuelles.

Méta-, un préfixe exprimant la profondeur et l'exhaustif, est maintenant courant dans le vocabulaire de l'écologie microbienne. La métataxonomie, la métagénomique et la métatranscriptomique sont trois domaines grandissants qui se concentrent sur l'étude du microbiote à l'aide d'approches moléculaires. La métataxonomie, l'étude de la structure taxonomique d'un échantillon à l'aide de marqueurs génétiques (codes-barres génétiques), dérive directement des premières méthodes d'étude du microbiote. Au lieu d'étudier uniquement la longueur du gène d'intérêt, on le séquence. La métagénomique, l'étude de l'entière du matériel génétique d'un échantillon par séquençage « shotgun », est une approche plus intégrative, mais aussi plus coûteuse. Enfin, la métatranscriptomique, similairement à la métagénomique, consiste à séquencer l'ARN par séquençage « shotgun », permettant d'étudier le répertoire fonctionnel d'un échantillon. Bien qu'elle soit moins intégrative que les deux autres méthodes, la métataxonomie donne accès à une grande quantité d'informations à un coût plus faible, ce qui

en fait une méthode de choix afin de décrire le microbiote des Téléostéens (Nayak 2010; Dimitroglou et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2018).

La métataxonomie repose sur le séquençage de bibliothèques d'amplicons d'un gène d'intérêt, un ensemble de courtes séquences d'ADN nommées des codes-barres génétiques, qui ont été préalablement amplifiées par réaction de polymérisation en chaîne (PCR). Pour les Bactéries et les Archées, l'utilisation du gène de la sous-unité 16S de l'ARN ribosomique (ARNr) est la référence universelle (Llewellyn et al. 2014, Sevellec et al. 2019, Sylvain et al. 2020). Ce gène est un marqueur de choix puisqu'il comprend des intervalles de régions conservées et hypervariables. Les régions conservées facilitent la conception d'amorces universelles qui s'hybrident spécifiquement au gène de l'ARNr 16S, tandis que les régions hypervariables permettent de discriminer les taxons bactériens présents dans l'échantillon. Parmi les 8 régions hypervariables présentes dans le gène de l'ARNr 16S, la région V4 permet de discriminer la majorité des genres bactériens, ce qui en fait un marqueur de choix pour l'étude du microbiote (J. Zhang et al. 2018). Cependant, ce gène n'est pas présent chez tous les Eucaryotes, ce qui le rend peu utile pour discriminer leurs communautés dans un échantillon.

Contrairement à l'étude des communautés bactériennes, la caractérisation des microcommunautés eucaryotes d'un échantillon par métataxonomie ne fait pas consensus. En effet, différents marqueurs sont utilisés ; par exemple, le gène de la sous-unité I de la cytochrome oxydase (COI), (Giebner et al. 2020, Atienza et al. 2020), le gène de l'ARNr 18S (de Vargas et al. 2015, Mann et al. 2020) et le gène de l'ARNr 28S (Machida et Knowlton 2012, Kounosu et al. 2019). Néanmoins, la région V4-V5 du gène de l'ARNr 18S semble gagner en popularité (Hugerth et al. 2014, Capra et al. 2016, Kounosu et al. 2019, Mann et al. 2020). C'est en partie dû à l'existence d'amorces qui donnent accès à la majorité de la diversité eucaryote et qui sont très spécifiques.

Une problématique liée à l'étude de la fraction Eucaryote du microbiote est causée par la similitude des séquences cibles de l'hôte et des communautés habitant sa flore intestinale. En effet, les séquences conservées des marqueurs génétiques de l'hôte sont généralement identiques à celles des autres Eucaryotes qui colonisent son intestin. Conséquemment, il y a généralement une plus grande quantité de cellules de l'hôte que de cellules d'autres organismes dans les

échantillons, ce qui mène à une amplification préférentielle de l'ADN de l'hôte lors de l'amplification par PCR. Ultimement, cela peut nuire à la détection d'organismes présents en faible abondance dans les échantillons. Vestheim et Jarman (2008) ont développés des amorces de blocage, amorces permettant d'inhiber spécifiquement l'amplification PCR de séquences cibles. Ces amorces sont modifiées avec un « Spacer C3 », une chaîne de trois carbones ajoutés à l'extrémité 3' de l'amorce, qui va prévenir l'élongation du brin par la polymérase à ADN. Bien que cette méthode ait grandement gagné en popularité au cours des dernières années (Boessenkool et al. 2012, Belda et al. 2017, Su et al. 2018, Liu et al. 2019, Mayer et al. 2021, Rojahn et al. 2021, Stewart et al. 2021), d'autres méthodes telles que le séquençage sélectif d'amplicon par CRISPR-Cas (CCSAS) (Zhong et al. 2021) et la Restriction de l'endonucléase polymérase suicide (SuPER) (Green et Minz 2005) existent également. Tout de même, ces méthodes nécessitent toutes beaucoup d'étapes de développement et de tests afin d'être implémentées adéquatement lors d'une étude scientifique.

***Mesonauta festivus* comme espèce modèle**

Les Téléostéens ont colonisé une grande diversité d'environnements qui posent des défis physiologiques intéressants à étudier. L'étude des interactions entre les poissons et les microcommunautés qui colonisent leurs tissus offre l'opportunité de comprendre leur importance chez un modèle vertébré (Lescak et Milligan-Myhre 2017). En effet, les systèmes digestifs et immunitaires des Poissons sont très similaires à ceux des Mammifères (Renshaw et Trede 2012; Wallace et al. 2005). Par exemple, le Poisson-zèbre (*D. rerio*) est un poisson modèle d'intérêt majeur pour la compréhension de processus physiologiques chez les Vertébrés (Fishman 2001). De plus, les Téléostéens occupent une importance croissante dans l'économie mondiale, ce qui devrait promouvoir le développement de connaissances à leur égard.

Le Cichlidé drapeau (*M. festivus*) est un poisson modèle pour notre laboratoire. En effet, nous avons déjà récolté des données sur le microbiote intestinal, branchial et du mucus cutané de plus de 200 *M. festivus* sur une vaste étendue du bassin amazonien (Sylvain et al. 2019; Sylvain et al. 2020; 2022). De plus, nous avons précédemment génotypé par séquençage 240 *M. festivus* réparties sur 12 sites d'étude du bassin amazonien, nous permettant de faire des inférences intéressantes par rapport à la structure populationnelle de l'espèce (Leroux et al. 2022). *M. festivus*

est un Cichlidé majoritairement omnivore et distribué ubiquitairement dans le bassin amazonien (Pires et al. 2015). Tout dépendant de la disponibilité en ressources, son alimentation est composée de détritus, de périphytons et de microcrustacés (Röpke et al. 2014, Pires et al. 2015). Bien que ses populations du bassin Negro soient fortement différenciées génétiquement de celles du reste du bassin amazonien, la structuration génétique de ses populations est relativement indépendante des conditions environnementales présentes à chaque site d'étude (Leroux et al. 2022). Cette caractéristique en fait une espèce particulièrement intéressante afin d'étudier de manière indépendante l'effet du génotype et de l'environnement sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote. De plus, l'espèce procure des soins biparentaux à ses larves, favorisant potentiellement le transfert vertical de souches bactériennes lors des premiers stades de développement (Sylvain et Derome 2017, Gurevich et al. 2020). L'espèce serait aussi à la base de stations de nettoyage pour retirer des ectoparasites à d'autres espèces de poissons (Severo-Neto et Froehlich 2015), ces stations de nettoyages sont similaires à celles documentées chez plus de 131 espèces de poissons en eau salée (Côté 2000).

Parmi les trois articles scientifiques disponibles documentant le microbiote intestinal de poissons amazoniens en milieu naturel, deux proviennent de notre laboratoire et incluent le Cichlidé drapeau (Ramirez et al. 2018; Sylvain et al. 2019; Sylvain et al. 2020). Selon ces données, les groupes taxonomiques les plus abondants dans le microbiote intestinal de *M. festivus*, en ordre décroissant, sont des Clostridia, des Gammaprotéobactéria et des Fusobacteria. De plus, deux nouvelles espèces de Nématodes parasites ont récemment été documentées dans l'intestin de *M. festivus* (Cárdenas et al. 2018). L'utilisation d'une approche de métabarcodage génétique devrait fournir des informations complémentaires à cette découverte. En somme, l'accumulation d'informations sur l'espèce, ses populations, leurs génotypes et les micro-organismes qui y sont associés fait de *M. festivus* un Téléostéen modèle de choix pour mon étude.

Problématiques

Tel que mentionné, l'étude des facteurs modulant la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal chez des modèles naturels n'est pas une tâche aisée. En effet, le microbiote intestinal est affecté par de nombreux paramètres biotiques et abiotiques qui interagissent entre eux à plusieurs niveaux. En ce sens, peu de modèles *in situ* permettent d'étudier de manière simultanée

plusieurs facteurs structurants le microbiote sans qu'il y ait des interactions importantes entre les variables à l'étude. De plus, ce type d'étude nécessite une approche intégrative qui combine une évaluation compréhensive de plusieurs variables telles que le génotype de l'hôte, des données environnementales, l'état de santé de l'hôte ainsi que son microbiote.

Nous avons précédemment expliqué pourquoi les Téléostéens sont de très bons modèles pour l'étude du microbiote intestinal. Également, les poissons ont une position centrale dans l'économie et la culture Amazonienne. De plus, les budgets de recherche sont plus faibles en Amazonie que dans les pays tempérés, ce qui explique le faible nombre d'études qui se concentrent sur le microbiote ichtyens pour cette région. Au contraire, la majorité de l'effort de recherche de ce secteur se concentre sur des espèces de milieu tempérées qui sont élevées en aquaculture. Ainsi, une meilleure compréhension du microbiote des espèces tropicales pourrait aider à optimiser les conditions d'aquaculture dans cette région. L'étude simultanée de données sur l'environnement, le génotype et d'une approche par métataxonomie intégrant les communautés eucaryotes et procaryotes devrait permettre de détecter des corrélations entre ces variables modulatrices et la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de *M. festivus*. Nous avons également appris que l'étude de la fraction eucaryote du microbiote intestinal implique des contraintes méthodologiques supplémentaires. Ainsi, le développement et le test d'amorces de blocage spécifiques à *M. festivus* pourrait grandement améliorer les résultats d'une étude visant à étudier cette fraction du microbiote.

Entre autres, de tels résultats offriront des informations par rapport à l'importance relative de chacun de ces facteurs sur le microbiote de cette espèce et permettront potentiellement de trouver des biomarqueurs corrélés à des conditions particulières. Également, cette introduction permet de bien cibler l'importance que le microbiote représente pour son hôte. Mieux comprendre les facteurs structurant cette micro-communauté complexe signifie aussi que nous pourrons mieux la moduler à notre avantage, mieux contrôler les paramètres optimaux pour l'aquaculture et même prévenir et traiter des maladies avec des outils de gestion des communautés microbiennes, incluant l'usage de probiotiques.

Objectifs, hypothèses et prédictions

L'objectif central de ce mémoire est d'étudier l'influence qu'ont l'environnement, le génotype et la présence de parasites intestinaux sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de *Mesonauta festivus* dans le bassin hydrologique de l'Amazone. L'atteinte de cet objectif a été réalisée en deux chapitres qui sont présentés sous la forme d'articles scientifiques qui sont sous révision par les pairs au moment du dépôt de ce mémoire.

Le premier chapitre vise à développer et tester des amorces de blocage spécifiques à *M. festivus* afin de bloquer l'amplification de son gène de l'ARNr 18S région V4-V5. Ainsi, ce chapitre se divise en deux sous-objectifs qui sont respectivement de développer des combinaisons d'amorces de blocage d'amplification PCR spécifiques à cette espèce et de tester ces amorces de blocages sur des échantillons d'intestin de *M. festivus* afin de mesurer leur spécificité et leur efficacité. Mon hypothèse était que l'utilisation d'amorces de blocage spécifiques au gène de l'ARNr 18S région V4-V5 de *M. festivus* réduirait l'abondance des séquences provenant de l'hôte dans les échantillons ayant été amplifiés avec des amorces de blocage d'amplification PCR, permettant ainsi la détection d'autres organismes présents en abondance réduite dans les échantillons, et ce, sans interférer avec l'amplification des séquences des organismes d'intérêt dans les échantillons, c'est-à-dire celles de parasites potentiels, champignons et les séquences provenant de l'alimentation de *M. festivus*. En ce sens, notre prédiction initiale était que le blocage de l'amplification par PCR du gène de l'ARNr 18S de *M. festivus* irait spécifiquement réduire l'abondance des séquences provenant de l'hôte, facilitant ainsi la détection d'autres organismes présents en abondance réduite dans les échantillons. Ultimement, des bloqueurs d'amplification efficaces devraient réduire la quantité de séquençage gaspillé en concentrant l'effort de séquençage sur des séquences d'intérêt.

Le deuxième chapitre se base sur des données précédemment récoltées par moi-même, François-Étienne Sylvain et Aleicia Holland et les amorces de blocage développées lors du chapitre 1. Son objectif est d'améliorer notre compréhension des rôles que l'environnement, le génotype de l'hôte et la présence d'infestations entéro-parasitaires jouent sur la composition taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de *M. festivus* dans le bassin hydrologique de l'Amazone. Notre hypothèse était que tous ces facteurs jouent un rôle modulateur sur le microbiote intestinal de l'hôte et que la présence ou l'abondance de certaines bactéries sera corrélée à certaines

variables d'intérêt. Plus précisément, notre prédiction était que les différentes populations génétiques de *M. festivus* dans le bassin hydrologique de l'Amazonie auraient des microbiotes différents entre eux. Similairement, nous prédisions que les poissons provenant de rivières d'eau blanche auraient des microbiotes différents de ceux provenant de rivières d'eau noire, une hypothèse qui a précédemment été vérifiée par François-Étienne Sylvain chez *M. festivus* et le Piranha noir (*S. rhombus*) (Sylvain et al. 2019). Pour terminer, notre dernière prédiction était que les poissons infectés par des parasites intestinaux auraient un microbiote différent des poissons sains, microbiote démontrant potentiellement un signe de dysbiose associable à la présence d'un parasite.

Résumé de la méthode

De septembre à décembre 2018 et 2019, lors de la saison sèche, 240 *Mesonauta festivus* ont été récoltés à 12 sites d'étude répartis sur un grand territoire du bassin hydrologique de l'Amazonie. Parmi ces sites, cinq étaient des écosystèmes d'eau noire et sept arboraient une eau blanche. À chaque site d'étude, des échantillons d'eau ont été récoltés afin de caractériser la physicochimie de l'eau et de décrire le bactérioplancton présent dans l'eau. 20 *M. festivus* ont été pêchés à chacun des sites afin d'y extraire un échantillon de nageoire, d'intestin, de branchie, de mucus et le bolus alimentaire.

Pour le premier chapitre, les échantillons de nageoires ont été utilisés afin de génotyper les poissons et d'obtenir une séquence consensus de la région V4-V5 du gène de l'ARNr 18S de *M. festivus*. Par la suite cette séquence consensus a été comparée à des séquences de parasites provenant d'une base de données afin d'y trouver des régions discriminantes uniques pouvant être utilisées afin de développer des amorces de blocage spécifiques à *M. festivus*. Les amorces de blocage développées ont été testées sur des échantillons d'ADN d'intestin de *M. festivus* échantillonnés à l'Archipel des Anavilhanas (n = 8). La région V4-V5 du gène de l'ARNr 18S a été amplifiée par PCR en utilisant diverses combinaisons de bloqueurs d'amplifications et un groupe contrôle sans les amorces de blocage. La librairie de séquençage résultante a été séquencée à l'aide de la technologie MiSeq de Illumina. Les séquences ont par la suite été traitées à l'aide des outils de bio-informatiques CutAdapt (Martin 2011) et DADA2 (Callahan et al. 2016) afin d'obtenir un catalogue des séquences de variants d'amplicons (ASVs) qui a été annotée taxonomiquement à l'aide de la base de données SILVA 138.1 (Quast et al. 2013). Par la suite,

nous avons combiné la table d'ASVs, la table d'assignation taxonomique ainsi que les métadonnées dans un objet Phyloseq qui a été utilisé pour les analyses statistiques subséquentes. Notamment, nous avons mesuré l'efficacité des combinaisons d'amorces de blocage en comparant les échantillons amplifiés avec (groupes test) et sans (groupe contrôle) amorces de blocage. Ces comparaisons ont été réalisées à l'aide de divers tests statistiques tels que des tests de Wilcoxon pour échantillons paires sur l'abondance relative des amplicons provenant de l'hôte, une Analyse de la Variance (ANOVA) à deux facteurs sur les indices de diversité Alpha, une Analyse Permutationnelle de la Variance (PERMANOVA) à deux facteurs sur les indices de diversité Beta ainsi que des diagrammes à bandes afin de présenter les communautés Eucaryotes présentes dans les échantillons.

Pour le chapitre deux, l'ADN des 240 échantillons d'intestin précédemment récoltés a été extrait et des bibliothèques de séquençage ont été préparées par amplification PCR de la région V3-V4 de l'ARNr 16S et de la région V4-V5 de l'ARNr 18S. Les amorces de blocage développées lors du chapitre 1 ont été utilisées pour l'amplification PCR du gène de l'ARNr 18S. Les deux bibliothèques de séquençage résultantes ont été séquencées à l'aide de la technologie MiSeq d'Illumina. Les séquences ont par la suite été traitées à l'aide des outils de bio-informatiques CutAdapt et DADA2 afin d'obtenir deux tables d'ASVs. La table d'ASVs basée sur les données du gène de l'ARNr 16S a été annotée taxonomiquement à l'aide de la base de données SILVA 138.1 tandis que la base de données NCBI refseq SSU 18S a été utilisée pour le gène de l'ARNr 18S. Tout comme pour le chapitre 1, nous avons combiné les tables d'ASVs résultantes dans deux objets Phyloseq qui ont été utilisés pour les analyses statistiques subséquentes. Pour résumer, nous avons évalué la prévalence parasitaire à l'aide d'un test d'indépendance du X^2 comparant la prévalence d'organismes eucaryotes parasites dans les échantillons d'intestin de poissons provenant de sites d'eau blanche et noire. Nous avons également comparé la diversité alpha du microbiote bactérien intestinal de *M. festivus* dans chaque type d'eau amazonien à l'aide d'un test Wilcoxon à deux échantillons indépendants et avons évalué la diversité Beta du microbiote bactérien intestinal dans les deux types d'eau à l'aide d'une PERMANOVA. Encore pour comparer le microbiote intestinal des poissons dans les deux types d'eau, nous avons calculé une ordination de type non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) couplée avec une analyse « Envfit » de Vegan (Oksanen et al. 2019) afin de détecter des corrélations entre certains paramètres physicochimiques de l'eau et la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal. Pour

continuer, nous avons effectué une analyse linéaire discriminante à l'aide du programme LEfSe afin de trouver des éléments taxonomiques du microbiotes permettant d'expliquer des différences significatives entre le microbiote des poissons échantillonnés dans chacun des deux types d'eau. Pour terminer, nous avons cherché pour des interactions taxonomiques entre des organismes parasites eucaryotes et des organismes procaryotes du microbiote. Pour ce faire, nous avons comparé les microbiotes des poissons pour lesquels nous n'avons pas détecté la présence d'un parasite intestinal à ceux de poissons potentiellement infectés par des parasites intestinaux à l'aide d'une PERMANOVA sur les indices de diversité bêta de Bray Curtis. Nous avons aussi effectué des analyses en coordonnées principales, des diagrammes à bande d'abondance relative d'ASVs bactériens ainsi que des réseaux de co-abondance calculés à l'aide de l'application CoNet (Faust et Raes 2016) sur Cytoscape

Chapitre 1 : Elongation arrest blocking primers enhance parasite detection in 18S rRNA metabarcoding study of *Mesonauta festivus* gut eukaryotic communities

Résumé

La similitude des régions conservées du gène de l'ARNr 18S des hôtes et de leur microbiote eucaryote complexifie l'étude de cette fraction du microbiote intestinal en utilisant des amorces universelles. L'utilisation d'amorces de blocage, des oligonucléotides modifiés avec un « spacer C3 », permet d'inhiber spécifiquement l'amplification PCR du gène cible de l'hôte. Dans cet article, nous avons développé des amorces de blocage spécifiques à *Mesonauta festivus* qui ont permis de réduire de 66 % l'abondance relative d'ADN provenant de l'hôte. Ces amorces de blocage ont permis d'augmenter la détectabilité de parasites intestinaux d'intérêt dans des échantillons d'intestin de poisson tout en offrant l'accès à des données sur l'alimentation de l'espèce et sur la diversité eucaryote commensale présente dans les échantillons. Entre autres, nous avons détecté la présence d'un parasite cilié du genre *Nyctoherus* sp. ainsi que des Trematodes et des Amibes parasites.

Abstract

The study of the eukaryotic fraction of the microbiota using a metabarcoding approach is usually hindered by the high host to eukaryotic microbiota DNA ratio in samples. The 18S rRNA gene is similar for both the host and its eukaryotic communities, leading to a preferential amplification of the predominant host DNA when using universal primers. Multiple approaches have been developed to reduce host DNA amplification. One method is based on elongation arrest blocking primers, oligonucleotides modified with a C3 Spacer that stops the advancement of the DNA polymerase at non-conserved regions of a target gene. In this paper, we successfully developed and tested species-specific elongation arrest blocking primers to block the Flag cichlid, *Mesonanta festinus*, 18S rRNA SSU. Our elongation arrest blocking primers significantly reduced the amount of amplicons from host DNA in samples by 66 %. In addition to reducing the amount of sequencing wasted, the blocking primers increased the detectability of potentially dangerous parasitic taxa in fish gut, highlighting the potential of the method for parasitic screening. For instance, we discovered a case of infection by the parasitic ciliate *Nyctotherus* sp. Also, we detected the presence of a parasitic Trematode and an Amoebae, collected compelling data on the species feeding habits and obtained data on the commensal eukaryotic diversity present in *M. festinus* gut. While our data support the possibility of achieving a complete inhibition of host DNA amplification using elongation arrest blocking primers, more research is still required. Still, there is a need for the development and additional testing of protocols to study the eukaryotic diversity present in fish gut, a slow-growing field of study in comparison to its prokaryotic counterpart.

Introduction

To date, most of the molecular microbial ecology research has focused on the prokaryotic branch of the microbiota. Yet, previous findings have linked the eukaryotic communities living in hosts' guts to several pathologic conditions in fish (Scheifler *et al.* 2019) and mammals (Aivelo & Norberg 2018) using COI and 18S metabarcoding approaches. Furthermore, major interactions between species from the three taxonomic domains have been reported in animal guts (Leung *et al.* 2018, Kodio *et al.* 2020). However, this field of study is slowed by the poor availability of simple and cost-effective molecular methods to analyse gut eukaryotic communities. While a variety of approaches are currently available, none are exempt from the introduction of bias nor are well optimized (Green & Minz 2005, Vestheim & Jarman 2008). For instance, taxonomic identification using taxonomic keys does not allow the detection of microscopic organisms and requires *a priori* knowledge of the potential biodiversity present. Conversely, high-throughput DNA sequencing approaches have proven their ability to identify the taxonomic richness in samples at a higher taxonomic resolution than visual identification in fish, while also giving additional information on diet and the unknown diversity present (Berry *et al.* 2015). The development of optimised molecular methods to characterise eukaryotic gut communities is essential to better describe the commensal eukaryotic microbiota and host-parasite interactions in natural populations of fish.

The main challenge in analysing the eukaryotic fraction of the microbiota comes from the homologies between the conserved ribosomal RNA SSU sequences of the host and their associated eukaryotic organisms. While universal primers have the advantage of amplifying taxonomically diverse phyla, this characteristic favors the amplification of unwanted host DNA. Indeed, DNA amplification with universal primers often leads to a preferential amplification of the predominant host DNA in the gut samples (Su *et al.* 2018). This high abundance of host DNA contamination considerably limits the detection of DNA from other organisms that are present in lower abundances.

There are multiple methods to reduce the quantity of host DNA amplicons in samples. Recently, Zhong *et al.* (2021) developed CRISPR-Cas Selective Amplicon Sequencing (CCSAS) based on taxon-specific single-guide RNA to direct Cas9 to cut host 18S rRNA gene sequences. Using this method, they achieved a near complete blockage of host DNA. They also designed

guide RNAs for approximately 16 000 metazoan and plant taxa. While CRISPR is known to recognize the wrong target gene in certain occurrences (Fu et al. 2013), this major advance to the field could rapidly become the go-to approach to inhibit the amplification of specific genes. Also, Green & Mitz (2005) developed a similar method using a Suicide Polymerase Endonuclease Restriction (SuPER), in which specific restriction enzymes cut the host's amplicons before PCR amplification. However, this method requires a unique cutting site in the host's target gene and has only been applied once in another study (Guedegbe et al. 2009). Another way is to use a cocktail of multiple group-specific amplification primers to detect a wide range of organisms in samples (Koester & Gergs 2017). While this method has proven to be useful, the use of multiple primers can lead to an amplification bias and their usage requires in-depth *a priori* knowledge of the eukaryotic communities under study. Since there is scarce information about fish eukaryotic gut communities, the usage of a multiple group-specific primers for highly conserved regions such as the 18S rRNA SSU is suboptimal compared to methods that allow for explorative and integrative research.

A method of growing interest, developed by Vestheim & Jarman (2008) is the usage of blocking primers to inhibit the PCR amplification of undesired DNA in metabarcoding studies. These species-specific primers are modified with a C3 spacer at the 3' end, a short three carbon chain that prevents the elongation of the DNA during PCR amplification. While it is slowly getting a wide-range acceptance (Boessenkool et al. 2012, Belda et al. 2017, Su et al. 2018a, Liu et al. 2019, Mayer et al. 2021, Rojahn et al. 2021, Stewart et al. 2021), the usage of blocking primers to describe host-parasite interactions could still benefit from additional testing of the method for other non-referenced species. Moreover, additional data should help compare this method to the newly developed approach based on CRISPR-Cas (Zhong et al. 2021). Studies have used annealing inhibiting blocking primers, primers overlapping with the 3' end of universal primers and competing directly for annealing, to reduce host DNA amplification in the krill (*Euphausia superba*) (Vestheim and Jarman 2008), mosquitoes (*Anopheles gambiae*) (Belda et al. 2017), fish species (Su et al. 2018) and humans (Boessenkool et al. 2012). On the contrary, elongation arrest blocking primers are primers annealing anywhere in the target sequence and stopping the advancement of the DNA polymerase. This type of blocking primers is less studied since their effectiveness was seemingly lower than for annealing inhibition blocking primers (Vestheim and Jarman 2008). However, the development path for elongation arrest blocking

primer is simpler since they can be developed in ultra-variable regions of the target gene, facilitating the discovery of unique sequences in the host's target gene.

Here, we successfully developed and tested specific elongation arrest blocking primers based on the methodology suggested by Vestheim & Jarman (2008) to block *Mesonanta festinus* 18S rRNA SSU during PCR amplification. This integrative and easily implemented method allowed a significant reduction of host's DNA amplification, while not interfering with the amplification of other target sequences. Furthermore, the blocking primers enhanced the detectability of other species in gut samples and helped dress a short portrait of the commensal eukaryotic diversity present in *M. festinus* gut. Overall, this method represents a good approach to enhance the detection of parasitic species and ensure a cost-effective sequencing of samples enriched with host DNA. Although developed for *Mesonanta festinus*, a good model species for ecological and evolution studies in the Amazon basin (Pires et al. 2015), this approach could potentially be modified for usage with various other Teleosts.

Methods

DNA extraction

Eight *M. festinus* were collected at Anavilhanas National Park in the *Rio Negro* (AM, Brazil) (2°41'46.1S, 60°46'33.3W) in 2015, using small seine net-fishing. Shortly after collection, fish were dissected using sterile instruments, under a flame, to extract a fin and a gut sample according to the methodology described by Sylvain et al. (2019). Samples were frozen at -80 °C right after the dissection and until the DNA extraction. Genomic DNA was extracted following the manufacturer's instructions of the QIAGEN DNeasy® Blood and Tissues kit and stored at -80°C until amplification. Double strand DNA was quantified using the Qubit® 2.0 Fluorometer.

Blocking primers development

Using purified DNA from *M. festinus* fin samples, the V4-V5 region of the rRNA 18S gene of *M. festinus* was amplified by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). We used the following amplification primers: 566F and 1289R [Appendix B] (Hadziavdic et al. 2014); and the following PCR program: (a) 30s 98°C; (b) 10s 98°C; (c) 30s 60°C; (d) 20s 72°C; (e) 2min at 72°C; using 30 amplification cycles. The amplicons were purified with 0.7X AMPure beads (Beckman Coulter Genomics) and DNA quality was tested using Nanodrop 2000. The six *M. festinus* 18S rRNA

gene libraries were sequenced by Sanger sequencing at the *IBIS Plateforme d'Analyse Génomique* to describe the gene of interest. The six resulting sequences' electropherograms were assembled jointly using the CAP3 *denovo* assembler implemented in the UGENE suite to obtain a robust consensus sequence (Sequences are available on Genbank NCBI with the following accession numbers: MZ736888:MZ736899[accn]).

The consensus sequence was aligned to known 18S rRNA gene sequences of 7 genera of parasites typically found in fish's gut, i.e., *Cryptosporidium hominis*, *Myxobolus cultus*, *Lepeophtheirus salmonis*, *Myxobolus cerebralis*, *Caenorhabditis elegans*, *Ichthyophthirius multifiliis* and *Aglaiogyrodactylus forficuloides*. We used the MUSCLE (Madeira et al. 2019) alignment program, also implemented in UGENE (Okonechnikov et al. 2012). The consensus sequence is available in supporting information (Parasite_Alignment.fa). We manually compared the *M. festinus* 18S rRNA gene V3-V4 region consensus sequence to the seven parasite sequences to search for regions which can strongly differentiate *M. festinus* from other taxa. Three unique regions were detected and used as templates to develop blocking primers [Fig. 1]. From these unique genomic regions, we designed four blocking primers, two forward and two reverse primers, to specifically bind to the chosen regions of *M. festinus*' V4-V5 rRNA gene [Fig. 1]. These primers modified with a C3-spacer to inhibit DNA amplification were manufactured by *MilliporeSigma*.

The first combination of primers [635F-C3 and 1062R-C3], henceforth represented by the letter *F*, binds to DNA regions far from the universal primers binding site. On the contrary, the other combination [816F-C3 and 846R-C3], henceforth represented by the letter *M*, is composed of primers binding at the center of the target gene and stopping the elongation midway.

Blocking primer evaluation

PCR amplification and DNA sequencing

DNA from eight *M. festinus* gut samples collected at Anavilhanas National Park in the *Rio Negro* was used as PCR material to test the efficiency of the blocking primer combinations. Four gut samples were filled with food (Sample ID 1 to 4), while the other four samples had a moderate to null food bolus, leading to a higher host DNA to gut content ratio (Sample ID 5 to 8). The V4-V5 region (\approx 550 base pairs) of the 18S rRNA gene was amplified by PCR using the

amplification primers 616*F, 574*F and 1132R [Appendix B] (Hugerth et al. 2014). We used two forward primers to amplify a higher diversity of organisms in samples since 616*F and 574*F does not amplify the same range of organisms. This set of primers was designed to optimise parasite species detection (Kounosu et al. 2019). We produced seven different PCR reaction mixes for each sample. We tested for concentrations of 2X, 5X and 10X for each of the two combination of blocking primers (i.e., *F-primers* and *M-primers*) and included a control group without blocking primers. The following PCR program was used: (a) 30s 98°C; (b) 10s 98°C; (c) 30s 57°C; (d) 20s 72°C; (e) 2min at 72°C; 35 amplification cycles. Amplified DNA was purified with 0.5X AMPure beads (Beckman Coulter Genomics) since using a lower PCR product to beads volume ratio helps to eliminate shorter sequences, primers dimers, proteins, and phenols. Post-PCR DNA concentration and quality were assessed on Nanodrop and by electrophoresis on 2% agarose gels. Indexing PCR was completed with the following program: 30 s 98°C; (b) 10 s 98°C; (c) 30 s 60°C; (d) 20 s 72°C; (e) 2 min at 72°C; 12 amplification cycles. We ran the PCR product on a 2% electrophoresis gel to assess the efficiency of the PCR reaction, purified the amplified DNA with 0.7X AMPure beads (Beckman Coulter Genomics) and verified the DNA concentration and quality on Nanodrop™ 2000. Positive and negative controls were included at each step of the PCR amplifications. After purification, multiplex sequencing was performed using the MiSeq platform from Illumina® (Illumina), by the *Plateforme d'analyses génomiques* at the *Institut de Biologie Intégrative et des Systèmes* (IBIS) of *Université Laval* using the MiSeq Reagent Kit v3 according to the manufacturer's protocols. Positive and negative controls were also sequenced but did not result in any sequence including amplification primers, supporting the absence of contamination during PCRs.

Data processing and taxonomic assignment

The analysis of amplicon sequences was done at the *Institut de Biologie Intégrative et des Systèmes* (IBIS) at *Université Laval*. After trimming with CutAdapt (Martin 2011), 1,417,627 sequences were obtained (mean of 33,753 sequences per sample). The demultiplexed fastq sequence files were processed through DADA2 (Callahan et al. 2016) using the function `ytfilterAndTrim()` with the following parameters: 280 for the read truncation length, two as the phred score threshold for total read removal and a maximum expected error of two for forward reads and four for reverse reads. The filtered reads were then fed to the error rate learning, dereplication and ASV inference steps using the functions `learnErrors()`, `derepFastq()` and `dada()`. Chimeric sequences were removed using the `removeBimeraDenovo()` function with the “consensus”

method parameter. Taxonomic assignment was done using the function *assignTaxonomy* from DADA2 in R (Wang et al. 2007) based on the SILVA Release 138.1 Ref NR 99 for SSU, which is based on a 99% criterion to remove redundant sequences in the database. We verified that the sequencing depth of every sample was sufficient using a rarefaction analysis [Fig. S1]. We calculated a taxonomic tree based on the DNA sequences using the R package *ape* (Paradis et al. 2004, Paradis & Schliep 2019) and a *Phyloseq* (McMurdie & Holmes 2013) object was produced in R to do subsequent analyses.

Statistical analyses

We estimated blocking primers efficiency by calculating the relative abundance of the class Actinopterygii, the class of *M. festivus*, in samples using the R package *Phyloseq*. Then, we grouped samples according to the blocking primer used during their amplification and produced barplots representing the mean relative abundances of Actinopterygii in each group. Since the relative abundances were not normally distributed, we used a non-parametric paired Wilcoxon test to verify for significant differences in host amplicons relative abundance between blocking primer groups.

Using the R functions *plot_richness* from *Phyloseq* and *estimate_pd* from *btools* (Thomas Battaglia 2021), we estimated the observed (Total number of ASVs), Faith (Phylogenetic diversity), Shannon, and Simpson alpha diversity indexes of the 5 blocking primer groups. We calculated a two-way ANOVA using both the blocking primer groups and the Gut-ID as explicative variables for each diversity index estimated. We verified the assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity of variances using Shapiro-Wilk tests on residuals and Levene tests for each group. In cases where the assumptions were not respected, we used a square root transformation which lowered the impact of high alpha diversity values. When the ANOVA was significant for a given Alpha diversity metric, we used a Tukey's HSD to verify for pairwise differences between groups considering a 95 % confidence interval. Afterward, we computed the same diversity analyses based on a dataset where we removed the class Actinopterygii, using the function “*subset_taxa()*” from *Phyloseq*, to verify if host related ASVs diversity were driving the differences between groups. For both the datasets with and without host related ASVs, we produced boxplots representing the four alpha diversity metrics in function of the experimental groups considered.

A two-way PERMANOVA based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity indexes was calculated using the function *adonis* in the R package *vegan* considering the blocking primer groups and the gut IDs of samples as the independent variables. To verify for significant differences between blocking primer groups, we used a post-hoc pairwise Adonis test with the function *pairwise.adonis2* (Pedro Martinez Arbizu 2017). Afterwards, PCoAs based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity indexes and Weighted Unifrac phylogenetic distances were produced using the function *plot_ordination* from the R package *PHYLOSEQ* to illustrate the results of the PERMANOVA. Again, we produced another PCoA based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarity index using the dataset without host related ASVs. More specifically, we removed the class Actinopterygii from the Phyloseq object and produced a PCoA to assess the impact of blocking primers while removing the influence of host related ASVs.

We produced a taxonomic barplot considering the top 10 % ASVs in abundance (43 most abundant ASVs) present in each blocking primer group for the four samples with a high relative abundance of host DNA using the function *plot_bar* from *Phyloseq* in R. We produced the barplot considering the Class as the taxonomic resolution. We omitted the Phylum *Streptophyta* since its overabundance in most samples masked the detectability of other more-interesting taxonomic units and is food related. Afterward, we produced another taxonomic barplot considering the samples amplified using *M*-primers while removing every ASVs that are associated to the alimentation of *M. festivus*. More precisely, we removed the following Phyla: Phragmoplastophyta, Vertebrata, Peronosporomycetes, Chlorophyta, Blastocladiomycota, Dinoflagellata, Ochrophyta and LKM15. Also, we removed two taxonomic classes from the *Phyloseq* object (i.e., Chromadorea and Diatomea). This graphical element aimed at describing the eukaryotic microbiota of *M. festivus* without consideration to its feeding habits.

Discussion and results

Blocking primer development

We discovered three unique regions in *M. festivus*' rRNA 18S V4-V5 gene sequence following its comparison with seven potential parasites present in fish gut. From these genomic regions, three were specific enough to specifically ligate to the host' target region. Elongation arrest blocking primers were developed in duos, one forward and one reverse, to block the amplification on both the 3' and 5' strands. They have been modified with a C3 spacer at the 3'

end, a chain of 3 hydrocarbons, to stop the advancement of the DNA polymerase. The blockage should result in the formation of shorter and incomplete amplicons that will not be sequenced because they do not possess the two adapter sequences required for Illumina Miseq sequencing.

Vestheim & Jarman (2008) previously tried to develop elongation arrest blocking primers. However, their attempt was unsuccessful since these completely inhibited the PCR reaction in their study. Likewise, the authors suggested a lower efficacy of elongation arrest blocking primers because they are not interacting directly with the DNA polymerase (Vestheim and Jarman 2008). Yet, there is no scientific data to support their lower efficiency. Also, Belda et al. (2017) previously achieved a blockage of more than 80 % using elongation arrest by Peptide-Nucleic Acid while they failed at reducing host DNA using annealing blocking primers in the same study. Furthermore, the genetic regions adjacent to universal primers are usually very conserved (Rojahn et al. 2021). For this reason, elongation arrest primers are more versatile and easier to develop, making them suitable for any species and a wide range of studies. The development of a replicable method to develop such primers should facilitate further eukaryote metagenomic studies.

Our first duo of primers (*F*-primers) [635F-C3 and 1062R-C3] was binding to DNA regions afar from the amplification primers annealing site [Fig. 1]. The *F*-primer set was meant to block the DNA polymerase towards the end of the amplification, forming an incomplete amplicon that should not include the 3' complementary sequence required for the barcode indexing PCR. Since the indexing sequence is required for Miseq sequencing, the incomplete amplicons should not be sequenced. However, the *F*-primers did not significantly reduce the amount of host DNA in samples [Fig. 2]. This could be due to the annealing position of the *F*-primers, located afar from the annealing site of the polymerase. Here, the long distance between the initial position of the polymerase and the blocking primers could lead to an inefficacy at blocking the polymerase. While we have no way to confirm this hypothesis, host DNA sequences were full length in the samples amplified using the *F*-primers, confirming that there was no blockage of the polymerase during the PCR amplification. Considering the inefficiency of the *F*-primers, it would have been interesting to test for blocking primers complementary to the one used in this study. The complementary sequence of the *F*-primers would have blocked the amplification of host DNA nearer to the polymerase annealing site. The resulting amplicons would have been very short,

approximately 50 base pairs, and could potentially lead to a better blockage of host DNA amplification by directly removing the cleaved sequences during the size selection step using AMPure beads from Beckman Coulter Genomics.

The second duo (*M*-primers) [816F-C3 and 846R-C3] was composed of primers binding at the center of the target gene and stopping the elongation midway [Fig. 1]. This results in the formation of incomplete amplicons of about half the length of a normal amplicon. The formation of short amplicons has numerous advantages. Firstly, the incomplete amplicons are visible on electrophoresis or polyacrylamide gels, on which the efficiency of the blocking primers can be assessed quickly after the PCR amplification. Secondly, these shorter amplicons are easy to filter-out using AMPure beads from Beckman Coulter Genomics. The size recovery based on bead to DNA ratio step tends to select longer amplicons and remove primer dimers and other unwanted contaminants. A bead to DNA ratio of 0.5X is removing most of the amplicons of less than 300 bp facilitating the removal of incomplete amplicons which could otherwise negatively affect the indexing PCR.

Similarly to the study of Vestheim and Jarman (2008), using a concentration of more than 2X of the *M*-primers completely inhibited the PCR amplification. There is a short complementary region between these two blocking primers, which may favour the formation of primer dimers. Consequently, the PCR inhibition may be caused by the formation of secondary structures at high concentrations, ultimately leading to unwanted interactions with the polymerase. Also, there could be non-specific binding in presence of a high concentration of the *M*-primers. Not achieving to include higher concentrations of blocking primers is a major shortcoming since previous studies systematically obtained a higher amplification inhibition when using 10X of blocking primers (Vestheim and Jarman 2008, Clerissi et al. 2018, Su et al. 2018). In this sense, it is possible that achieving to use a higher concentration of elongation arrest blocking primers could lead to a near complete inhibition of host target gene amplification.

Blocking primer evaluation

According to the paired sample Wilcoxon test, the *M*-primers allowed a significant reduction of the mean relative abundance of host sequences present in samples when compared to the

control group (p-value = 0.004). The mean relative abundance of the class Actinopterygii, the class of *M. festivus*, in the eight gut samples treated with the *M-primers* represented 34.01 % of the abundance of the control group [Fig. 2]. On the contrary, none of the three concentrations of *F-primers* significantly reduced the number of host amplicons in samples in the paired samples Wilcoxon test (p-values > 0.05). Using an increasing concentration of *F-primers*, from 2X to 10X, did not lead to a reduction of the number of host sequences in samples. In this sense, *F-primers* did not successfully stop the amplification of host DNA and did not successfully inhibit the following indexing PCR.

There was a marked difference between the relative abundances of host related ASVs detected in the eight guts sampled. This important variation was caused by the state of the gut sampled. While four guts were full and contained a low relative mass of host tissues (Gut IDs 1 to 4), the four other guts contained a higher relative mass of host tissues (Gut IDs 5 to 8). Blocking primers are especially needed in this second case, where the detection of the eukaryotic communities of the gut is masked by the high abundance of host DNA in the template. For the *M-primers*, the efficacy at inhibiting host's DNA amplification was consistent in samples starting with a low and a high relative abundance of host tissues [Table 1]. For example, the mean relative abundance of the class Actinopterygii in gut IDs 1 to 4, when treated with the *M-primers*, represents 14.58 % of the relative abundance of the control group. This means that we were able to reduce the amplification of non-target host DNA sequences at close to 1/6 in these samples.

While we achieved a significant reduction of host DNA amplification in samples using elongation arrest blocking primers, we were not able to reach a complete inhibition. Previous studies reached near complete inhibition of host target gene amplification using both annealing blocking primers and CCSAS (Vestheim and Jarman 2008, Liu et al. 2019, Zhong et al. 2021). Furthermore, Zhong et al. (2021) already developed guide RNAs for 16 000 referenced eukaryotes. Their method could also be implemented for unreferenced organisms using Sanger sequencing, as we did in this study. Consequently, future research should consider testing and optimizing this novel approach, which could represent a major advancement to the field.

Alpha diversity

When compared to the control group in a Tukey HSD test, the Faith phylogenetic alpha diversity index was significantly lower in the *M-primers* group (p-value = 0.02). Similarly, the total

number of ASVs (observed diversity) in samples seemed lower for the *M-primers* group than in the control group in figure S2, but there was no significant difference between groups (p -value = 0.12). The reduction in these two alpha diversity metrics was mainly caused by the lower number of host related ASVs present in samples amplified with the *M-primers*. When removing the class Actinopterygii from the dataset, there was no significant difference between the alpha diversity metrics of the *M-primers* group and the control group in a Tukey HSD test (p -values > 0.05) [Fig. S3]. This supports the possibility that the differences in alpha diversity between these two groups is caused by the presence of many host ASVs. Moreover, we only detected a mean of 30 ASVs per sample, which is a low total diversity. For this reason, the removal of a small number of host related ASVs in the *M-primers* group could represent an important shift of the communities observed in samples. Strikingly, 20 % of all ASVs in the dataset are related to vertebrates, while *M. festivus* diet should not include vertebrates since the species has a generalist diet mostly composed of detritus and periphyton (Pires et al. 2015). For this reason, most of these ASVs probably originate from host DNA present in samples or could originate from other fish with which *M. festivus* interacts, as it was previously observed cleaning other fish from endoparasites (Severo-Neto and Froehlich 2015). Conversely, there were no significant difference between the *M-primers* group and the control group in the Tukey HSD test for the Shannon and Simpson alpha diversity indexes (p -value > 0.9) [Fig. S2]. These two alpha diversity indexes correct for the evenness in samples. Therefore, the evenness gained from the reduced number and abundance of host ASVs in the control group is counterbalancing for the loss of host related ASVs in the *M-primers* group. According to the alpha diversity results, *M-primers* specifically inhibited the amplification of host DNA sequences since their application did not inhibit the detection of other ASVs in samples. However, the usage of blocking primers did not lead to the detection of an increased alpha diversity in samples. Overall, using blocking primers still facilitated the unravelling of all the targeted eukaryotic diversity while requiring a lower sequencing depth.

Beta diversity

According to the two-way PERMANOVA comparing the Bray-Curtis dissimilarity indexes and considering the eight gut IDs and the four blocking primer combinations as factors, most of the variance was explained by differences between gut IDs ($R^2 = 0.85$; p -value = 3.0×10^{-5}) and a moderate part of the variance was explained by differences between blocking primer groups

($R^2 = 0.07$; p -value = 1.0×10^{-4}). Furthermore, the application of *M-primers* resulted in the highest influence on the sample's beta diversity in the Pairwise Adonis test comparing blocking primers combinations to the control group (For *M-primers*, $R^2 = 0.09$; p -value = 0.007). In the PCoA based on Bray-Curtis's dissimilarity indexes, there was a significant shift in beta diversity in the four samples which contained a moderate relative mass of host tissues (Gut IDs: 5 to 8), but no important variations in beta diversity for the four gut samples filled with food content (Gut IDs: 1 to 4) [Fig. 3]. This result was very similar when producing a PCoA based on weighted Unifrac distances [Fig. S4]. For samples 5 to 8, the usage of *M-primers* led to a shift in beta diversity, resulting in a reduction of the distance separating gut IDs 5 to 8 and 1 to 4 [Fig. 3]. Consequently, the *M-primers* significantly reduced the impact of a starting high relative mass of host tissues in samples.

Furthermore, *M-primers* did not affect the beta diversity of samples with a starting low amount of host DNA (Gut IDs: 1 to 4) in figure 3. When computing a pairwise Adonis test using a dataset where we removed every ASVs from the class Actinopterygii, *M-Primers* did not have a significant effect on the beta diversity when compared to the control group ($R^2 = 0.03$; p -value = 0.07). Indeed, there was no beta diversity shift between blocking primer groups when plotting a PCoA based on the dataset omitting the class Actinopterygii [Fig. S5]. While these results support a high specificity of the blocking primers to the host target gene, this does not rule out the possibility that our blocking primers would also inhibit the amplification of other teleostean. This highlights the limitation of the method for the description of the diet of carnivorous Teleosteans. Diet studies should rather focus on the study of the food bolus, which contains a reduced amount of host sequences.

***M. festivus* feeding habits**

Most of the diversity observed in *M. festivus* gut samples was related to food content. Two genera of plants, *Cyperus* sp. and *Oryza* sp., were the most abundant food related ASVs for the samples analysed. These two genera, from the order Poales, averaged 48 % of the total relative abundance in samples. Considering the diet of *M. festivus*, which is documented as mostly composed of detritus and periphyton, we expected a higher relative abundance of microalgae rather than a dominant presence of macroalgae in samples. Still, the presence of these plants

makes a lot of sense considering their high abundance on the field and that *M. festivus* hides in these plants. Moreover, we detected high abundance of Chlorophyceae, a unicellular green alga, and diatoms in some gut samples. We also detected high abundance of Nematodes from the class Chromadorea in six of the eight samples studied. This class of Nematodes includes several species living in sediments. The detection of plants, micro algae and Nematodes confirms an omnivorous and very diversified diet for *M. festivus* (Pires et al. 2015).

Furthermore, we detected Fungi species associated to *M. festivus*' alimentation. For example, *Pythium* sp., a genus of parasitic oomycetes known to infect plant roots was detected in six samples. This genus probably arises from fish feeding on decomposed plants. Considering *M. festivus* feeds on detritus, it would explain why plants as *Cyperus* sp. and *Oryza* sp. were so abundant in samples. Similarly, we detected a genus of Blastocladiomycota known to infect unicellular green algae in two samples.

Overall, most of the eukaryotic diversity that we identified in samples was related to food content. Notably, the high abundances of Poales, the two plants, tended to hinder the detection of other taxa that were less abundant in samples. Now that we have knowledge about the alimentation of the species, developing additional blocking primers could help reduce the amplification of specific food sources in samples. This could further enhance the detection of parasite species in infected fish. Indeed, the high abundance of these two plants hindered the detection of parasite species in figure 4. For this reason, we omitted them from figure 4.

Blocking primers for parasite detection

In figure 4, the use of *M*-primers enhanced the detection of low abundance parasitic taxonomic classes in gut IDs 5 to 8, samples with high abundance of host DNA. For instance, in the top 10% ASVs barplots [Fig. 4], we detected 12 different taxonomic classes in the *M*-primers group against 9 in the group without blocking primers. More importantly, parasitic classes of high interest were present in higher percentage, which improved their detectability. Indeed, the *M*-primers enhanced the detection of Trematodes in gut ID 6 [Fig. 4]. This class of parasitic helminths is known to infect fish species as an intermediate host and Mammals as definitive host. Additionally, *M*-primers helped to detect Arcellinida in gut ID 7 [Fig. 4]. This class of

Amoebae could also be a parasitic taxon infecting *M. festivus*. Likewise, the blocking primers enhanced the detection of low abundance parasite taxa in samples. This highlights the usefulness of blocking primers for parasitic screening, as parasitic taxa are usually present in lower abundances than host tissues and food in gut samples.

***M. festivus* Eukaryotic microbiome**

More broadly, the implementation of a metataxonomic approach combined with blocking primers optimized for parasite screening allowed the detection of multiple potential parasitic infections and the characterisation of the eukaryotic communities of *M. festivus* gut. For instance, a parasitic Ciliophora from the genus *Nyctotherus* sp. was detected in high relative abundance in two gut samples (Gut IDs 2 and 7) and in lower abundance in one (Gut ID 4) [Fig. 5]. To our knowledge, this genus was only documented once infecting a fish (Earl & Jiménez 1969). *Nyctotherus* sp. is known to cause diarrhea and digestive problems in pet turtles (Satbige et al. 2017; Suzuki et al. 2020). As previously mentioned, gut ID 6 was infected by a Platyhelminthes from the class Trematoda and we detected the presence of a Tubulinea in gut ID 7. Also, we detected Microsporidia in very low abundance in gut ID 4 but cannot conclude about its parasitic role in *M. festivus* considering the low amount of data that we collected. These results highlight the potential of developing metataxonomic approaches to describe the host-parasite relationships in a region as diversified as the Amazonian rainforest. The usage of a metataxonomic approach for the identification of gut eukaryotic diversity, and particularly the microscopic parasitic genera, favors the detection of unknown parasites. These species would potentially not be detected using conventional taxonomic identification methods, which rely on light microscopy, and which are still the main methods used in tropical parasite ecology studies.

Furthermore, we observed a low diversity of commensal eukaryotic taxa in *M. festivus* gut microbiota. Notably, the observed mycobiome of *M. festivus*, microfungi that are not related to food content, was mainly composed of Basidiomycota and Chytridiomycota. We also detected Ascomycota in low abundance in two samples of the control group, but this taxon was not detected in the *M-primers* group. These three fungal phyla were recently documented as being part of fish commensal mycobiome in tilapia and bighead carp (Zhou et al. 2021). The low contribution of these taxa could be explained by the high abundance of food related DNA in samples, which potentially hindered their detectability. Using primers adapted for the detection

of Fungi would potentially lead to the detection of a more diversified and abundant mycobiome for *M. festivus*.

Conclusion

We developed and tested a pair of elongation arrest blocking primers, a method which could potentially be replicated for other teleostean to study their parasitic communities. Our elongation arrest blocking primers led to a 66 % reduction in host DNA abundance in samples. This ultimately enhanced the detection of parasitic taxa in gut samples and significantly reduced the amount of wasted sequencing. The combination of a metagenomic approach and blocking primers helped us detecting a parasitic infection by the ciliate *Nyctotherus* sp. for the first time in fish. Also, we observed four other infections by parasitic taxa, collected data on the species feeding habits and provided a better overview of the eukaryotic diversity present in *M. festivus*' gut. However, other studies using annealing inhibiting blocking primers and CRISPR-Cas Selective Amplicon Sequencing (CCSAS) obtained a near complete inhibition of host DNA amplification. Notably, the newly developed CCSAS method looks promising and should be considered for future studies. When compared to our results, CCSAS leads to a higher inhibition of amplification and requires a similar development path as elongation arrest blocking primers.

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Authors contributions

N.L., S.B. and N.D. designed the experiment. F.S., N.L., A.V. and N.D. organized sampling expeditions. F.S. and N.L. sampled fish during field expeditions. N.L. processed samples in the laboratory (fish dissections and DNA extractions). N.L. and S.B. performed bioinformatic analyses. N.L. wrote the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Ethical approval

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Ethics Committee for the Use of Animals of the *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia* (INPA). The permit (number 29837-18 as of 23 March 2021) was approved by the Ethics Committee for the Use of Animals of INPA.

Data availability statement

The scripts and the datasets used for the statistical analysis of this project are freely available from the Open Science Network platform (URL: https://osf.io/u6w3f/?view_only=27cefb515bd345648867fc20268c2d88). The consensus sequence used to detect unique sites in *M. festivus* 18S rRNA V4-V5 gene is also available on OSN platform. Sequences from Sanger sequencing are available on Genbank NCBI with the following accession numbers: MZ736888:MZ736899[accn]).

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Table

Table 1: Relative abundances of the class Actinopterigii in *Mesonanta festinus* gut samples for each combination (n = 2) and each concentration (Conc.) (n = 3) of blocking primer tested in the study. *M*-primers are elongation arrest blocking primers located in the middle of the target gene (816F-C3 and 846R-C3) and *F*-primers are located at the extremities of the target gene (635F-C3 and 1062R-C3). At a concentration higher than 2X, M-primers completely inhibited the PCR amplification. In the table, N.a. stands for no amplification.

Blocking primer combination	Conc.	Actinopterigii relative abundance (%)							
		Low				High			
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Control	0	0.2%	0.3%	0.7%	3.6%	39.0%	46.5%	72.0%	77.9%
M-primers	2X	0.0%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%	9.0%	26.5%	24.0%	21.5%
M-primers	5X	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.
M-primers	10X	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.	N.a.
F-primers	2X	0.2%	1.0%	4.0%	1.3%	27.0%	33.0%	58.9%	70.2%
F-primers	5X	0.9%	4.9%	9.4%	0.7%	27.7%	38.8%	58.2%	66.3%
F-primers	10X	1.2%	8.9%	18.7%	0.7%	31.7%	39.5%	56.1%	73.1%

Figures

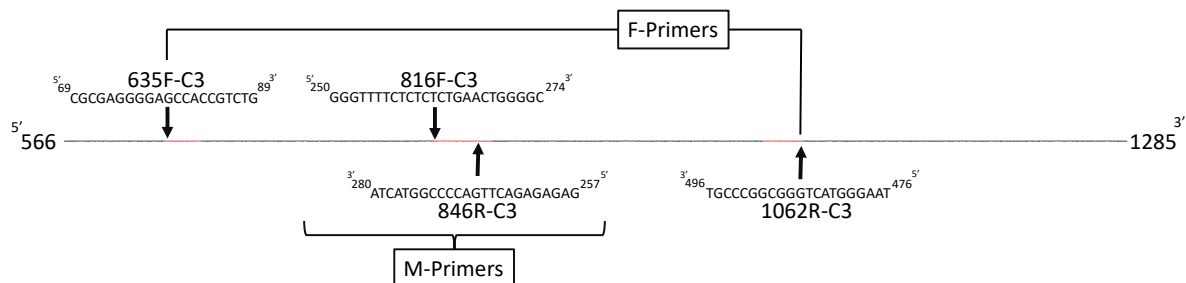


Figure 1: Starting position of the 4 designed blocking primers on the consensus sequence of *Mesonanta festivus* V4-V5 rRNA 18S gene. The sequence and direction of each blocking primer is identified on the figure. The 3 unique regions discovered are marked in red.

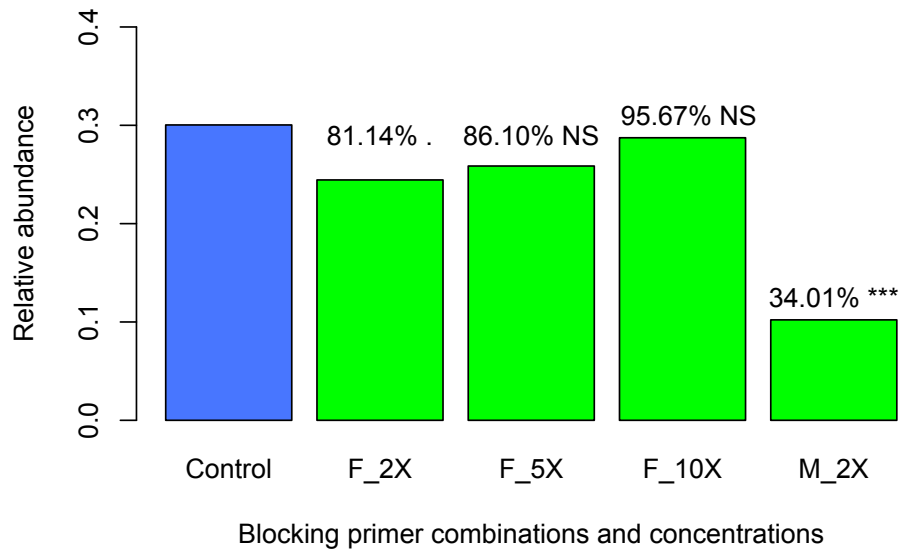


Figure 2: Mean relative abundance of ASVs from the class Actinopterygii detected in *Mesonauta festinus* gut samples based on the amplification of the 18S rRNA V4-V5 gene (n = 8). Samples have been grouped according to the blocking primers used during their amplification. The percentage above each bar plot represent the residual relative abundance of the class Actinopterygii when compared to the control group (colored in blue).

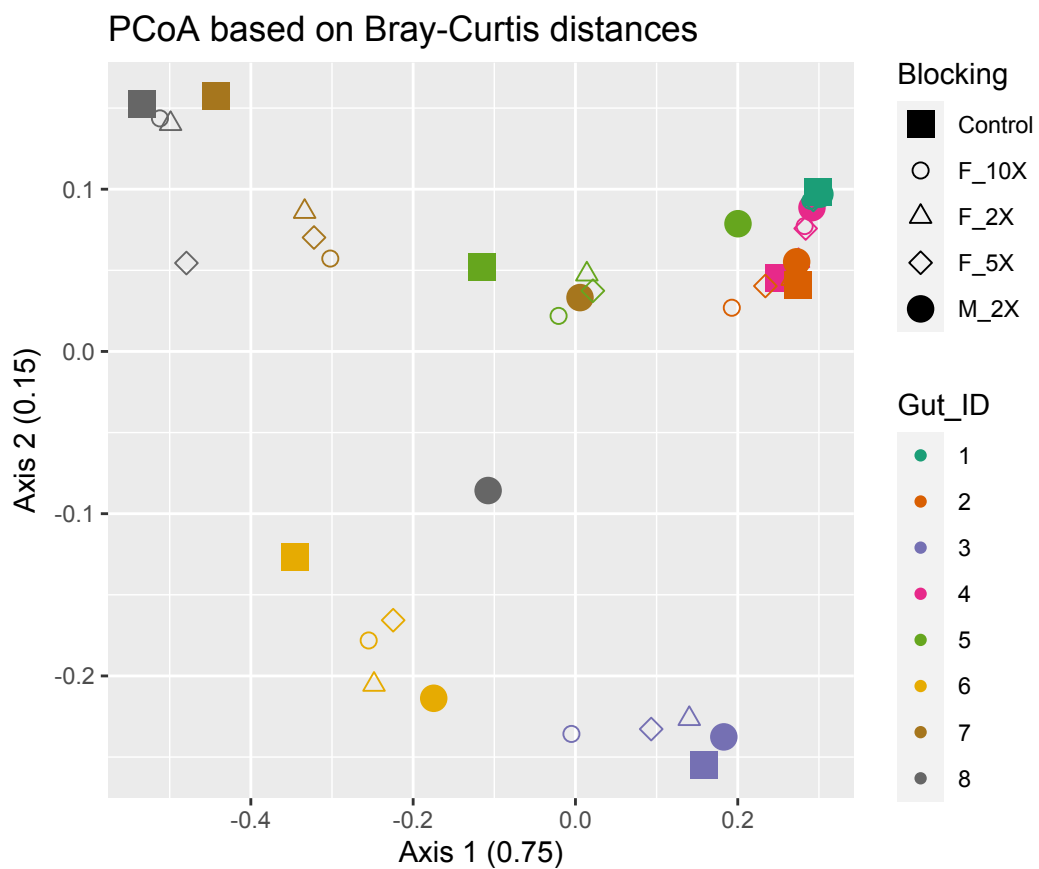


Figure 3: Principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) based on the Bray-Curtis distances between *Mesonanta festinus* gut samples Eukaryotic communities ($n = 40$). Samples were colored according to their gut ID ($n = 8$) and the pinch types represent the blocking primers used during their amplification ($n = 5$). The fraction of the total variance explained by each axis is identified.

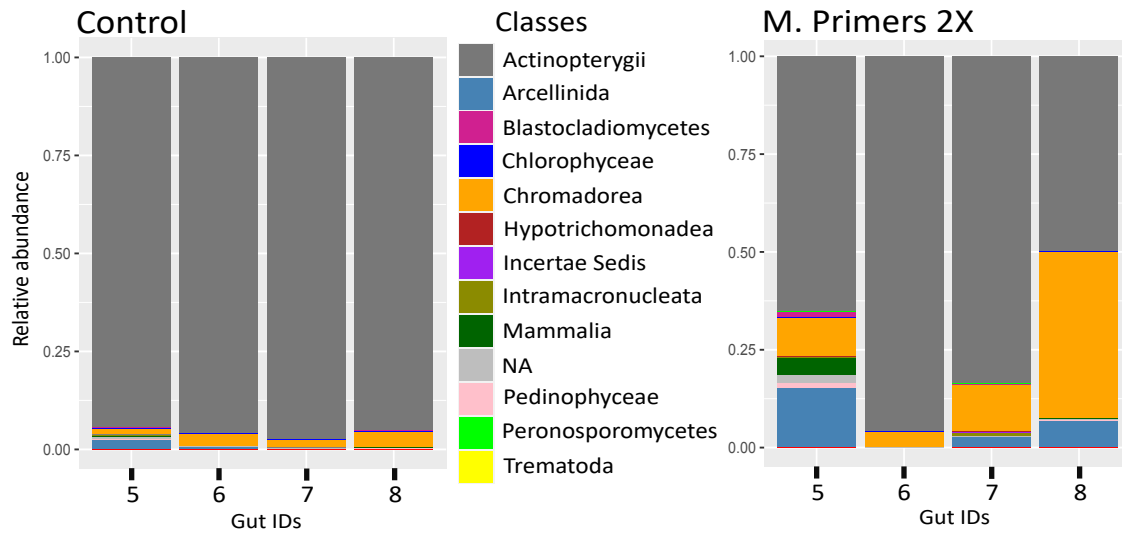


Figure 4: Relative abundance bar plots of the 43 most abundant ASVs present in *Mesonauta festinus* gut samples with a high relative abundance of host DNA ($n = 4$). We only considered the control and the *M-primers* groups. We omitted the Phylum Streptophyta from the bar plots since its high relative abundance hindered the detectability of other taxa. At the left, all samples are from the control group, which have not been affected by any blocking primers. At the right, samples have been amplified using *M-primers* at a concentration of 2X.

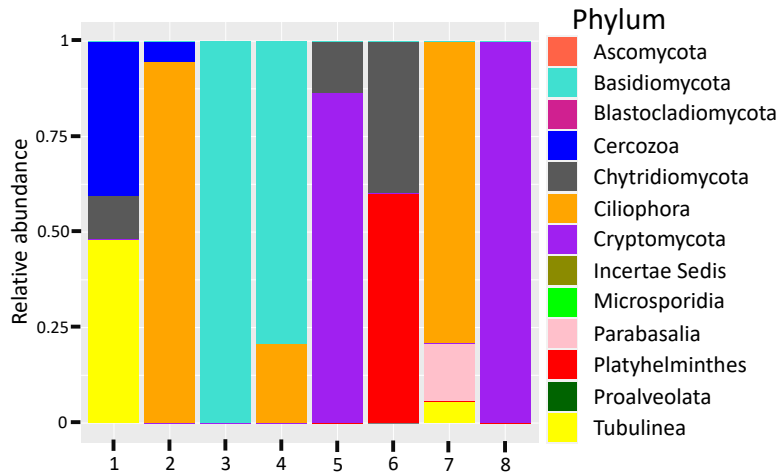


Figure 5: Relative abundance bar plots of the Eukaryotic gut microbiota of *Mesonauta festivus*. We only considered ASVs that are not related to *M. festivus* alimentation in samples amplified using the *M*-primers (n = 8). We omitted taxa that originate from the alimentation of *M. festivus*. Correspondingly, we removed the following Phyla from the bar plot: Phragmoplastophyta, Vertebrata, Peronosporomycetes, Chlorophyta, Blastocladiomycota, Dinoflagellata, Ochrophyta and LKM15. We also removed two taxonomic classes related to alimentation (i.e., Chromadorea and Diatomea).

Chapitre 2 : Gut microbiota of an Amazonian fish in a heterogeneous riverscape: Intergrating Genotype, Environment and Parasitic infections

Résumé

Le microbiote intestinal régule des processus physiologiques majeurs. Cependant, l'étude des facteurs modulant sa structure taxonomique est complexe en milieu naturel. *Mesonauta festivus*, un Cichlidé amazonien, a des caractéristiques favorables à ce type d'étude. Ainsi, nous avons utilisé une approche par métabarcodage des gènes de l'ARNr 16S et 18S couplée au génotypage par séquençage de 167 poissons et l'analyse de 33 paramètres physicochimiques de l'eau à 12 sites afin d'étudier la contribution relative de l'environnement, la présence de parasites intestinaux et le génotype de l'hôte sur la composition taxonomique du microbiote intestinal. Nous avons associé des infections par le cilié *Nyctotherus* sp. à une dysbiose du microbiote intestinal et détecté la présence de vers intestinaux, qui eux avaient un impact mineur sur le microbiote. Également, nos résultats soutiennent une influence plus importante de la proximité phylogénétique que la similitude environnementale sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinale de ce Cichlidé.

Abstract

A number of key factors can structure the gut microbiota of fish such as: environment, diet, health state and genotype. *Mesonauta festivus*, an Amazonian cichlid, is a relevant model organism to study the relative contribution of these factors on the community structure of fish gut microbiota. *M. festivus* genetic populations have previously been studied and the species thrives in rivers with markedly different physicochemical characteristics. Here, we collected 167 fish from 12 study sites and used 16S and 18S rRNA metabarcoding approaches to characterize the gut microbiome structure of *M. festivus*. These datasets were analysed in light of the host fish genotypes (Genotyping-By-Sequencing) and an extensive characterization of environmental physico-chemical parameters. We explored the relative contribution of environmental dissimilarity, the presence of parasitic taxa and phylogenetic relatedness on structuring the gut microbiota. We documented occurrences of *Nyctoterus* sp. infecting a fish and linked its presence to a dysbiosis of the host gut microbiota. Moreover, we detected the presence of helminths which had a minor impact on the gut microbiota of their host. Also, our results support a higher impact of the phylogenetic relatedness between fish rather than environmental similarity between sites of study on structuring the gut microbiota for this Amazonian cichlid. Our study in a heterogeneous riverscape integrates a wide range of factors known to structure fish gut microbiomes. It significantly improves understanding of the complex relationship between fish, their parasites, their microbiota, and the environment.

Importance

The gut microbiota is known to play important roles in its host immunity, metabolism, and behavior. Its taxonomic composition is modulated by a complex interplay of factors that are hard to study simultaneously in natural systems. *Mesonauta festivus*, an Amazonian cichlid, is an interesting model to simultaneously study the influence of multiple variables on the gut microbiota. In this study, we explored the relative contribution of the environmental conditions, the presence of parasitic infections and the genotype of the host on structuring the gut microbiota of *M. festivus* in Amazonia. Our results highlighted infections by a parasitic ciliate that caused a disruption of the gut microbiota and by parasitic worms that had a low impact on the microbiota. Finally, our results support a higher impact of the genotype than the environment on structuring the microbiota for this fish. These findings significantly improve understanding of the complex relationship between fish, their parasites, their microbiota, and the environment.

Introduction

Fish gut microbiota is now acknowledged to play important roles in their host's metabolism, immunity and even behavior (Bäckhed 2011, Wang et al. 2018, Zheng et al. 2020, Morais et al. 2020). The taxonomic composition and functional repertoire of the gut microbiota are determined by a wide range of factors. From these, four usually stand out as the most important: environmental conditions, host diet, genotype, and physiological condition (i.e., developmental stage and state of health) (Ghanbari et al. 2015, Wang et al. 2018, Kodio et al. 2020, Ou et al. 2021). The contribution of these factors on the structure of the gut microbiota has been addressed previously using *in vivo* experiments on the zebrafish model, *Danio rerio* (Stephens et al. 2016, Arias-Jayo et al. 2018, Zhang et al. 2019). However, modelling *in situ* host-microbiota interaction with *in vivo* experimental data is far from being predictive, since *in situ* studies involve a much more complex interplay of multiple factors. The complexity of field studies makes it extremely important for *in situ* studies to have both elaborate sampling designs and extensive knowledge of the species to allow generation of meaningful results.

The environment is one of the main factors shaping the gut microbiota of fish (Pérez et al. 2010). Fish are in permanent contact with the surrounding water's microbial communities, which can act as the primary source of fish microbial symbionts (Sylvain and Derome 2017, Lavoie et al. 2021). Consequently, changes in water physicochemical parameters or other environmental alterations (e.g. xenobiotics) affect the taxonomic structure of the gut microbiota of fish (Sylvain et al. 2016, 2019, 2020, Jin et al. 2018). The Amazon Basin is characterized by heterogeneous aquatic ecosystems resulting from two main water types with very contrasting chemistries (Junk et al. 2015), fish communities (Junk et al. 2007) and water microbial communities (Peixoto et al. 2011). White water systems are characterised by a cloudy appearance caused by a larger amount of suspended solids, a lower amount of dissolved organic carbon (DOC), a circumneutral pH and a higher quantity of ions than black water, which is rich in DOC, acidic and ion-poor. For instance, conductivity at 25°C for black water is close to 8 µS/cm versus 70 µS/cm for white water. Also, the pH of black water systems is usually lower than five, compared to seven for white water (Sioli 1984, Val and Almeida-Val 1995, Ríos-Villamizar et al. 2013, Holland et al. 2017). The bacterioplankton communities from these different water types also significantly differ and is correlated with differences in environmental parameters (Sylvain et al. 2021). Since the surrounding water may be a source of horizontal transfer of environmental

microbial strains to the fish gut microbiota (Sylvain et al. 2019, Lavoie et al. 2021), we hypothesised that certain taxa of *M. festivus*' gut microbiome would be related to the water type (black or white) and potentially recruited by horizontal transfer. If environment plays a major structuring role on microbial communities, the microbiota of a given fish species living in both water types should harbour discriminant taxonomic features specific to each environment.

Fish microbiota can also be associated with the physiological condition of their host. The gut microbiota is an important structuring component of the innate immunity of fish (Gomez and Balcazar 2008) and is in direct contact with parasites colonizing the gut. Moreover, several fish pathologies have been associated to gut microbiota dysbiosis (i.e. imbalance) (Leung et al. 2018, Xiong et al. 2019, Infante-Villamil et al. 2021). For instance, Llewellyn et al. (2017) documented a disruption of the skin microbiome of the Atlantic salmon following infection with the parasitic copepod *Lepeophtheirus salmonis*, favoring prevalence of opportunistic bacterial strains at the expense of putative commensals. Disruption of microbiome following parasitic infection was also confirmed in zebrafish (Gaulke et al. 2019). More recently, both synergistic and antagonistic interactions between ciliates and the microbiome have been described (Jahangiri et al. 2021). Therefore, the microbiota of wild fish infected by certain types of parasites could also present signs of dysbiosis involving parasite-specific taxonomic features. Given that parasitism of fish exerts tremendous negative effects on the economy and health of Amazonian riverine communities (Marques et al. 2020), many studies explored the complex dynamic of parasitic infections in Amazonia. To date, all of them have focused on visual identification, rather than using molecular approaches such as metabarcoding, thus limiting both the exhaustivity and accuracy of parasite detection and identification (Carvalho and Tavares-Dias 2017, Baia et al. 2018, O'Dell et al. 2020, Neves et al. 2021). A more extensive characterization of the parasitic diversity present in each Amazonian water type and its interactions with the gut microbiota of wild fish is therefore needed. The use of next generation sequencing will provide improved data and may lead to a more sophisticated statistical framework for further research on this matter.

Host phylogenetic relatedness is another key determinant of the gut microbiota taxonomic structure (Boutin et al. 2014, Li et al. 2017, Ling et al. 2020b). Indeed, close relationships between fingerlings and parents in species that exert extensive parental care (e.g. Cichlidae and Gasterosteidae) should favor vertical transfers, ultimately leading to akin

microbiotas in phylogenetically related fish (Sylvain and Derome 2017). In the same way, similar genetic backgrounds could favor the recruitment of similar microbiomes in closely related fish. For instance, Smith et al. (2015) observed a higher gut microbiota dissimilarity between Stickleback populations that are more genetically divergent. According to this, if host phylogenetic relatedness is an important determinant of the gut microbiota taxonomic structure, fish from the same genetic population should harbour similar gut microbiomes when considering their water type of origin and the presence of parasitic infections.

However, separating the effects of the phylogenetic relatedness and the environment is a complex challenge in natural systems, as high environmental dissimilarity between sites sometimes indirectly leads to a stronger genetic differentiation (Hay et al. 2022). Considering the high environmental heterogeneity of the Amazonian watershed, deciphering genetic and environmental effect requires the comparison of multiple connected black and white water sites involving different genetic populations. In any case, the interplay between genetic and environmental effect on gut microbiota taxonomic structure ranges between the following extreme scenario: in the presence of a strong environmental effect, fish should display similar microbial community shifts at similar environmental shifts (e.g. independent black water sites versus their respective connected white water sites). On the opposite, in the presence of a weak environmental effect, fish from a same genetic population, but inhabiting contrasting environments, are expected to converge in terms of microbiota composition.

This study aimed to understand how the gut microbiome of *M. festivus* is structured by their hosts' phylogenetic relatedness, parasitic communities, and the environment. Here, we combined 16S and 18S rRNA metabarcoding approaches to characterize the gut bacterial and eukaryotic communities from four genetic populations of *M. festivus* distributed across a wide range of rivers (black and white) within the Brazilian Amazon basin. We described (1) host-parasite prevalence rate in black and white water environments, (2) the possible roles environment and phylogenetic relatedness play on structuring the gut microbiota and (3) the effect of gut dwelling taxa presence in the gut microbiota. *M. festivus*, a detritivore cichlid ubiquitous to the Amazon basin, was chosen as the model organism since it has a high environmental tolerance to environmental variations such as drastically contrasting abiotic conditions between black and white water (Pires et al. 2015). Also, parasitic infections by

Nematodes have previously been reported in wild specimens of *M. festivus* (Cárdenas et al. 2018) and the species has important parental care investment, staying with fingerlings post hatching (Pires et al. 2015). Finally, in terms of genetic diversity, the four populations of *M. festivus* recorded in Amazonia are not structured according to the water physicochemical characteristics (Leroux et al. 2022), therefore making this species model suitable to disentangle environmental *versus* genetic effect on microbiota composition. Taken together, *M. festivus* is a relevant model to measure the relative contribution of environment, genotype, and parasitic infection in shaping the taxonomic structure of fish microbiota in a natural system.

Methods

Experimental design

We sampled 167 *M. festivus* at 12 sites distributed across three major Amazonian rivers (i.e., Rio Branco, Rio Negro and Rio Solimões) (permits # 2018021-1 and # 29837-18). [Fig. 1]. These sites comprised ecosystems with drastically divergent physicochemical parameters: five black water sites (BAR, NEG, CEM, ANA and TEF) and seven white water sites (PIR, SOL, MAN, JAR, JAC, CAT, BRA) [Table 1]. Field trips were conducted from September to December 2018–2019 during the dry season. We sampled every fish during the same season as there are parasites which prevalence is known to be more variable between seasons in Amazonia (Dias and Tavares-Dias 2015, Martins et al. 2017). We estimated the watercourse distance separating each sampling site using Google Earth pro. A multiparameter YSI Professional+Series meter (YSI Inc/Xylem Inc USA) was used to characterize water physicochemical properties (conductivity and pH) at each site. Two litres of water was also sampled at each site 30 cm below the surface, the depth where *M. festivus* were fished (Pires et al. 2015), to characterize other water parameters in the laboratory. At the laboratory, dissolved organic carbon (DOC) was quantified and characterized, and the concentration of nutrients (NO_2^- , NO_3^- , silicates), free ions (Ca, Na, Cl, Mg, K) and 12 metals (Al, V, Cr, Mn, Fe, Co, Ni, Cu, Zn, As, Cd and Pb) were determined according to the method detailed in Sylvain et al. (2021). All environmental parameters can be found in the supplementary information section. Fish specimens were collected at each sampling site using a combination of small seine net-fishing and line fishing (fish collection permit number 29837-18). Shortly after collection, fish were euthanized using a classic MS-222 protocol to dissect a fin clip, a gill, gut tissues and stomach content. All tissues were kept individually in NAP conservation buffer to preserve

DNA integrity (Camacho-Sanchez *et al.* 2013). Samples were frozen at -20°C right after the dissection and until DNA extraction.

Next Generation Sequencing Library Preparation

A total of 167 midgut samples were collected and processed. DNA was extracted from 20 mg of a midgut segment for each fish. We specifically selected the middle section of the intestine to be constant in the tissues analysed. Genomic DNA was extracted using the QIAGEN DNeasy® Blood and Tissues kit following the manufacturer's instructions. DNA quality and quantity were assessed with a NanoDrop™ 2000 spectrophotometer. 18S rRNA metabarcoding: The V4-V5 regions of the 18S rRNA gene were amplified by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) using the amplification primers 616*F and 1132R [See: Primer list in Data availability statement], a combination of primers designed to optimize parasite species detection (Kounosu *et al.* 2019). Two elongation arrest blocking primers, 816F-C3 and 846R-C3, modified with a C3 spacer to specifically inhibit the amplification of host DNA were added to the reaction according to the protocol described in (Leroux *et al.* 2022). The following program was used: (a) 30 s 98°C; (b) 10 s 98°C; (c) 30 s 54°C; (d) 20 s 72°C; (e) 2 min at 72°C; with 35 amplification cycles. 16S rRNA metabarcoding: The V3-V4 regions of the 16S rRNA gene were amplified by PCR using the amplification primers 341F and 805R [See: Primer list in Data availability statement]. The following program was used: (a) 30 s 98°C; (b) 10 s 98°C; (c) 30 s 60°C; (d) 20 s 72°C; (e) 2 min at 72°C; with 35 amplification cycles. After the first amplifying PCR, both the 16S and 18S rRNA next generation sequencing libraries followed the same protocol. We ran the PCR product on a 2% electrophoresis gel to assess the efficacy of the PCR reaction and purified the amplified DNA with AMPure beads (Beckman Coulter Genomics) to eliminate shorter sequences, primer dimers, proteins, and phenols. Post-PCR purified DNA concentration and quality were assessed on Nanodrop™ 2000. Indexing PCRs were completed with the following program: (a) 30 s 98°C; (b) 10 s 98°C; (c) 30 s 60°C; (d) 20 s 72°C; (e) 2 min at 72°C; 15 amplification cycles. We ran the PCR product on a 2% electrophoresis gel to assess the efficacy of the PCR reaction, purified the amplified DNA with AMPure beads (Beckman Coulter Genomics) and then verified the DNA concentration and quality on Nanodrop™ 2000. Both a positive and a negative control were included with each PCR reaction (one per PCR plate) for each step of the PCR amplifications (n = 8). None of the negative controls amplified during PCRs. Multiplex sequencing was performed using the MiSeq platform from Illumina® (Illumina),

by the *Plateforme d'analyses génomiques* at the *Institut de Biologie Intégrative et des Systèmes* (IBIS) at Laval University using the MiSeq Reagent Kit v3. All proceedings followed the manufacturer's protocols. All negative controls were sequenced, but no complete sequence was retrieved, supporting the absence of contamination during PCR amplification.

Processing of high-throughput sequencing data

After sequencing and removing primers with CutAdapt (Martin 2011), 13,432,629 and 10,338,365 sequences were respectively obtained from 16S and 18S libraries sequencing, respectively leading to a mean of 65,525 and 57,756 sequences per sample. The demultiplexed fastq sequence files were processed through DADA2 (Callahan et al. 2016) using the function “ytfilterAndTrim” with the following parameters: two as the phred score threshold for total read removal, a maximum expected error of two for forward reads and four for reverse reads, a truncation length of 280 base pairs for forward reads and 200 base pairs for reverse reads for 16S rRNA library, and a length of 275 base pairs for forward reads and 250 base pairs for reverse reads for 18S rRNA library. The filtered reads were then fed to the error rate learning, dereplication and Amplicon Sequence Variant (ASV) inference steps using the functions “learnErrors”, “derepFastq” and “dada”. Chimeric sequences were removed using the “removeBimeraDenovo” function with the “pseudo” method parameter. For 16S rRNA, taxonomic annotation was done using the function “assignTaxonomy” on the Silva rRNA SSU Ref NR 99 Release 138.1. For 18S rRNA, taxonomic annotation was done using *blastn* matches against the NCBI refseq SSU 18S database, whereas all hits above 90% identity were considered to determine the taxonomy using a lowest common ancestor (LCA) algorithm in a manner inspired by MEGAN (Huson et al. 2007). *Blastn* matches with 99% coverage and 99% identity were assigned the match's taxonomic identity. Since the number of 18S rRNA ASVs was low, we manually curated the 18S rRNA taxonomic table to reduce the chances of wrongfully classifying an ASV. We verified that the sequencing depth of samples was sufficient for both marker genes using rarefaction analyses. We calculated taxonomic trees based on the DNA sequences using the R package *ape* (Paradis et al. 2004, Paradis & Schliep 2019) and a *Phyloseq* (McMurdie & Holmes 2013) object was produced for each library in R to do subsequent analyses. In the 18S rRNA *Phyloseq* object, we removed ASVs with fewer than 2 read counts or without a taxonomic assignment at the kingdom level. For the 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object, we removed ASVs with fewer than 10 read counts or without a taxonomic assignment at the phylum level.

Statistical analyses

Estimating the parasitism rate in both water types

Using the 18S rRNA *Phyloseq* object previously produced, we removed every ASVs assigned to the Class *Actinopterygii* from the dataset with the function “subset_taxa” from *Phyloseq* to remove host ASVs. We manually investigated the dataset for the repeated presence of parasitic taxa and detected the presence of six taxonomic groups of parasites of global interest for our study (i.e., *Nyctotherus* sp., Nematoda, Platyhelminthes (Cestoda and Trematoda), Acanthocephala and Microsporidia). We did not quantify the abundance of parasitic DNA observed in a given sample as our method rather aim at detecting eukaryotic parasite taxa. Indeed, the amplification bias caused by the variable amount of host tissues and the amount of food bolus present in the gut would have biased the quantification. Instead, we used a binary (yes or no) statistic to describe the presence or absence of a given parasite in a gut sample. A fish with more than five sequences from an ASV assigned to a given parasitic taxa was considered as a fish with the parasite present in its gut. Likewise, the detection of a parasite in a gut sample does not mean the fish is infected since DNA-based methodologies can detect both living and dead parasites originating from different sources.

Only three types of parasites had a sufficiently high presence rate for us to produce statistical analyses (i.e., *Nyctotherus* sp., Nematoda and Platyhelminthes). We used Chi-Square tests of independence with Yates’ continuity correction, using the function “chisq.test” (R Core Team 2013) to test for a dependency between the water type and the three types of parasite infection studied. We also estimated the mean prevalence of these taxa at each site and calculated a mean for each water type to produce a boxplot representing the mean prevalence of *Nyctotherus* sp., Nematoda and Platyhelminthes in both water types.

Describing gut microbiota in both water types

Using the 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object previously produced, we estimated the observed (number of ASVs), phylogenetic (Faith 1992) and Shannon (Shannon 1949) alpha diversity indexes for each midgut samples. We verified for differences between the mean alpha diversity indexes from fish gut samples in both water types using a two-sided two-sample Wilcoxon test with the function “wilcox.test”. We used a non-parametric statistical test as the number of fish at black (n = 60) and white (n = 107) water sites was not equal and diversity indexes were not

normally distributed for all groups. Then, we computed a Permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance (PERMANOVA) based on Bray Curtis Beta diversity distances, using the function “adonis2” from *Vegan* (Oksanen & *al.* 2019) in R with 200 000 permutations, considering the 16S rRNA ASV table as the response variable. The water types and genetic population of each sample were the explicative variables. There was no interaction between explicative variables. Leroux et *al.* (2022) already genotyped *M. festivus* samples at these 12 sites and found 4 distinct genetic populations, which we considered in our analysis. We then plotted the results of the PERMANOVA using a non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) ordination approach based on both the Bray Curtis and Weighted Unifrac indexes. Since both distance indexes led to similar results, we only included the weighted Bray Curtis index in our main results. We used the function “envfit” from *Vegan*, with 1000 permutations, considering five physicochemical parameters documented as major differentiating factors between black and white water environments as explicative variables (i.e., dissolved organic carbonate (DOC), silicate in suspension, productivity rates, conductivity and pH) (Ríos-Villamizar et *al.* 2013). We fitted the five environmental predictors onto the ordination analysis as vectors to show how these five environmental variables correlates with the Bray Curtis dissimilarity index of the midgut microbiota of *M. festivus*.

We conducted a Linear discriminant analysis Effect Size (LEfSe) (Segata et *al.* 2011) to identify taxa mainly characterizing the differences between the mid gut microbiota of *M. festivus* in black and white water environments. We used a 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object agglomerated by genus, using the function “tax_glom” from *Phyloseq*, as the response variable and the water type where the fish of each midgut sample was collected as the explicative variable. For the parameters, we used a value of 1×10^{-3} for the alpha value of the factorial Kruskal-Wallis test among classes and a threshold of 3 on the logarithmic LDA score for discriminative features. These parameters are very stringent and aim at only discovering highly discriminative features, lowering the potential for false positives. We used the “Plot LEfSe Results” and “Plot Cladogram” features of the *Galaxy* tool to plot the results of the analysis. To compare with the LEfSe analysis, we filtered the 25 most abundant genera from the 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object using the function “prune_taxa” from the package *Phyloseq*. Then, we merged samples according to their water type and produced relative abundance bar plots at the class taxonomic resolution

to look for differences in abundance between the midgut microbiota of *M. festivus* in both water types.

Describing interactions between parasites and the gut microbiota

Since we did not detect a significant, nor important effect of the detection of any kind of helminth (i.e., Nematoda, Platyhelminthes (Cestoda and Trematoda) and Acanthocephala) on the structure of the mid gut microbiota of *M. festivus*, we pooled all the presence of these parasite into the “fish with helminth” category. We previously analysed independently the impact of each type of helminth detected and their pooling does not influence the analysis of the results in the discussion. The other taxon of interest is the ciliate genus *Nyctotherus* sp., for which we found a high infection rate. We conducted separate analyses for both types of parasite (Helminths and *Nyctotherus* sp.) while considering cases of multiple infection by both type of parasite in a same sample. We did not detect coinfection pattern between the infection rate of any parasite detected.

Using the 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object, we estimated the total number of ASVs (observed diversity), the Faith’s phylogenetic diversity and the Shannon alpha diversity indexes for each fish midgut sample. We also estimated the total number of ASVs from the phylum Proteobacteria in samples. Then, we grouped samples according to the detection or not of ciliates of the genus *Nyctotherus* sp. and helminths in the 18S rRNA dataset. Since the design of the experiment was not balanced, both for the helminths and *Nyctotherus* sp., and some diversity indexes were not normally distributed for all groups, we used two-sided two-sample Wilcoxon tests, using the function “wilcox.test”, to look for differences between the mean alpha diversity index of each group. We also computed a multiple factors PERMANOVA based on Bray Curtis Beta diversity distances, using the function “adonis2” from *Vegan* in R with 50 000 permutations, considering the genera of the 16S rRNA ASV table as the response variable. We considered the presence of helminths, the presence of *Nyctotherus* sp., the water type of provenance and the genetic population for each sample as the four explicative variables. There was no significant interaction between explicative variables, except between the genotype and the presence of *Nyctotherus* sp. ($R^2 = 0.03$, p-value = 0.003). However, considering the genetic population and the presence of *Nyctotherus* sp. independently leads to the same results. We plotted the results of the PERMANOVA using a Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) based on both the Bray-Curtis and Weighted Unifrac indexes for both types of infection. The stress values were

0.24 and 0.18 for Bray-Curtis and Weighted Unifrac respectively. Since both distance indexes led to similar results, we only included the Bray-Curtis index in our main results. Then, we filtered the 50 genera with the highest relative abundance from the 16S rRNA Phyloseq object using the function “prune_taxa” from the package *Phyloseq*. We merged samples according to the presence or absence of *Nyctotherus* sp. and helminths and produced relative abundance bar plots at the class taxonomic resolution to look for differences in relative abundance between the midgut microbiota of *M. festivus* in each group for each parasite type.

We produced a microbiota co-abundance network for samples in which we detected infection by *Nyctotherus* sp. and a co-abundance network for fish uninfected by *Nyctotherus* sp. We used the CoNet application (Faust and Raes 2016) in Cytoscape (Shannon *et al.* 2003) using the number of sequences (abundance) of the 100 most abundant genera present in the 16S rRNA *Phyloseq* object agglomerated at the genus level as the data matrix. The following parameters were selected according to the CoNet documentation on 16S V35 phylotypes data subset (Faust and Raes 2016): for the randomization and the bootstrap, we activated parent-child exclusion, filtered the data matrix with a minimum occurrence of 10 in rows, standardized the data using a column normalization, activated the Pearson and Spearman correlation indexes, activated the Mutual information parameter, activated the Bray Curtis and Kullback-Leibler dissimilarity distances, chose an automatic threshold setting edge selection parameter of 100, chose a randomization routine of 100 iterations based on the edgeScores and selected the brown P-value merging. We formatted both networks with the Cytoscape application and the yFiles layout tool using an organic layout.

Results

M. festivus gut microbiota in both water types

Eukaryotic communities

The phyla Ciliophora, Nematoda, Streptophyta and Platyhelminthes were the most abundant out of the 135 ASVs detected from the 18S rRNA dataset. Within this, six classes of gut dwelling taxa were detected; Chromadorea, Cestoda, Trematoda, Neoechinorhynchida, Amorphorea and Microsporidia. Only gut dwelling Nematodes, Platyhelminthes and the Ciliate *Nyctotherus* sp. were detected in sufficiently high number of fish for us to complete meaningful statistical analyses. We detected *Nyctotherus* sp. in 53 samples, compared to 21 and 26 for Nematodes and Platyhelminthes respectively [Fig. 2]. We detected Platyhelminthes from the classes Cestoda (n = 24) and Trematoda (n = 4). In two occurrences, we detected both a cestode and a trematode in the same fish, and 87 samples were free from these taxa. According to the Pearson Chi-square test comparing the prevalence of these three gut dwelling taxa in both water types, the prevalence of Platyhelminthes was significantly associated to the water type (X-squared = 12.167, df = 1 and p-value = 4.8×10^{-4}) [Fig. 3]. Conversely, *Nyctotherus* sp. (X-squared = 0.25527, df = 1 and p-value = 0.6134) and Nematodes (X-squared = 0.21584, df = 1 and p-value = 0.6422) were independent to water type. We only detected one infection by a Platyhelminthe in samples from black water (n = 60), while there were 25 occurrences in samples from white water (n = 107).

Bacterial communities

Alpha diversity metrics (i.e., observed, Faith's phylogenetic and Shannon) of *M. festivus* midgut microbial communities were not significantly different in gut samples collected from different water types according to the two-sided Wilcoxon tests (p-values > 0.6). In the "Envfit" analysis, there was a significant correlation between the Bray Curtis dissimilarity indexes and the chlorophyll a concentration in water ($R^2 = 0.084$, p-value = 0.001), while the four other physicochemical parameters tested were not significantly correlated with the beta diversity (DOC: $R^2 = 0.003$, p-value = 0.76; Silicate: $R^2 = 0.027$, p-value = 0.11; Conductivity: $R^2 = 0.027$, p-value = 0.11; pH: $R^2 = 0.024$, p-value = 0.14). According to the NMDS based on Bray Curtis dissimilarity index fitted with environmental vectors, the microbiome from fish sampled at white water sites were structured along the same axis as the productivity [Fig. 4]. In the PERMANOVA based on Bray Curtis dissimilarity index, the population genotype had a

more important effect than water type on fish gut microbiome (genetic: $R^2 = 0.04$, p -value = 1.5×10^{-5} ; water type: $R^2 = 0.02$, p -value = 5.0×10^{-6}).

The LEfSe analysis identified discriminative features from seven different taxonomic classes present in gut samples from black and white water sites [Fig. 5A]. The classes Gammaproteobacteria, Brevinematia, Cyanobacteria and two families from Acidimicrobiia and Deinococci were associated with guts from white water sites. Similarly, Acidobacteriae and family of Clostridia were associated with guts from the black water environment. In the barplots showing the relative abundance of the 25 most abundant genera [Fig. 5B], we observed a higher relative abundance of genera within the classes Alphaproteobacteria, Brevinematia, Bacteroidia and Gammaproteobacteria in samples from white water, while we observed a higher relative abundance of the classes Clostridia and Desulfovibrionia in samples from black water. From these results, we detected a strong concordance between the LEfSe analysis results and the bar plots relative abundances for 3 taxonomic classes (i.e., Gammaproteobacteria, Brevinematia and Clostridia) [Fig. 5]. However, as these taxa were not detected in the water microbiome sampled in each water type, it was not possible to link these discriminant features to a putative horizontal transfer from the water microbiome.

Influence of parasites on the gut microbiota

There were significant differences between the alpha diversity of the midgut microbiota of fish infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. in the two-sided Wilcoxon rank sum test. For the three diversity metrics considered, the alpha diversity was significantly higher in samples where *Nyctotherus* sp. was detected (Observed diversity: $W = 3715.5$, p -value = 0.01702; Faith's phylogenetic: $W = 4078$, p -value = 0.0003; Shannon diversity: $W = 3910$, p -value = 0.002251) [Fig. 6]. In contrast, we did not detect any significant differences between mean alpha diversity indexes in fish where helminths were detected (Observed diversity: $W = 2421$, p -value = 0.1953; Faith's phylogenetic: $W = 2598$, p -value = 0.5087; Shannon diversity: $W = 2625$, p -value = 0.5726). Furthermore, samples in which *Nyctotherus* sp. or helminths were detected had a significantly higher number of ASVs from the phylum Proteobacteria in their microbiome (*Nyctotherus* sp.: $W = 1748.5$, p -value = 1.222×10^{-05} ; Helminths: $W = 2191$, p -value = 0.03409) [Fig. 6].

A moderate but highly significant influence of *Nyctotherus* sp. (PERMANOVA: $R^2 = 0.05$, $p\text{-value} < 2 \times 10^{-05}$) and a low influence of the presence of helminths (PERMANOVA: $R^2 = 0.01$, $p\text{-value} = 0.045$) was detected on the taxonomic composition of *M. festivus* gut microbiome. Also, the water type from which samples were collected had a low influence (PERMANOVA: $R^2 = 0.02$, $p\text{-value} = 1.5 \times 10^{-3}$) on the Bray Curtis dissimilarity index, while the genetic population of samples had a moderate influence (PERMANOVA: $R^2 = 0.04$, $p\text{-value} < 1.2 \times 10^{-4}$) across the 12 sites. In the PCoAs based on Bray Curtis dissimilarity index, we observed a structuration of samples infected by *Nyctotherus* sp., while there was no apparent difference detected in the presence of helminths [Fig. 7B]. Furthermore, samples infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. had a lower relative abundance of Proteobacteria and hosted Halobacterota, which was absent from the samples without *Nyctotherus* sp. [Fig. 7A]. On the contrary, the detection of helminths in samples was not associated to differences in the 50 most abundant genera.

The CoNet Co-abundance networks showed a restructuring of the midgut microbiota taxonomic structure of *M. festivus* associated with the presence of *Nyctotherus* sp. [Fig. 8]. The network based on samples without *Nyctotherus* sp. included 23 genera of Proteobacteria, while the network based on other samples included only 16. Also, Proteobacteria are responsible for 33 % of edges (links) in the network based on samples not infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. (47 out of 141 edges) in comparison to 14% for the network based on fish infected by the parasite (13 out of 92 edges). The two co-abundance networks have a similar total number of nodes, respectively 69 and 64, but the network based on fish not infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. had a higher number of edges (141 vs 92). The higher number of edges mainly results from the higher diversity and connectivity of Proteobacteria in the network. It is worth noting that the phylum Halobacterota is present only in the network based on fish infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. Interestingly, these Halobacterota strains belong to the family Methanocorpusculaceae, which includes known potential endosymbiont of *Nyctotherus* sp.

Discussion

M. festivus midgut microbiota in both water types

Eukaryotic communities

This is the first study investigating the Eukaryotic diversity within Amazonian wild fish gut using a molecular approach. Previous studies have focussed on aquaculture fish, which were fed artificially and were reported to contain both a lower gut Eukaryotic diversity and parasitism rates than wild fish sampled in the present study (Li et al. 2012, Minich et al. 2018). For instance, we detected the presence of 135 nonhost-related ASVs from 53 different genera across our 167 *Mesonauta festivus* samples. In comparison, Minich et al. (2018) detected less than 50 Eukaryotic operational taxonomic units (OTUs) in their faeces and gut samples of aquaculture fish. Most of the observed Eukaryotic diversity in our samples was composed of food related taxa (i.e., Arthropoda, Streptophyta, Rotifera, Chlorophyta and Annelida) and potentially gut dwelling taxa (i.e., Ciliophora, Platyhelminthes, Nematoda and Acanthocephala). Only nine ASVs were Fungi, with Ascomycota being the most abundant phylum from this kingdom. Ascomycota were previously reported as the main fungal taxa within fish's gut samples (Marden et al. 2017, Zhou et al. 2021).

Ciliophora, Platyhelminthes, and Nematoda were the potentially gut dwelling phyla with the highest prevalence in *M. festivus* midgut samples [Fig. 2]. For Ciliophora, the genus *Nyctotherus* sp. was detected in 53 samples. This genus has only been reported once in fish and was suggested to be an endosymbiont of fish (Earl and G. 1969). It has also been recorded as an intestinal parasite of roaches and in herbivorous reptiles (van Hoek et al. 1998). These Ciliates are known for their important methane production caused by their endosymbiosis with a methanogenic Archaea (Gijzen et al. 1991). While the pathogenicity of *Nyctotherus* sp. is still to be demonstrated for fish (Suzuki et al. 2020), the high concentrations of methanotrophic bacteria in the fish host gut could lead to important chemical changes in infected animals, potentially resulting in a shift of microbial communities (Borrel et al. 2020). For instance, *Nyctotherus* sp. infections in pet turtles have been reported to cause diarrhea, dehydration, weight loss and passage of undigested food in the faeces (Satbige et al. 2017). Also, Platyhelminthes, as Cestoda and Trematoda, are known as common parasites in detritivore tropical fish (Choudhury and Dick 2000, Baia et al. 2018). Their distribution and prevalence are of particular interest, since they cause important health problems for riverine communities (Cotias de Mattos Oliveira et al. 2020). For nematodes

in this study, most detections were of the genus *Spirocamallanus*, which is a genus of nematode documented to frequently infect Amazonian fish species, including Cichlids, and causing important economic losses (Oliveira de Araujo et al. 2009, Neves et al. 2021).

Even though we detected several genera of known parasitic taxa that could infect *M. festivus*, our experimental design does not allow concluding about an actual infection from helminths (i.e., Platyhelminthes or Nematodes). DNA-based methods do not make a difference between living and dead specimens. Indeed, some Platyhelminthes or Nematodes could potentially originate from *M. festivus* feeding on a different life stage of the species, from a food source that was infected by the parasite, or even from free-living species closely related to a parasitic taxon. For instance, Camallanidae, an order of Nematode detected in samples, are known to infect copepods as a secondary host (Thatcher 1998) and Tetracystida, an order of Cestoda, is specifically infecting cartilaginous fish as a definite host (Reyda and Marques 2011). Furthermore, DNA-based methods do not make a difference between living and dead specimens, augmenting the risk of wrongfully concluding about an infection. Even though we only considered known gut dwelling taxa in our analyses, this limitation needs to be considered in the interpretation of our results. Still, the Ciliate *Nyctotherus* sp. can confidently be considered as a parasite as this gut dwelling genus is not known infecting food of *M. festivus* and could disperse by vertical transfer between hosts (van Hoek et al. 1998).

While the prevalence of Nematodes and Ciliates was independent to the water type, Platyhelminthes were more prevalent in *M. festivus* midgut samples collected in white water sites than in black water sites [Fig. 3]. The mean prevalence of Platyhelminthes at black water sites was as low as 2 %, compared to 26 % at white water sites. Since our study is the first to compare the parasitism in black and white water environments, additional testing using an optimised framework for parasitism assessment in both water types is required to conclude with confidence about the higher Platyhelminthes parasitism rate in white water. Still, Trematodes and Cestodes have complex life cycles, which usually include the parasitism of multiple organisms and some life stages in the water column. Since black water has very restrictive physicochemical characteristics (Ríos-Villamizar et al. 2013, Junk et al. 2015) and tends to host a lower fish density than white water rivers (Junk et al. 2007), it is plausible that parasitic Platyhelminthes have difficulty thriving in black water. In the contrary, there was no dependency between the

prevalence of Nematoda, *Nyctotherus* sp. and water type. Again, there is no point of comparison in the literature, but the simpler mechanisms of *Nyctotherus* sp. infection, mostly by vertical transmission, could reduce the influence of the environment on their infection rate (van Hoek et al. 1998). While these results are a good starting point, further studies are needed to provide points of comparison and help characterising the parasitism rate in both water types.

Overall, the observed Eukaryotic diversity in our samples was ten times lower than the bacterial diversity observed in the same samples, that is 532 different bacterial genera for 53 eukaryotic genera. In this sense, we observed a lower contribution of Eukaryotic taxa in the sympatric microfauna of *M. festivus* gut, with eukaryotic diversity dominated by pathogenic taxa in our samples. However, the low diversity observed could be partially caused by the differences between amplification methods. While we used blocking primers to reduce host DNA amplification, an important portion of our libraries was still composed of host DNA, potentially preventing the detection of multiple rare eukaryotic taxa. Moreover, there could be a primer bias associated to 18S rRNA universal primers, favouring the detection of certain taxa (Kounosu et al. 2019, Yeh et al. 2021).

Bacterial communities

The pronounced physicochemical differences between black and white water environments had a limited influence on the midgut bacterial communities of *M. festivus*. For instance, alpha diversity was not significantly different when comparing the bacterial communities of gut samples from both water types. Also, only the chlorophyll A concentration was significantly correlated to the microbiome beta diversity in the “Envfit” analysis. In the NMDS fitted with environmental vectors, the Bray Curtis index from white water fish gut samples are aligned in the same axis as the chlorophyll A in the NMDS [Fig. 4]. Fish living in a more productive environment could present different feeding habits, ultimately leading to changes in gut microbial communities (Kashinskaya et al. 2018). However, none of the four other physicochemical parameters differentiating black and white waters were significantly correlated to samples distribution in the graphical space. These results support a low influence of the restrictive environmental conditions of the black water environment (low ion concentration and acidic pH). On the contrary, environmental parameters associated to the diet of the host seems to have a higher influence. Since the gut microbiota of fish is relatively isolated from the water, changes in physicochemical characteristics could have a limited influence on its

communities. This isolation from the environment could lead to a more important role of host-related factors, such as diet and genotype, on structuring the gut microbiome (Smith et al. 2015, Sylvain et al. 2019, Steury et al. 2019).

The abundance of three important taxonomic classes (i.e., Gammaproteobacteria, Brevinematia and Clostridia) and two taxonomic classes which ecology is associable with specific characteristics of the different water types (i.e., Acidobacteriales and Cyanobacteria) could be the result of a horizontal transfer from the environment to the microbiota of *M. festivus*. The Linear Effect Size analysis (LEfSe) detected a higher abundance of Gammaproteobacteria and Brevinematia in the microbiota of *M. festivus* from white water sites and a higher abundance of a family of Clostridia in samples from black water sites [Fig. 5A]. These three taxonomic classes represent major components of the mid gut microbiota of *M. festivus* since their relative abundance is high [Fig. 5B]. Also, high relative abundance of Gammaproteobacteria and Clostridia were respectively associated with the gut microbiome of fish from white and black water environments in a previous study (Sylvain et al. 2019). While these taxa could be recruited from the water directly, they could also be favored in a gut ecological niche that is specific to a given water type. For instance, the important environmental dissimilarity between both water types could lead to differences in the metabolism, feeding habits or stress factors in fish living in different environments. These factors are known to influence on the taxonomic structure of fish gut microbiota (Wang et al. 2018). We also detected a higher relative abundance of Acidobacteriales in the microbiota of fish coming from black water sites. These acidophilic bacteria probably thrive in acidic black water. Similarly, we detected a higher abundance of Cyanobacteria in fish from white water, furthering the potential horizontal transfer of bacteria associated with the higher chlorophyll A concentration in white water sites [Fig. 4]. While these two taxonomic classes are not major components of the midgut microbiota of *M. festivus* [Fig. 5B], their presence could represent cases of horizontal transfer. For both Acidobacteriales and Cyanobacteria, we can link the biology of the bacteria to typical characteristics of each water type. However, we cannot directly link these bacterial strains to the water bacterioplankton as we did not observe these in our water microbiome assessment.

In contrast, we detected a stronger influence of the genetic population from which gut samples originated than their water type of origin. In the PERMANOVA, the bacterial

communities of samples originating from related fish, that is fish from the same genetic population, tended to be more alike than the ones coming from unrelated fish collected from the same water type. This result supports a higher influence of genetic-related factors than environmental factors in shaping the taxonomic composition of *M. festivus* gut microbiome. These results concord with previous findings, which highlighted a higher influence of the phylogeographic relatedness between fish than ecological variations on structuring the gut microbiota of cichlids (Baldo et al. 2017, 2019). *M. festivus* is known for its important parental care investment, during which juveniles stay very close to both parents (Pires et al. 2015). This type of behaviour could facilitate a vertical transfer of gut microbial communities. Furthermore, some genotypes that are specific to a given genetic population could have the ability to recruit specific bacteria, ultimately leading to a higher similarity of fish that are genetically similar. Here, *M. festivus* is a species of particular interest as some closely related individuals are known to originate from drastically divergent environmental conditions (i.e., from black and white water sites) (Leroux et al. 2022). This characteristic of *M. festivus* helps deciphering the effect of the genotype and environmental conditions, two factors that are generally highly correlated in natural systems (Lundgren et al. 2013, Lozano-Jaramillo et al. 2020). Naturally, further study of the gut microbiota of *M. festivus* in light of its genetics would help to disentangle the relative contribution of these two complex factors for cichlids. In future research, doing a controlled transplant experiment with genotyped fish from different environments and genotypes could highlight fish microbiome adaptations to a changing environment.

Overall, our results support a low but present effect of the environmental dissimilarity between black and white water environments on the taxonomic structure of the mid gut microbiota in *M. festivus*. As supported by previous research on cichlids, the genetic relatedness between sites seems to play a more important role than the environmental similarity between sites in shaping the taxonomic structure of the midgut microbiota of *M. festivus*.

Influence of parasites on the gut microbiota

Helminths

As the presence of Nematodes and Platyhelminths in gut samples had similar effects on the taxonomic structure of *M. festivus* gut microbiota, we pooled both types of parasites in these analyses. According to our results, there seem to be no direct relationship between *M. festivus* gut

microbiota and helminths occurrence. While most past studies are congruent with our results, supporting a low influence of helminth infections on taxonomic structures of gut microbiota in both fish and mammals (Cooper et al. 2013, Zaiss and Harris 2016, Fu et al. 2019), another study detected significant interactions between the microbiota and helminth infections in zebrafish (Gaulke et al. 2019). Overall, it seems like controlled experiments are better at detecting the influence of helminths on the microbiota, since they reduce the background noise by controlling for host sex, genotype and environment (Reynolds et al. 2015, Ling et al. 2020). Furthermore, controlled experiment can ensure that the helminth is truly infecting the fish, while our experimental design can only detect its presence in the gut. Still, intestinal helminths constantly secrete products that could modulate the metabolism of microbial communities and there is a clear gap in knowledge about potential host-parasite-microbiota interactions for these taxa.

Nyctotherus sp.

Conversely, infection by *Nyctotherus* sp. appeared to have a major impact on *M. festivus* microbiota. First, the three alpha diversity metrics considered were significantly higher for gut samples infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. [Fig. 6]. Also, infections by *Nyctotherus* sp. explained five times more variance than the detection of helminths in the PERMANOVA based on Bray Curtis index, translating into a clear spatial structuration of samples according to this factor in the PCoA [Fig. 7B]. According to previous studies, unhealthy fish have either a less or a more diversified microbiota accompanied with the presence of pathology-specific bacterial taxa that should otherwise be absent (Infante-Villamil et al. 2021, Vargas-Albores et al. 2021, Cheaib et al. 2021). Here, we documented a reduction in diversity [Fig. 6] and relative abundance of Proteobacteria in the microbiota, where they were replaced by higher relative abundances of other classes of bacteria (i.e., Bacteroidota, Desulfobacterota, Fusobacterota, Verrucomicrobiota and Halobacterota) [Fig. 7A]. Proteobacteria are a major component of bony fish gut microbiota (Givens et al. 2015, Colston and Jackson 2016), and a reduction in their abundance and diversity associated with *Nyctotherus* sp. infection might result in gut dysbiosis (Jin et al. 2018, Wang et al. 2019). Also, we detected high abundances of Halobacterota, a class of methanogenic Archaea absent from samples free of *Nyctotherus* sp., in samples infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. More specifically, the genus *Methanobrevibacter* is a known endosymbiont of multiple species of *Nyctotherus* sp. (Gijzen et al. 1991, Lind et al. 2018). Also, in fish infected by *Nyctotherus* sp., we observed an increased total diversity, mainly driven by an increased Halobacteria, Verucomicrobiales and Eubacteriales diversity. While a clear definition of a healthy gut

microbiota is still lacking for omnivorous cichlids, studies tend to support that Fusobacteria, Proteobacteria and Firmicutes should dominate the microbial communities in the gut, with the three previously reported to represent approximately 80 % of the microbiota (Wang et al. 2018, Baldo et al. 2019). Thus, the high abundance of *Nyctotherus* sp. and its endosymbiont, which are both competing for resources with other taxa, may have major impacts on the gut microbial community structure of *M. festivus*.

Network analysis provide hallmarks of microbiota dysbiosis (Boutin et al. 2013, Vázquez-Baeza et al. 2016, Lavoie et al. 2021, El Khoury et al. 2021, Cheaib et al. 2021). A complex and highly interconnected co-abundance network is representative of a more resilient and healthy microbiota, one where the removal of a genus of bacteria will have minimal impact on its structure due to numerous other edges solidifying each node (Dogra et al. 2020). Likewise, the co-abundance network based on fish infected by *Nyctotherus* sp. had a reduced complexity and connectivity when compared to the network of fish without *Nyctotherus* sp., indicating a dysbiosis of the gut microbiota [Fig. 8]. In fact, the co-abundance network based on fish with *Nyctotherus* sp. had 30% fewer edges (connections) per node when compared to the one based on fish without the ciliate. This major difference between the two groups is mainly caused by the near absence of Proteobacteria in the central network based on *Nyctotherus* sp. infected fish. Moreover, in fish without *Nyctotherus* sp., Proteobacteria are making a high number of connections with other bacterial genera, which goes a long way at forming a complex and solid co-abundance network. Many of these Proteobacteria genera are absent or make isolated connections in the network based on fish infected by *Nyctotherus* sp., ultimately leading to a flimsier network [Fig. 8]. Also, we only observed the presence of Halobacterota in the co-abundance network based on fish infected *Nyctotherus* sp., furthering its potential role in the microbiome restructuration observed for these fish. By causing a modification of the structure of the microbiota of its host, *Nyctotherus* sp. potentially reduces the metabolism, the immunity, and the survivability of infected fish (Sheng et al. 2018, Wang et al. 2018).

Conclusion

In this study, we combined a dual 16S and 18S metagenomic approach, with *M. festivus* genotypes and environmental parameters at 12 sites to describe the interactions between the microbiota, parasite infections and the environment. We observed a higher prevalence of gut

dwelling Platyhelminthes in fish from white water than from those of black water sites, while prevalence rates for Ciliates and Nematodes was similar for fish from both water types. Also, the genetic relatedness between fish was shown to have twice as much impact on gut microbiota than the water type, suggesting a higher influence of the genotype in recruiting bacterial symbionts. Above all, we reported the first description of microbiota dysbiosis likely resulting from an infection by *Nyctotherus* sp. The presence of this pathogen was accompanied by a reduction in Proteobacteria diversity and high abundances of a methanogenic Archaea. Our study thus provides novel insights into the complex ecological interactions between fish, their gut microbiome, and their associated parasitic communities.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study was carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Ethics Committee for the Use of Animals of the *Instituto Nacional de Pesquisas da Amazonia* (INPA). The permit (number 29837-18 as of 23 March 2021) was approved by the Ethics Committee for the Use of Animals of INPA and the Animal Protection Committee of Laval University (Quebec, Canada) (permit # 2018021-1).

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The scripts, amplification primer list and the datasets used for the statistical analysis of this project are freely available on the Open Science Framework (DOI 10.17605/OSF.IO/ZNJQ2). Raw sequence reads are deposited in the SRA (BioProject XXX) and metadata are also stored in the SRA (BioProject XXX) using the MIxS package MIGS.eu.5.0.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

N.L., F.E.S, N.D. and A.V. designed the experiment. F.E.S., N.L., A.H., N.D. and A.V. organized sampling expeditions. F.E.S., N.L., A.H. and N.D. sampled fish during field expeditions. N.L., F.E.S., A.H. and N.D. processed samples in the laboratory (fish dissections and DNA extractions). N.L. performed bioinformatic analyses. N.L. wrote the manuscript. All authors reviewed the manuscript.

Table

Table 1: Water type at each site, genetic population of origin (genotype), dissolved organic carbon concentration (DOC), ionic composition (Na, Mg, K, Ca and Cl), nutrient concentration (Silicate), productivity (Chlorophyll a: Chl a), physiochemical characteristics (Conductivity: Cond and pH) and Global Positioning System (GPS) coordinates (GPS S and GPS W) measured at each sampling sites (n = 12).

Site	ID	n	Color	Genotype	DOC	Na	Mg	K	Ca	Cl	Silicate	Chl a	Cond.	pH	GPS S	GPS W
Barcelos	BAR	12	Black	A	10.93	0.46	0.12	0.42	0.04	0.11	64	0.35	13.1	3.71	0°50'50.8	62°57'40.3
Rio Negro	NEG	10	Black	A	11.67	0.25	0.09	0.33	0.49	1.16	92	0.73	10.6	4.16	1°23'29.8	61°59'35.3
Rio Branco	BRA	18	White	B	6.04	1.15	0.43	0.7	0.93	1.1	180	6.21	22	6.25	1°19'05.7	61°52'34.7
Anavilhanas	ANA	13	Black	B	11.38	1.8	0.26	0.65	0.08	0.32	73	0.05	13.2	4.24	2°41'46.1	60°46'33.3
Lago do cemitério	CEM	8	Black	B	9.76	0.23	0.05	0.14	0.37	0.64	77	1.35	7.2	3.83	3°02'16.6	60°32'42.7
Janauari	JAR	16	White	C	7.13	1.99	0.2	0.79	0.06	1.47	98	4.62	22.4	4.38	3°12'03.4	60°03'10.1
Catalão	CAT	17	White	C	9.05	4.56	3.76	1.71	0.83	1.75	242	7.14	174.8	5.7	3°09'56.4	59°54'38.4
Lago Janauacá	JAC	17	White	C	5.73	3.32	1	1.07	0.44	2.17	157	1.35	88	6.75	3°23'37.5	60°19'52.6
Manacapuru	MAN	12	White	C	7.97	4.91	0.14	1.45	0.05	1.43	126	2.78	24.3	5.31	3°16'16.9	60°42'03.2
Téfê-Solimões	SOL	9	White	D	5.73	1.95	0.21	0.28	1.11	1.29	327	4.41	19.7	6.05	3°21'07.4	64°40'21.4
Lago Tefé	TEF	17	Black	D	7.13	0.87	0.19	0.56	0.82	0.53	218	1.82	10.6	4.98	3°27'55.2	64°53'13.2
Lago Pirates	PIR	18	White	C	6.47	5.35	1.76	1.28	1.17	3.26	222	9.05	127.6	7.15	3°15'19.2	64°41'44.3

Values are the average of three readings. Units are in mg/L for DOC and ions, $\mu\text{mol/L}$ for silicate, $\mu\text{g/L}$ for productivity and $\mu\text{S/cm}$ for conductivity. n = number of fish sampled at the given site.

Figures

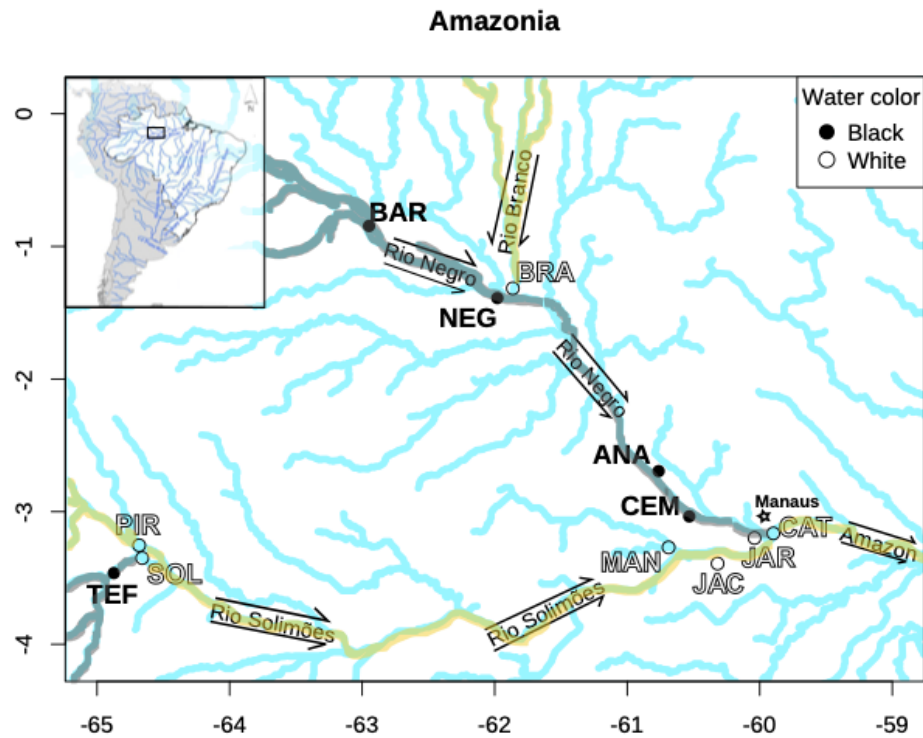


Figure 1: Location of sampling sites ($n = 12$) in the Amazon basin. The three major tributaries of the Amazon are labelled and the water flow directions are identified using arrows. Water is always flowing toward the East, in the direction of the Amazon. Sites have been identified using their three-letter acronyms and point colours are consistent with the described water type at a given site. Main rivers have been coloured according to their water type. This figure was modified from Leroux *et al.* (2022).

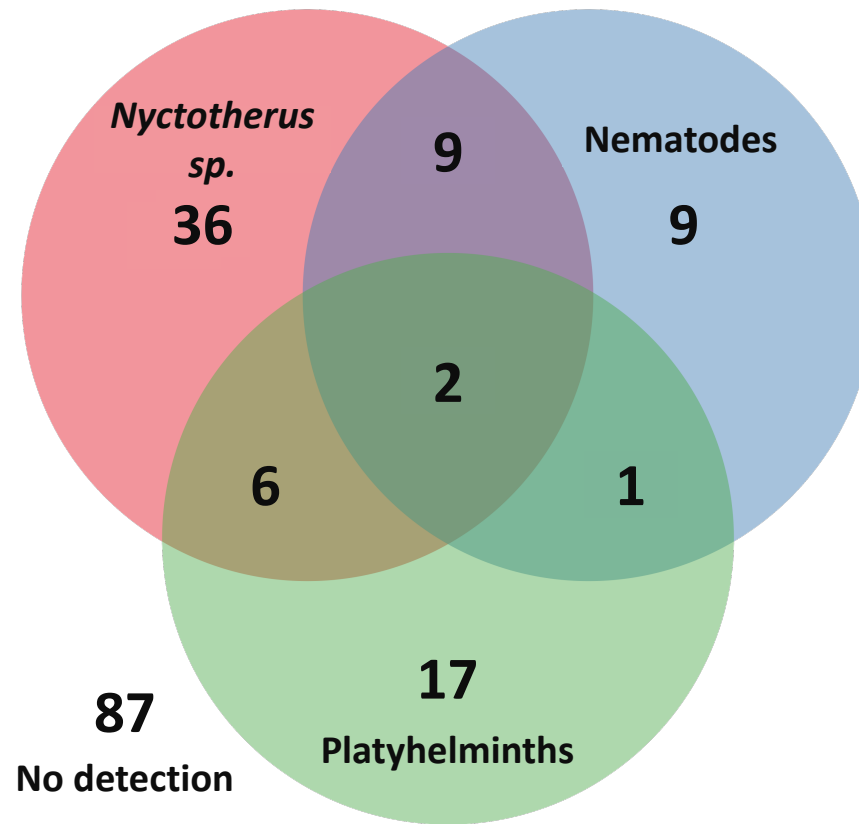


Figure 2: Venn diagram representing the number of *Mesonauta festinus* midgut samples (n = 167) where we detected the presence of the ciliate *Nyctotherus* sp., nematodes or platyhelminths using a 18S rRNA gene metabarcoding approach. In total, we detected 53 *Nyctotherus* sp. infections, compared to 21 and 26 for nematodes and platyhelminths respectively. This Venn diagram was produced using the library VennDiagram in R.

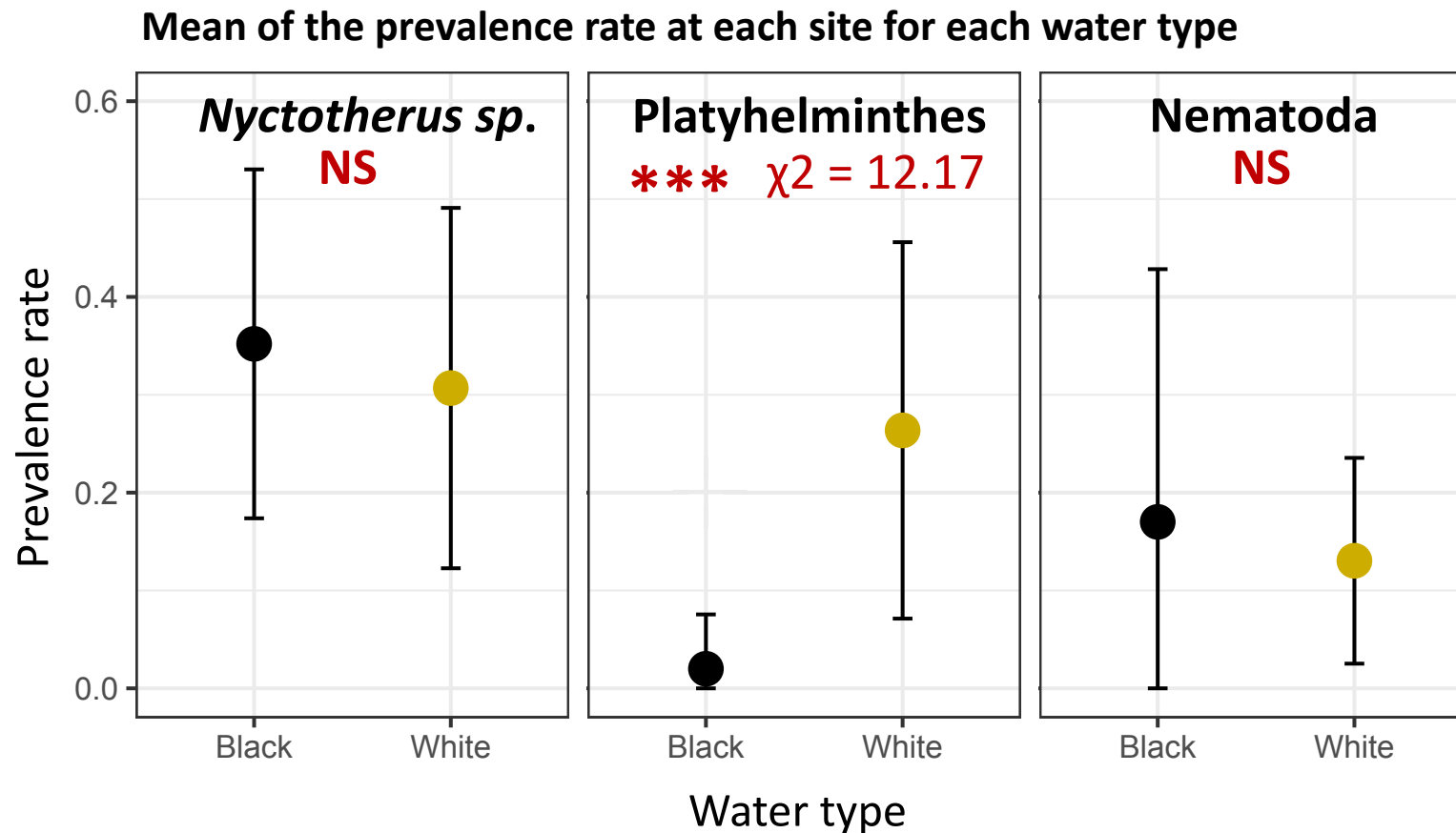


Figure 3: Mean prevalence rate of *Nyctotherus sp.*, Platyhelminthes and Nematoda estimated at each site ($n = 12$) and clustered by water type for *Mesonauta festinus* mid gut samples ($n = 167$). We included the results of the three Chi-Square tests of independence in red at the top of each plot. NS stands for not significant.

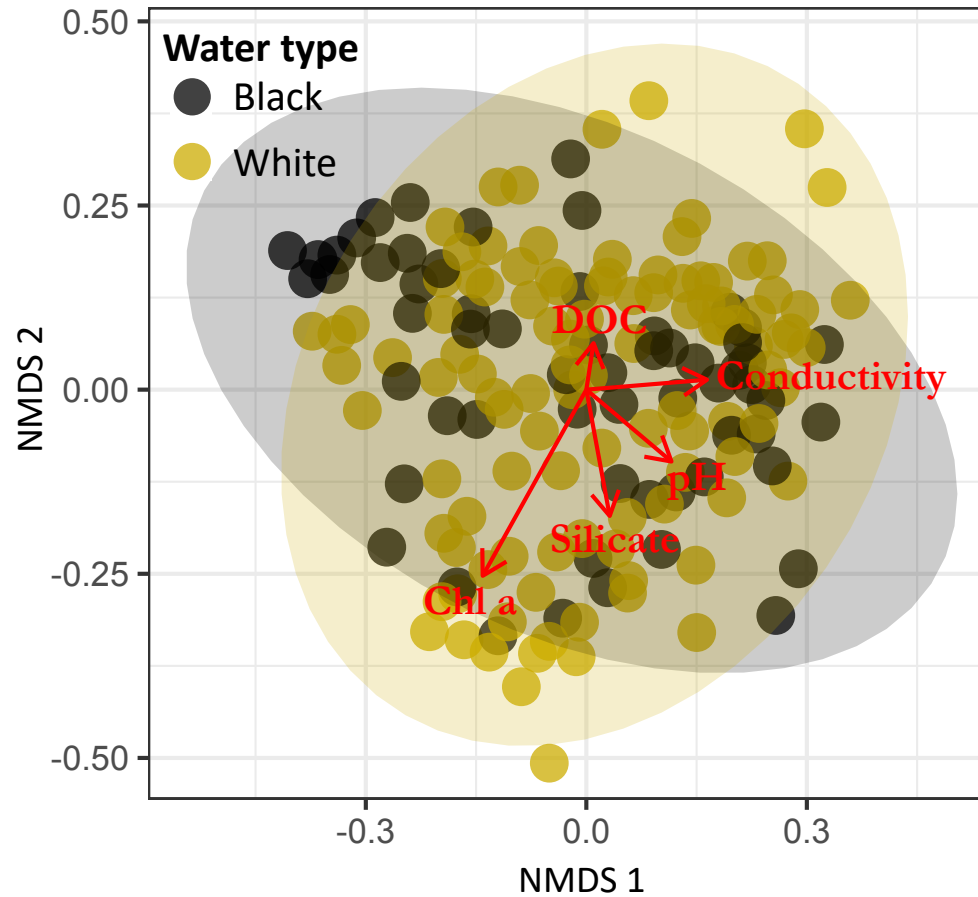


Figure 4: Non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) based on the Bray Curtis dissimilarity index between the 16S rRNA taxonomic structure of the midgut microbiota of *Mesonauta festinus* samples ($n = 167$) at five black water and seven white water sites in Amazonia. Environmental vectors, based on five physicochemical characteristics measured at each site ($n = 12$), were fitted on the NMDS using the function “envfit” from *vegan* in R.

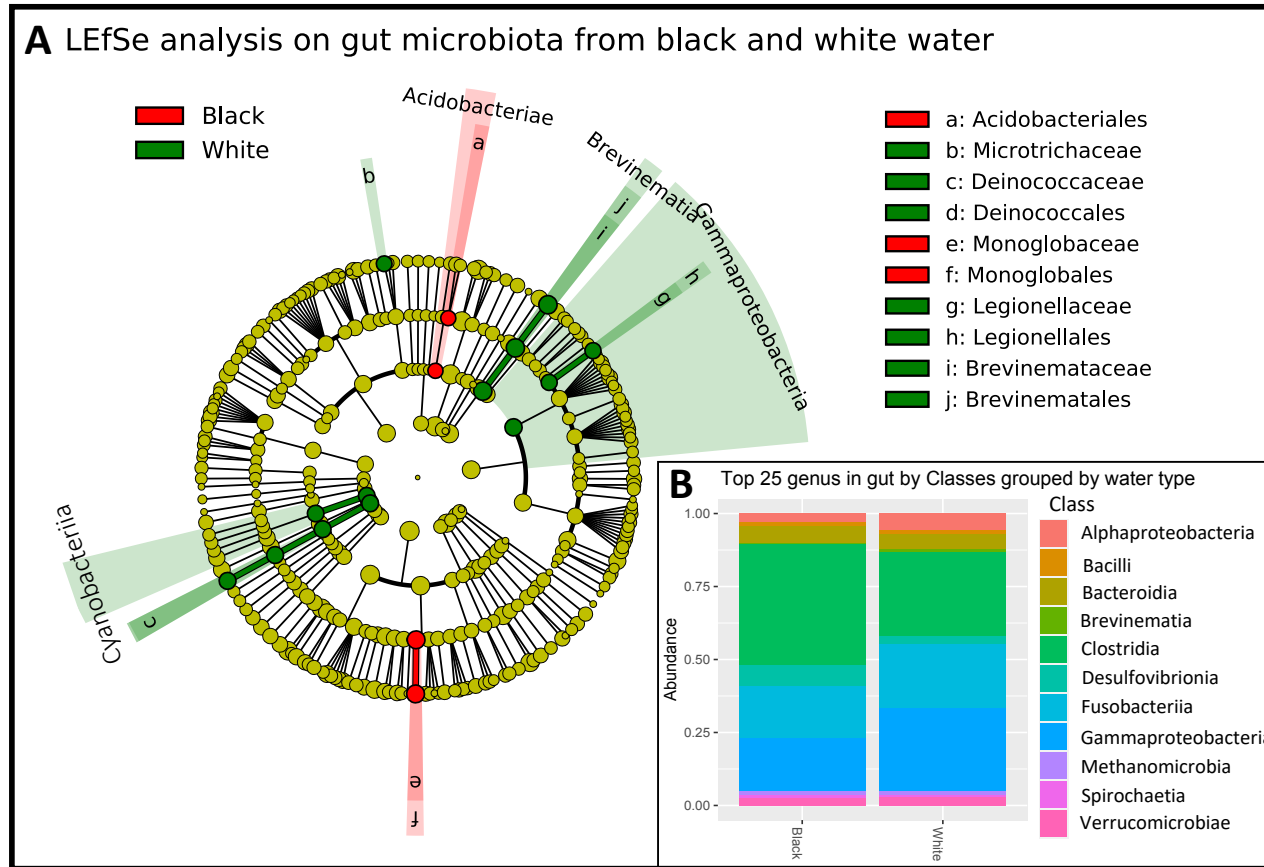


Figure 5: A: Linear discriminant analysis effect size (LEfSe) based on the 16S rRNA taxonomic structure agglomerated by genus of the midgut microbiota of *Mesonauta festivus* ($n = 167$) sampled at five black water and seven white water sites. The water type at each site was considered as the discriminant variable. We detected 17 discriminant features considering a minimal LDA score of 3 and a p-value of 1×10^{-3} for the Kruskal-Wallis' test. B: relative abundance bar plots of the 25 most abundant genera detected in the same dataset. Samples are grouped by water type and each genus is coloured according to its taxonomic class.

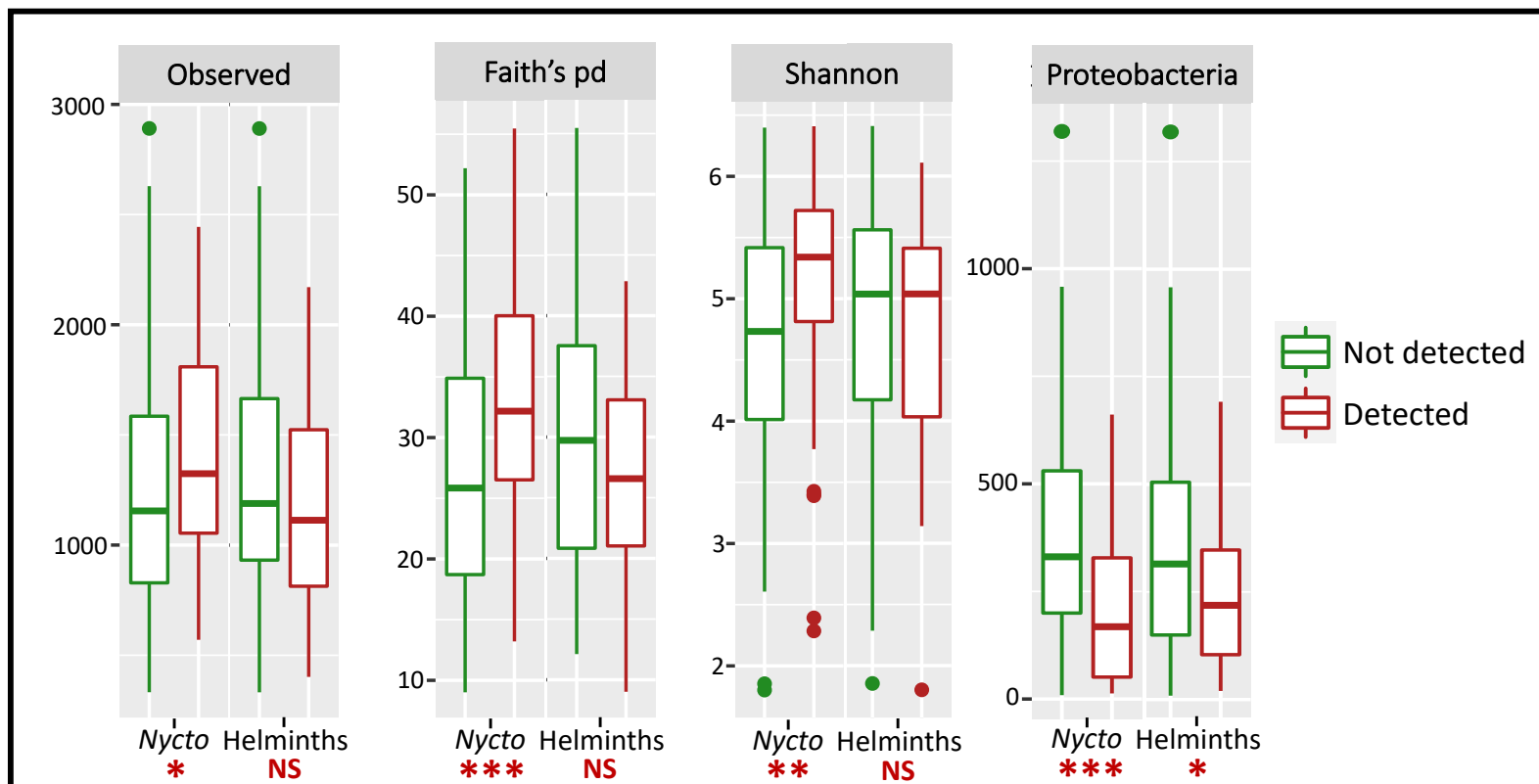


Figure 6: Boxplot representing the 16S rRNA microbiota Alpha diversity in midgut samples of *Mesonauta festivus* (n = 167) collected at 12 sites in central Amazonia. We measured the total number of ASVs observed (Observed diversity), the Faith's phylogenetic diversity, the Shannon diversity, and the total number of ASVs from the phylum Proteobacteria in samples. Samples were clustered according to the detection of *Nyctotherus* sp. (n = 53) or helminths (n = 38) in fish midgut samples. We included the results of the two-sided two-sample Wilcoxon test comparing the alpha diversity of samples from which a parasite taxon was detected or not detected for each type of parasite (i.e., *Nyctotherus* sp. and Helminths). NS stands for not significant.

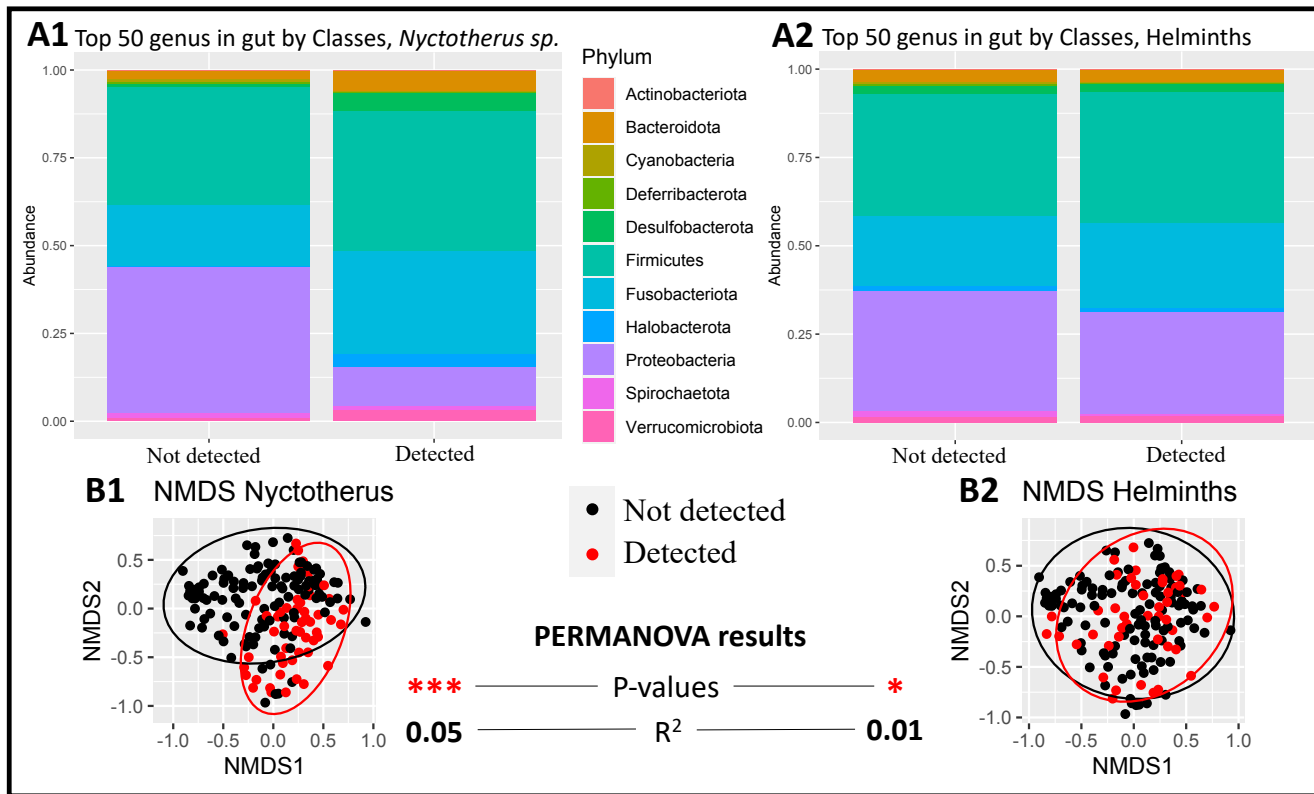


Figure 7: A: relative abundance bar plots of the 50 most abundant genera detected in midgut samples of *Mesonauta festivus* (n = 167) clustered according to the detection of *Nyctotherus sp.* or helminths in fish midgut samples. B: non-metric multidimensional scaling (NMDS) plots based on the Bray-Curtis distances between samples of the 16S rRNA midgut microbiota of *Mesonauta festivus* (n = 167) at the ASVs level. Samples in which *Nyctotherus sp.* or helminths have been detected were clustered together. 95 % confidence ellipse were included in the NDMS for each group. The results of the PERMANOVA based on four factors are also presented for both parasite types. The NMDS was produced with *Vegan* from R.

Co-abundance networks of *M. festivus* gut microbiota

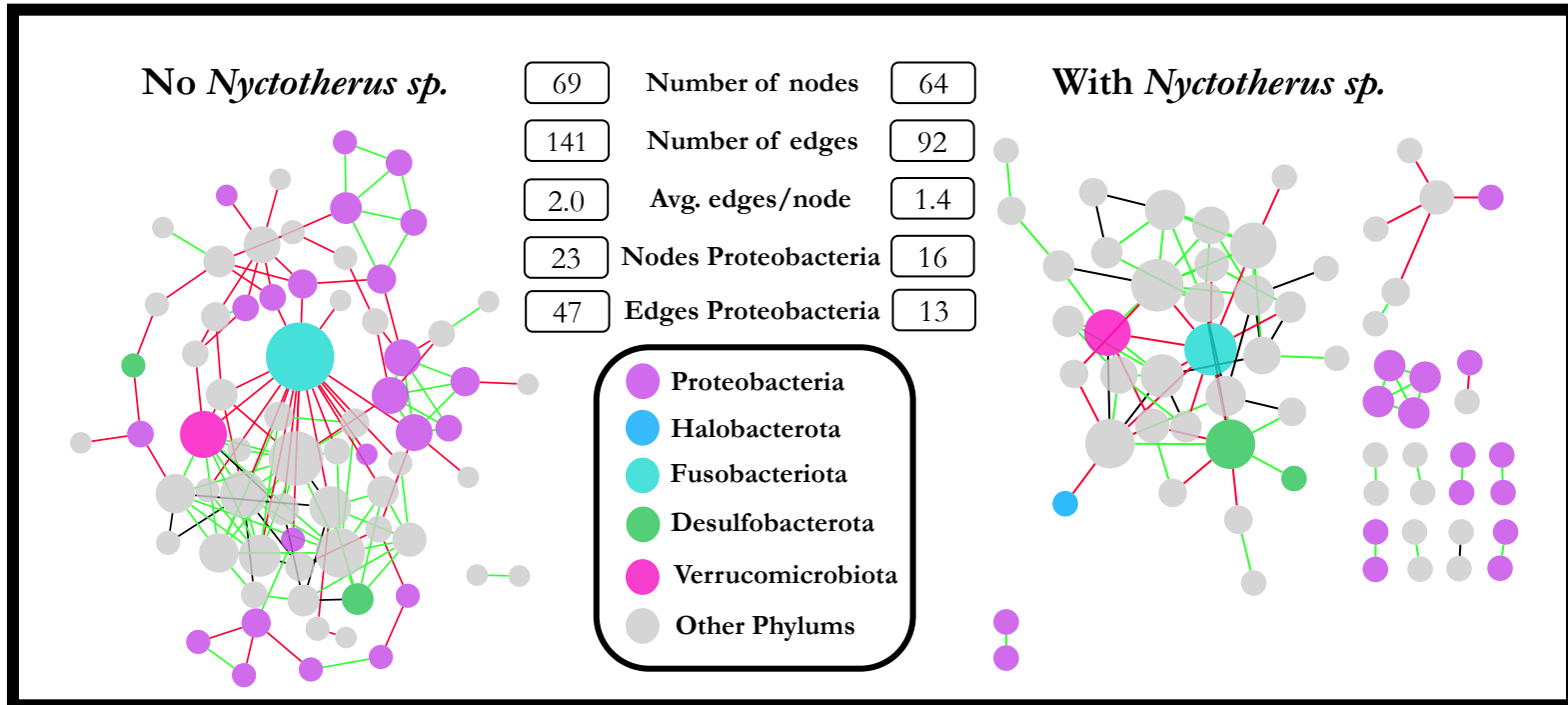


Figure 8: Coabundance networks based on the taxonomic structure of the mid gut microbiota of *Mesonauta festivus* that are infected ($n = 53$) and not infected ($n = 114$) by *Nyctotherus sp.* The two networks were produced using the CoNet application in Cytoscape using the abundance of the 100 most abundant genus present in our 16S rRNA metabarcoding dataset. Red edges (links) represent negative correlations between the abundance of two nodes (genus), green edges represent positive correlations and black edges represent unresolved correlations. We calculated the number of nodes, edges, the ratio of edges per node, the number of nodes from the phylum Proteobacteria and the number of edges from the phylum Proteobacteria present in each network. The main taxonomic classes explaining the differences between the two networks are identified in the legend.

Conclusion

« Quels sont les facteurs qui modulent la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal d'un hôte ? », une question qui continuera de faire couler de l'encre. Ce mémoire aura placé un morceau supplémentaire à ce casse-tête infini qu'est le microbiote, un puzzle dont la complexité semble croître à chaque nouvelle découverte.

Au fil du manuscrit, vous avez constaté que l'Amazonie est une région fascinante par ses diversités biologiques et écologiques incomparables, qui offrent des opportunités uniques d'étudier des processus physiologiques et évolutifs en milieu naturel. Vous aurez aussi appris que le microbiote intestinal joue des rôles clés dans des processus physiologiques majeurs chez son hôte et que plusieurs facteurs intrinsèques et extrinsèques à l'hôte modulent sa composition taxonomique. Toutefois, l'étude de ces facteurs en milieu naturel nécessite la mise en place de modèles expérimentaux adaptés qui minimisent leurs interactions. Notamment, *Mesonauta festivus* se positionne comme un excellent modèle puisqu'il est présent dans des eaux aux caractéristiques physicochimiques drastiquement divergentes, a des populations génétiques bien définies et que nous avons déjà des connaissances disponibles sur son microbiote intestinal et sur certains de ses parasites intestinaux. Ainsi, nous avons étudié l'influence qu'ont l'environnement, le génotype et la présence de parasites intestinaux sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de *M. festivus* dans le bassin hydrologique de l'Amazone.

La première étape de la mise en place de mon modèle expérimental consistait à développer des amorces de blocage d'amplification afin d'inhiber l'amplification de l'ADN provenant de l'hôte dans les échantillons. Nous avons développé une combinaison d'amorces de blocage arrêtant l'élongation qui a permis une réduction de 66 % du nombre de séquences provenant de l'hôte dans les échantillons, améliorant la détection de parasites intestinaux. Entre autres, cette expérience a confirmé la présence de parasites intestinaux chez *M. festivus* par la détection du cilié *Nyctotherus* sp. dans certains échantillons, ainsi que la détection de trématodes et d'une amibe parasitaire. De plus, nous avons collecté des données utiles sur l'alimentation de l'espèce et sur la diversité commensale présente dans son microbiote. Bien que le blocage de l'amplification n'ait pas été efficace à 100 %, le développement et le testage de ces bloqueurs d'amplification ont permis de comparer leur efficacité à d'autres méthodes, des données utiles

pour les travaux futurs nécessitant une inhibition spécifique de l'amplification d'une séquence d'ADN.

Le second et principal chapitre du mémoire aura permis d'acquérir des connaissances fondamentales utiles à la compréhension de la relation étroite et complexe que l'hôte entretient avec son microbiote, les parasites intestinaux et son environnement. Pour cette étude, nous avons combiné une approche par métabarcodage des gènes de l'ARNr 16S et 18S au génotypage des mêmes poissons et à la caractérisation de la physicochimie de l'eau à 12 sites d'étude. Cette démarche a permis de détecter la présence de plusieurs espèces de parasites intestinaux chez *M. festivus*, dont de nombreuses infections par le cilié *Nyctotherus* sp. qui a été associé à une dysbiose du microbiote intestinal de l'hôte en réduisant l'abondance et la diversité en Protéobactéries et favorisant la présence d'Archées méthanogènes. De plus, nous avons détecté la présence de plusieurs types d'helminthes dans les échantillons, qui eux n'ont pas été associés à des variations de la composition taxonomique du microbiome. Finalement, nos résultats supportent une influence plus importante de la parenté phylogénétique que la similitude environnementale sur la structure taxonomique du microbiote intestinal de cette espèce en Amazonie.

Les connaissances fondamentales acquises dans ce mémoire laissent place à de nombreuses questions scientifiques qui sont actuellement sans réponse. Pour commencer, nos amorces de blocage d'amplification PCR n'ont pas été efficaces à 100 %. Selon nos résultats, réussir à implémenter une plus grande concentration d'amorces de blocage pourrait mener à un blocage complet de l'amplification d'ADN provenant de l'hôte. Une autre technique de blocage d'amplification, le CCSAS (Zhong et al. 2021), a également été développée depuis l'application de notre protocole du chapitre 1. Ainsi, il serait très intéressant de comparer différentes concentrations de nos amorces de blocage aux résultats obtenus à la suite de l'utilisation du protocole de Zhong et al. (2021). Les résultats d'une telle étude seraient très utiles afin de mettre en évidence les avantages de chaque méthode et de définir des recommandations pour les scientifiques souhaitant réaliser des études similaires. En effet, les rôles de la fraction eucaryote du microbiote sont encore nébuleux chez la plupart des organismes vivants. Le développement de techniques optimisées à leur étude, comme les techniques actuellement disponibles pour les Procaryotes, est un premier pas vers une meilleure compréhension de leur impact sur l'hôte.

Également, le protocole de détection des organismes parasites utilisé lors de l'étude du chapitre 2 n'est pas optimal. Peu d'études ont utilisé une méthode par métabarcodage génétique afin de détecter la présence de parasites intestinaux. Comme précédemment discuté, cette méthode comporte de nombreuses limitations puisqu'elle ne permet pas de confirmer que le poisson est réellement parasité. Effectivement, un parasite mort ou issu de l'alimentation de l'hôte pourrait tout autant être détecté par cette approche. Ainsi, une expérience en environnement contrôlé, où certains poissons seraient mis en contact avec des parasites intestinaux, serait très intéressante afin d'évaluer l'impact de certaines infections entéroparasitaires sur le microbiome intestinal et certaines variables physiologiques de l'hôte. Entre autres, une telle étude permettrait de confirmer les patrons que nous avons observé et permettrait de jeter un regard nouveau sur les analyses effectuées en milieu naturel. De plus, une telle expérience permettrait de corriger pour de nombreuses variables confondantes et faciliterait la détection de patrons statistiques, ce qui mènerait potentiellement de nouvelles découvertes. L'utilisation d'une approche par métatranscriptomique serait aussi très intéressante puisqu'elle permettrait d'étudier la fraction active du microbiome intestinal, incluant les parasites. En effet, l'étude de l'ensemble des ARNs produits par les organismes du microbiote offre de l'information sur les chemins métaboliques qui sont activés chez l'hôte et chez le microbiote à la suite d'une infection parasitaire ou d'une dysbiose microbienne. De plus, l'étude de l'ARN pourrait permettre de confirmer ou infirmer les résultats observés lors dans ce mémoire. Tous ses questionnements représentent bien l'étude du microbiote. Plus on en apprend, plus on a de questions à se poser.

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Annexe A : Appendices du chapitre 1

Appendice A

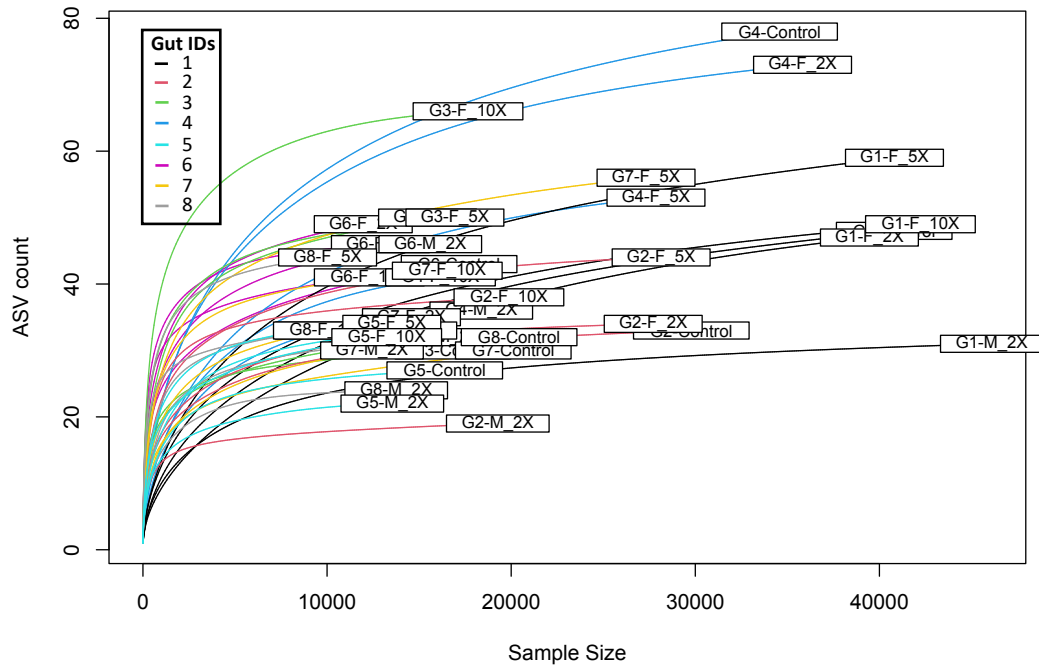


Figure S1: Rarefaction analysis produced representing the total number of ASVs detected in *Mesonauta festivus* gut samples in function of the sampling depth ($n = 40$). We coloured lines according to the gut ID of samples. While the sequencing depth is not equal for every sample, it seems like all the diversity was unravelled for every sample.

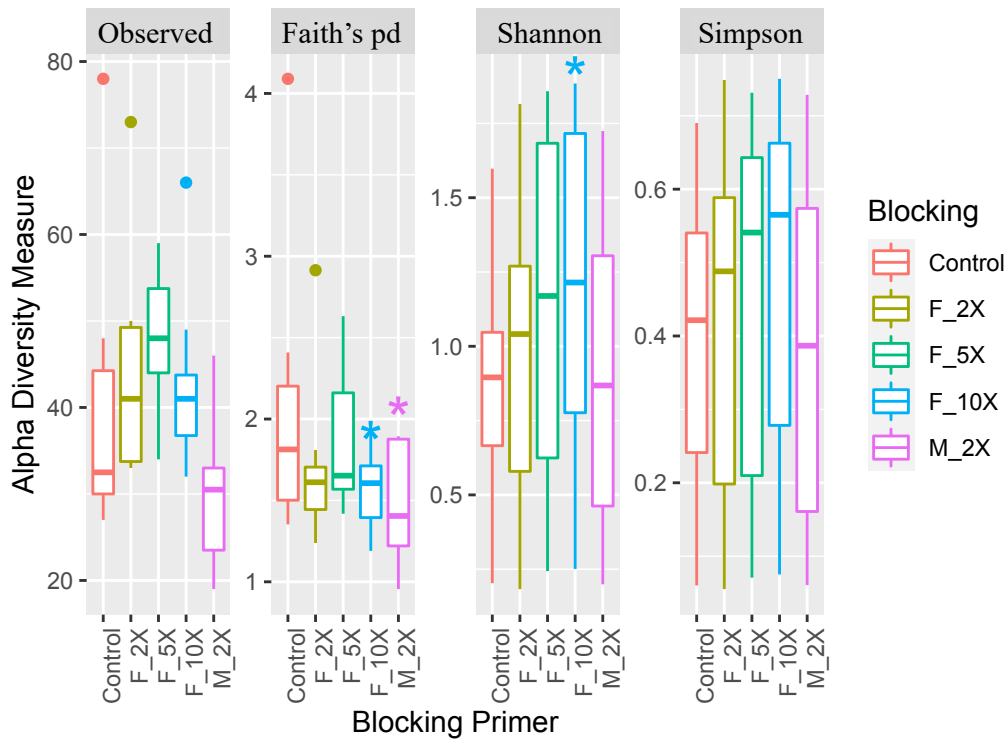


Figure S2: Observed, Faith's phylogenetic, Shannon and Simpson alpha diversity indexes from *M. festivus* gut samples ($n = 40$) amplified using different blocking primer combinations ($n = 5$). We clustered and colored samples according to their blocking primer group. The plot was produced using the function `plot_richness` from *Phyloseq*. There was a significant difference between the phylogenetic diversity from the M_2X group and the control (p -value < 0.05), but there was no significant difference in Shannon and Simpson diversity indexes (p -value > 0.9).

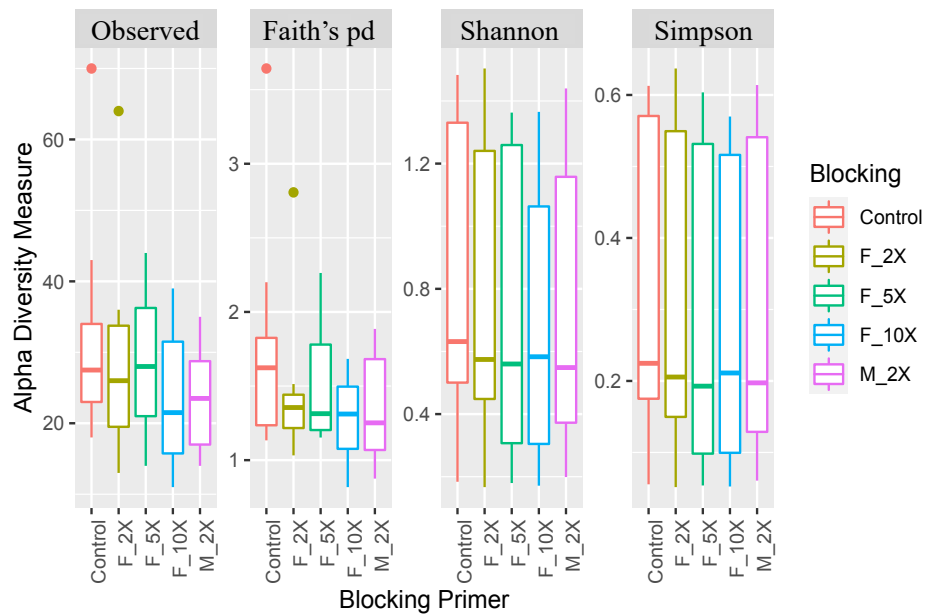


Figure S3: When omitting the class Actinopterygii, observed, Faith's phylogenetic, Shannon and Simpson alpha diversity indexes from *M. festivus* gut samples ($n = 40$) amplified using different blocking primer combinations ($n = 5$). We clustered and colored samples according to their blocking primer group. The plot was produced using the function `plot_richness` from *Phyloseq*. There was a significant difference between the phylogenetic diversity from the M_2X group and the control (p -value < 0.05), but there was no significant difference in Shannon and Simpson diversity indexes (p -value > 0.9).

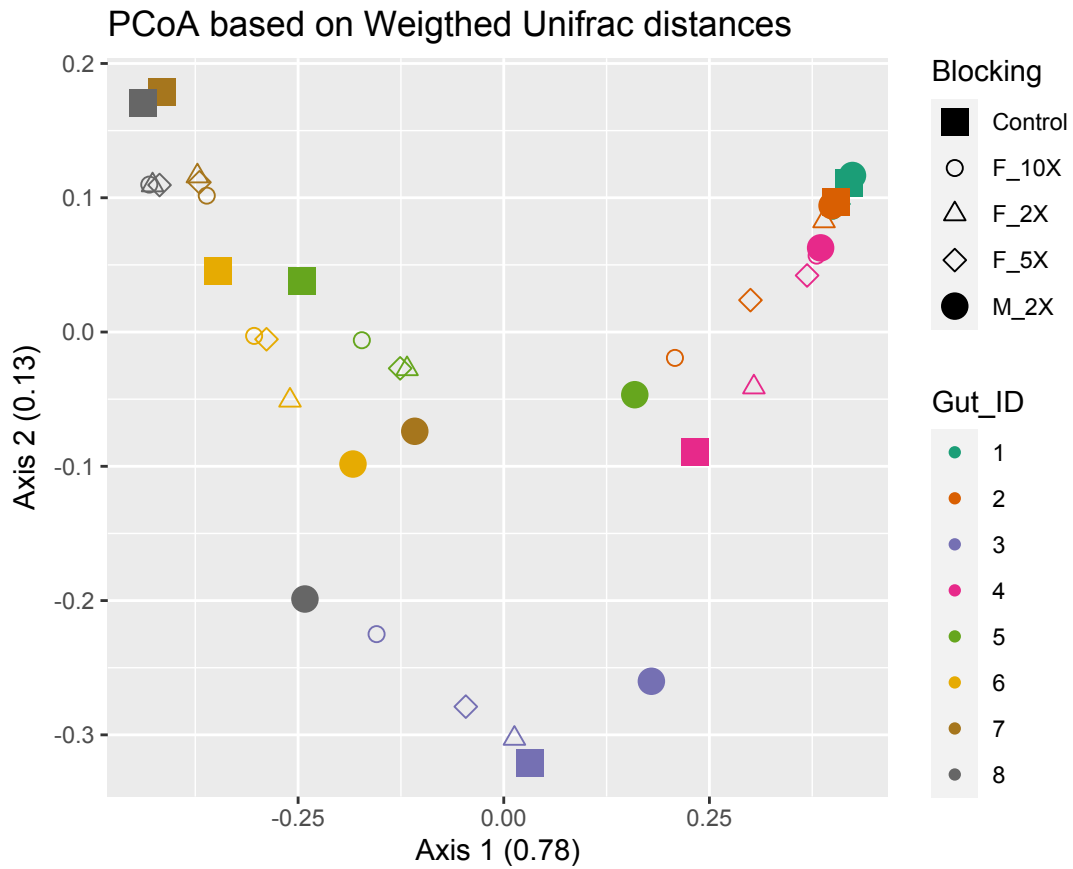


Figure S4: Principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) based on the Weighted Unifrac distances between *Mesonauta festivus* gut sample 18S rRNA V4-V5 communities (n = 40). Samples were colored according to their gut ID (n = 8) and the pinch types represent the blocking primers used during their amplification (n = 5). The percentage of the total variance explained by each axis is identified.

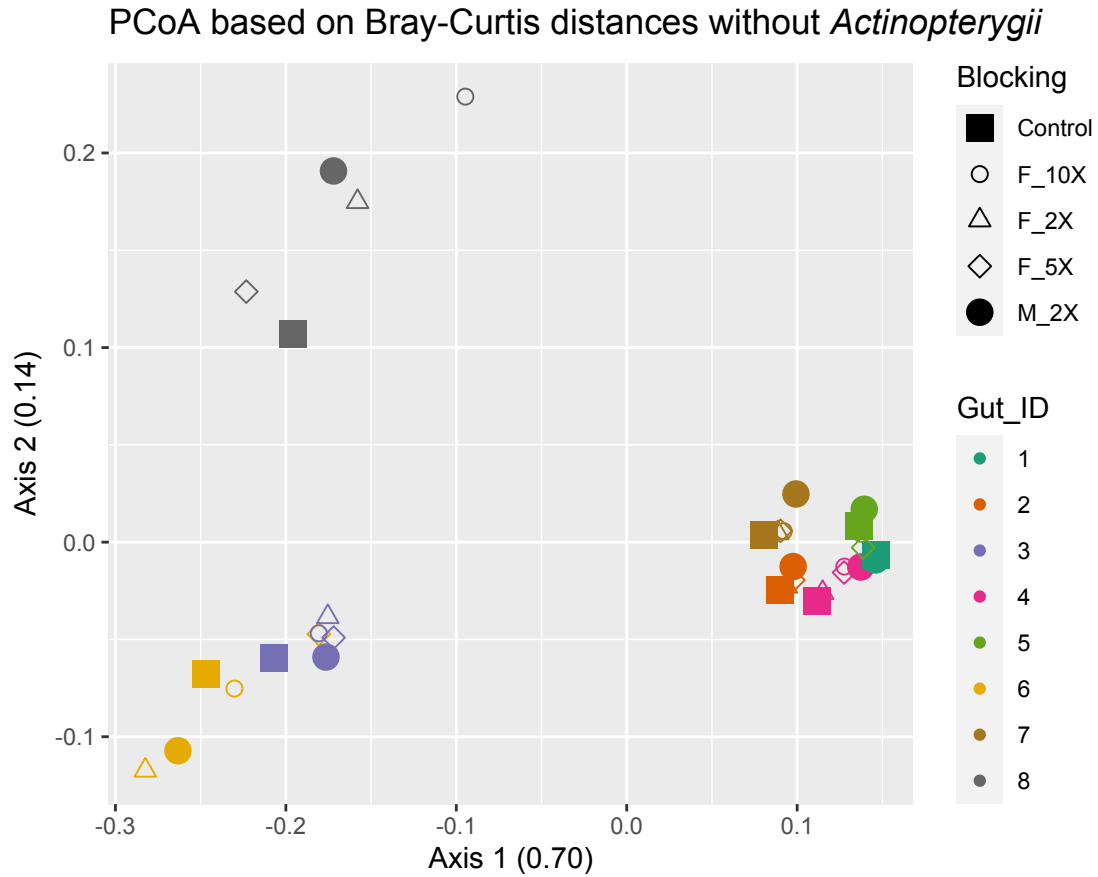


Figure S5: Principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) based on the Bray-Curtis distances between *Mesonauta festivus* gut sample 18S rRNA V4-V5 communities (n = 40) without considering the Class Actinopterygii in the *Phyloseq* object. Samples were colored according to their gut ID (n = 8) and the pinch types represent the blocking primers used during their amplification (n = 5). The percentage of the total variance explained by each axis is identified.

Appendice B

Primer list:

	Sequence (5'→3')	Template strand	Length	Start	Stop	Tm	GC%	Citation
635F-C3	CGCGAGGGGAGCCACCGTCTG	Plus	21	69	89	69.58	76.19	Na
846R-C3	ATCATGGCCCCAGTTCAGAGAGAG	Minus	24	280	257	63.80	54.17	Na
1062R-C3	TGCCCGGCGGGTCATGGGAAT	Minus	21	496	476	68.99	66.67	Na
816F-C3	GGGTTTTCTCTCTCTGAACTGGGGC	Plus	25	250	274	65.02	56.00	Na
574*F	CGGTAAYTCCAGCTCYV	Plus	17	574	591	58.8	56.9	(Kounosu et al. 2019)
616*F	TTAAARVGYTCGTAGTYG	Plus	18	616	634	53.8	39.8	(Kounosu et al. 2019)
1132R	CCGTCAATTHCTTYAART	Minus	19	1132	1113	53.9	35.2	(Kounosu et al. 2019)
566F	CAGCAGCCGCGGTAATTCC	Plus	19	566	585	70.2	63.2	(Hadziavdic et al. 2014)
1289R	ACTAAGAACGGCCATGCACC	Minus	20	1289	1269	57.9	55	(Hadziavdic et al. 2014)