MSc project 2020 –
The predictive power of personality traits on individual functioning in social networks

We are currently looking for motivated MSc students for a project with our captive zebra finch population at the University of Groningen. The starting date is September, 2020.

In this population, we study whether developmental conditions affect adult personality traits such as dominance, boldness & exploration. For this MSc project, we are interested in seeing whether these personality traits hold any predictive power on how the zebra finches function in social networks. Think of such questions as; 'are dominant individuals more likely to be central players in a social network?' or 'Do bold individuals interact with more individuals than shy individuals?'

We aim to establish the social network of our finches using RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology. For this, we equip all birds with a PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) tag around their leg, which are read when they fly through strategically placed antennae in their 'home' aviary. We hereby know the location of each bird, and can see which individuals interact with which individuals, and how often this happens. This data is the core of the social network.
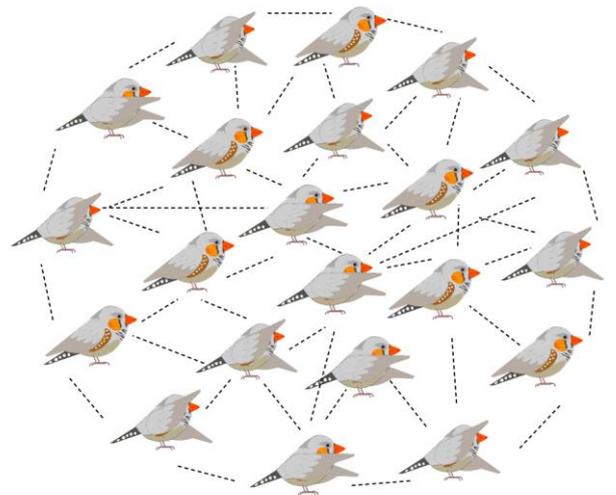
Within this project, you will be responsible for:
- Working together with another MSc student
- Setting up the social network
- Streamlining the dataflow coming from our RFID equipment

You will learn to become proficient in:
- Setting up social networks using RFID technology
- Managing large data-streams
- Data analysis & statistical methods (using the software 'R')

As mentioned above, you will work together with another MSc student. His project will focus on the developmental effects on individual functioning in social networks, which gives you the great opportunity to share the practical responsibilities of running the social network.

This project is under the supervision of PhD candidate Yoran Gerritsma (https://www.rug.nl/staff/y.h.gerritsma/) and prof. dr. Simon Verhulst (https://www.rug.nl/staff/s.verhulst/)

If you are interested in, or have questions, please contact y.h.gerritsma@rug.nl

Relevant literature:
1) Developmental stress predicts social network position – Boogert *et al.,* 2014
2) Individual personalities predict social behaviour in wild networks of great tits (Parus major) – Aplin *et al.,* 2013