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Knemidocoptes intermedius identified in forest ravens *(Corvus tasmanicus)*

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Knemidocoptic mange is a fairly common ectoparasitic disease of birds with a considerable species preference for certain host types. For example *Knemidocoptes mutans* commonly infects galliformes, *K. pilae* psittaciformes and *K. jamaicensis* passeriformes (Fain and Elsen 1967). This note reports the identification of *K. intermedius* from free-living forest ravens *(Corvus tasmanicus)* in Tasmania. *C. tasmanicus* is a nomadic bird common throughout most of Tasmania but not the mainland of Australia (Thomas 1979). It frequents coastal heath, agricultural land and forest areas and is ommivorous (Thomas 1979) feeding on carrion, grubs, crickets, worms and grains (Sharland 1981).

Seventy-five forest ravens were captured about 25km south scrapings from these lesions. There were no obvious lesions on the feet, lower legs, around the eyes or beak.

The histological character of the lesion was one of marked hyperkeratosis with extensive cavitation of the hyperkeratotic covering by numerous tunnels. The cavities lying closest to the underlying skin contained many mites. The underlying epithelium was only mildly and patchily hyperplastic, although it was thrown into irregular folds. There was no parakeratitis and there was only a mild dermal reaction consisting of a few foci of mononuclear cells about some dermal blood vessels.

Mites were fixed in 70% ethanol and identified as *K. intermedius*. This mite was originally described by Fain and Macfarlane (Fain and Elsen 1967) from a captive *Prunella strophiata* imported into England from the Himalayan Region. *P. strophiata* is a sparrow-like bird that lives in mountainous areas and feeds on insects, seeds and berries. Considering the relative geographical isolation of Tasmania from Asia it would seem that *K. intermedius* is probably more widespread than records indicate.

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References

Fain A and Elsen P (1967) — *Acta Zoologica and Pathologica*, No. 45, p 83