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## Social context hinders humans but not ravens in a short-term memory task

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1 **Social context hinders humans but not ravens in a short-term memory task**

2 Running title: Social context motivates ravens...

3

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15

16 **Abstract**

17 Using resources shared within a social group – either in a cooperative or a competitive way -  
18 requires keeping track of own and others' actions, which, in turn, requires well-developed  
19 short-term memory. Although short-term memory has been tested in social mammal species,  
20 little is known about this capacity in highly social birds, such as ravens. We compared ravens  
21 (*Corvus corax*) with humans in spatial tasks based on caching, which required short-term  
22 memory of one's own and of others' actions. Human short-term memory has been most  
23 extensively tested of all social mammal species, hence providing an informative benchmark  
24 for the ravens. A recent study on another corvid species (*Corvus corone*) suggests their  
25 capacity to be similar to the humans', but short-term memory skills have, to date, not been

26 compared in a social setting. We used spatial set-ups based on caches of foods or objects,  
27 divided into individual and social conditions with two different spatial arrangements of caches  
28 (in a row or a 3x3 matrix). In each trial, a set of three up to nine caches was presented to an  
29 individual that was thereafter allowed to retrieve all items. Humans performed better on  
30 average across trials, but their performance dropped, when they had to keep track of partner's  
31 actions. This differed in ravens, as keeping track of such actions did not impair their  
32 performance. However, both humans and ravens demonstrated more memory-related mistakes  
33 in the social than in the individual conditions. Therefore, whereas both the ravens' and the  
34 humans' memory suffered in the social conditions, the ravens seemed to deal better with the  
35 demands of these conditions. The social conditions had a competitive element, and one might  
36 speculate that ravens' memory strategies are more attuned to such situations, in particular in  
37 caching contexts, than is the case for humans.

38

39 **Keywords:** short-term memory, raven, human, sociality, primacy, cache recovery

40

41

## 42 **1. Introduction**

43 Well-developed memory systems allow for swift adaptation to complex environments. Keeping  
44 track of food locations, actions of conspecifics, and presence of predators and prey has been  
45 thought to drive the evolution of diverse memory skills (Murray et al., 2016). Some  
46 environments are more cognitively demanding than others and require enhanced memory. For  
47 instance, living in a dynamic social group requires well-developed memory because its  
48 members must constantly keep track of actions of others to adapt and benefit from group  
49 activities, from social interactions (Seyfarth & Cheney, 2015) to foraging (Bugnyar, 2013). This  
50 is particularly demanding in groups with fluctuations in group size and group composition (a  
51 high degree of fission-fusion dynamics; Aureli et al., 2008, Loretto et al., 2017, Szpl et al.,

52 2018), such as those of humans (Aureli et al., 2008), some non-human primates (Seyfarth &  
53 Cheney, 2015) and some corvids (Bugnyar, 2013; Boucherie et al., 2019).

54 Limited and ephemeral food availability also taxes memory processing: one must  
55 remember when and where food will likely reappear in the future after prolonged periods of  
56 absence. Some animals use memory to extend food availability beyond periods of food  
57 abundance by hoarding (Clayton & Dickinson, 1998; Vander Wall, 1990; Zinkivskay et al.  
58 2009). Hoarders cache food in several locations during abundance and retrieve it later, when  
59 availability drops (Pravosudov & Roth, 2013). The animals need well-developed spatial  
60 memories for the location of caches: they must recall where the food was hidden.

61 Retrieving food from one's own caches is a memory-intensive task, but arguably it is even  
62 harder to remember caches in a social context, in which the animal has access to a pool of its  
63 own and others' caches, and has to keep track not only of its own actions, but also those of  
64 conspecifics. Some social-food hoarders, such as the common raven (*Corvus corax*), resolve  
65 this by observing and remembering where a conspecific cached its food to pilfer the cache later  
66 when potential competitors are no longer attending (Bugnyar, 2013; Scheid & Bugnyar, 2008).  
67 Therefore, to maximize foraging success, ravens need not only individual spatial memory (for  
68 their own actions), but also observational spatial memory (for the actions of others; Scheid &  
69 Bugnyar, 2008).

70 Therefore, ravens have to deal with at least two memory-intensive socioecological  
71 pressures: high variability in food availability (Vander Wall, 1990) and competing with  
72 conspecifics for food caches (Bugnyar, 2013). Under these pressures, ravens have likely  
73 acquired enhanced memory skills for food locations and actions of conspecifics (Healy et al.,  
74 2005; Pravosudov & Roth, 2013; Smulders et al., 2010), but the limits of these skills remain  
75 unclear. To our knowledge, although ravens' long-term memory has been previously

76 investigated in cognitive tasks (Müller et al., 2017; Boeckle & Bugnyar, 2012), the limits of  
77 their short-term memory have not.

78         This study investigated how ravens' memories are affected by a competitive social  
79 context. To gain further knowledge about possible adaptations, we compared the ravens with  
80 humans, as humans are not only a highly social species, but also have the best studied memory  
81 systems. We used spatial memory tasks, adapted to each species body size and motor system,  
82 divided into individual and social settings.

83         In ecological contexts, ravens typically recover caches within a few hours up to a few  
84 days after the caches have been made (Bugnyar, 2013). To store and subsequently retrieve the  
85 locations from long-term memory, ravens must first process them within working memory  
86 (Baddeley & Hitch, 1974) and/or short-term memory (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968). These two  
87 terms have been often used interchangeably in animal memory research to refer to cognitive  
88 processing of immediate contexts, but they are not identical. Whereas working memory allows  
89 for active processing of information from the environment and long-term memory, short-term  
90 memory serves as a buffer between these two sources of information (Roberts & Santi, 2017).  
91 Processes of working memory prepare information held in short-term memory for later storage  
92 in long-term memory (Cowan, 2017), and both working and short-term memory correlate with  
93 long-term memory in humans (Neath et al, 2018). Here, we tested the subjects' memory in  
94 immediate contexts, and because of (1) the difficulty of establishing to what extent working  
95 memory and/or short-term memory contributed to performance in our cache recovery tasks, and  
96 of (2) possible terminological confusions, we adopt the term of *short-term spatial memory* used  
97 in previous research on cache recovery in corvids (Scheid & Bugnyar, 2008). However, when  
98 citing work of others which have used *working memory*, we maintain this term.

99         Thanks to working memory, an individual can temporally maintain goal-relevant  
100 information (Baddeley, 2003; Conway and Engle, 1995) and select it over competing yet less

101 relevant information. Having a larger storage capacity, and so being able to simultaneously  
102 manipulate a larger number of items, has been associated with better performance in general  
103 cognitive tasks in humans (Conway and Engle, 1995; Engle et al., 1999; Kyllonen and Christal,  
104 1990; Süß et al., 2002) and mice (Kolata et al., 2005; Light et al., 2010; Wass et al. 2013). In  
105 other words, variation in working memory has been related to variation in general intelligence  
106 (Kolata et al., 2005), and as such could have a role in cognitive evolution (Beaman, 2010). A  
107 well-developed working memory capacity in humans has been argued to have allowed for the  
108 emergence and sustenance of sophisticated cognitive abilities—such as planning, innovation,  
109 and analogical reasoning (Coolidge & Wynn, 2004).

110         Humans have repeatedly been reported to have an exceptional working and short-term  
111 memory capacity, in general larger than other animals (e.g., Wright & Elmore, 2016, Glassman  
112 et al., 1994; Carruthers, 2013). However, healthy adult humans can hold 4 chunks (groups) of  
113 items in their short-term memory (Cowan, 2001), and it has recently been shown that crows  
114 and rhesus monkeys can hold 4 items in their working memory too (Balakhonov & Rose, 2017;  
115 Buschman et al., 2011). Nevertheless, humans are known to effectively use such chunks  
116 through different strategies, for instance, by remembering a nine-digit phone number in three  
117 three-digit portions. Some animals, such as rats, pigeons and rhesus monkeys, have been shown  
118 to use chunking strategies too (e.g., Fountain, 1990; Terrace, 1991; Scarf et al., 2018). However,  
119 to our knowledge, this capacity has never been investigated in a social context, in any animal  
120 including humans; that is, when one has to update one's own short-term memory based on  
121 actions performed by another individual, and act upon the update.

122         It is difficult to predict how humans and ravens will compare in the spatial memory  
123 tasks; if, in such tasks, the raven short-term memory capacity is more limited than the human,  
124 the ravens' performance would be worse than that of the humans. Furthermore, humans may  
125 use linguistically based mnemonic strategies which are likely unavailable to ravens. As it has

126 been shown that the ability to solve complex cognitive tasks, that require executive systems, is  
127 inhibited by presence of other individuals (Wagstaff et al., 2008), we hypothesize that humans  
128 will suffer from a social inhibition effect in our observational spatial memory tasks, but will  
129 excel in the individual spatial memory tasks. Further, based on the ravens' socio-ecology, we  
130 expect that the ravens might not suffer from a social inhibition effect, and may even perform  
131 better in the social than in the individual conditions. Finally, to test whether humans'  
132 performance in our setup correlated with their working memory capacity, all humans  
133 participated in so-called Span Tasks from Engle Lab (Conway et al., 2005; Foster et al., 2015).  
134 This would also indicate what memory functions our tasks measured, which allows for more  
135 informed speculations about the performances of the ravens as well.

136

## 137 **2. Method**

138

### 139 **2.1. Subjects**

140

141 Six adult humans (3 females,  $M^{\text{age}}=27.8$ , age range: 25-31 years) and six adult ravens (5  
142 females) participated in the study. The humans were tested both individually and in pairs at  
143 Lund University, Sweden; they were alumni or current students of the university, and of  
144 international background; none of them had a degree in psychology and/or cognitive science.  
145 The humans were familiar both with the experimenter and the partner, with whom they  
146 participated in two observational spatial memory tasks. The humans were rewarded with  
147 cinema tickets, in accordance with the informed consent forms, which were signed before  
148 testing. Five out of six ravens were housed at the Lund University Corvid Cognition Station in  
149 a social group in a 400 m<sup>2</sup> space. One raven was a wild free-flying individual, kin to those  
150 housed at the Station and voluntarily participating in the experiment. The tests were conducted  
151 both individually and in pairs, in familiar facilities with free access to food and water during  
152 the experiment. All ravens, including the wild one, were familiar with the experimenter.

153           The subject-partner pairs were always the same, both in the humans and in the ravens  
154 (humans: 1 with 2, 3 with 4, 5 with 6; ravens: Rickard with None, Juno with Embla, Rugga  
155 with Tosta). For further details see Supplementary Information 1.

## 156 **2.2. Apparatus**

### 157 **2.2.1. Ravens**

158 Two experimental set ups were used (Figure 1A-B). Both consisted of nine wooden dishes  
159 (8.5x8.5 cm), equidistantly distributed either in a 9x1 row over a long wooden board  
160 (113x17x1.2 cm); 2.3 cm distances) or in a 3x3 matrix over a square wooden board (63x63x1.2  
161 cm, 13 cm distances). Although apparently simpler, the row distribution may be less  
162 ecologically valid than the matrix distribution as ravens arguably rarely cache in straight rows.  
163 Each dish was square-shaped and made by four wood pieces attached to the board. During the  
164 experiment, the dishes served as potential cache locations; a food item could be placed within  
165 the dish, and then covered with wood chips to disguise the item. The distribution of the dishes  
166 ensured that the raven could not explore two caches simultaneously, and that it was forced to  
167 walk in front of/between the caches, if more than three were baited in a trial. The food items  
168 were always quarters of ring-shaped dog treats.

### 169 **2.2.2. Humans**

170 Two analogical set ups were used for the humans. However, they were upscaled so that motor  
171 effort during cache recovery would be comparable to that of the ravens. This meant that the  
172 humans were also forced to walk in front of/between the caches, if more than three were baited  
173 in a trial. The humans were confronted with nine wooden dishes (18x18 cm), equidistantly  
174 distributed either in a 9x1 row (180x20x20 cm; 7 cm distances) or in a 3x3 matrix  
175 (140x140x20cm; 40 cm distances). The dishes were placed over cubes (20x20x20 cm), fastened  
176 onto the tops of one-meter high columns that allowed for comfortable cache recovery (without  
177 bending; Figure S1). During the experiment, the dishes served as potential cache locations; a



178 small metal ring ( $\varnothing$ 1 cm) could have been placed within the boundaries of the dish, and then  
179 covered with grill wood chips to disguise the item.

### 180 **2.3. Procedure**

181 At the beginning of each trial, the experimenter inserted exactly one item (a quarter of the dog  
182 treat or a small metal ring) per dish into a number of the dishes, ranging from three to nine.  
183 Next, wood chips or stones were placed over the item, and once ensured that it was no longer  
184 visible, the experimenter would step back from the apparatus to allow the subject or its partner  
185 to approach and immediately start the search. This procedure was followed in all experimental  
186 conditions, both with the ravens and the humans.

187 Each subject participated in four experimental conditions based on four available  
188 combinations of two manipulated factors: (1) the set up (row or matrix), (2) the social context  
189 (without or with a partner). Depending on the social context, the subjects had to follow different  
190 rules when solving the task. Without the partner, the subjects had to follow one rule: “explore  
191 each cache one after another, and do not return to an already explored cache”, and if they  
192 participated with a partner, they had to follow another rule: “explore caches that have not been  
193 explored by the partner”. In the test trials on the row distribution, the experimenter always  
194 cached the items in adjacent dishes to maintain a uniform distance between the caches  
195 regardless of their number, and to avoid an overlap with training trials. In the test trials on the  
196 matrix distribution, the experimenter cached the items in random dishes; otherwise a 3-cache  
197 trial on the matrix distribution would be virtually identical to the 3-cache trial on the row  
198 distribution. Overall, each subject completed 35 pseudo-randomized trials within each of the  
199 four experimental condition (row-individual, matrix-individual, row-social, matrix-social), that  
200 is, a total of 140 trials. The subject could not be tested on the same number of caches more than  
201 twice in a row, and otherwise the order of cache numbers was pseudo-random. Cache  
202 distribution (row vs. matrix) and social context (individual participation vs. participation with

203 a partner) were manipulated. The order of the conditions for each subject was not pseudo-  
204 randomized for two reasons. First, the ravens, highly neophobic (Miller et al., 2015), were  
205 hesitant to approach the apparatus at the beginning of each condition, regardless of whether  
206 they have had access to it beforehand. Because the risk of that a high level of arousal associated  
207 with neophobia (Greenberg, 2013) could hinder ravens' performance in the task, a short training  
208 phase preceded each condition (see Short-term individual spatial memory tests). Keeping to a  
209 predictable order of trials, that is using one set up consistently after the training phase, allowed  
210 for reducing the level of arousal and thereby its effect on the ravens' performance. Even when  
211 the ravens had already been familiarized with either of the setups in another condition than the  
212 immediately preceding one, they reverted to the previous behavior and did not instantly  
213 approach the set up. For instance, when presented with the matrix after completing the row-  
214 social condition, the ravens still needed a short habituation phase to approach and explore the  
215 matrix despite previous experience from the matrix-individual condition. Second, we assumed  
216 that the ravens may confuse the rules associated with the individual and the social condition,  
217 and we could not be sure that the ravens did not observe each other's trials for two reasons: (1)  
218 the testing was not performed in a complete blind spot in the facilities, and could in principle  
219 have been observed by the non-participating birds; (2) the wild raven was not housed in the  
220 facilities, but was let in during testing, and could possibly observe the testing of other  
221 individuals while free-flying or sitting on the top of the aviary. Observing others would not help  
222 in increasing memory performance, but as each trial for each individual was unique, the ravens  
223 could simply confuse the rules between the individual and the social condition. For this reason,  
224 we settled on the same order of conditions for all subjects. We tested the humans in the same  
225 manner, and monitored (and quantified) whether the individual subjects improved their  
226 performance over the trials and across the conditions. Therefore, all subjects have completed

227 the tests in the following order: 1. row-individual, 2. matrix-individual, 3. row-social, 4. matrix-  
228 social.

### 229 **2.3.1. Short-term individual spatial memory tests**

230 Both the ravens and the humans participated individually in two short-term individual spatial  
231 memory tests, in which they were required to retrieve all hidden items. They were allowed to  
232 explore all caches, but not to go back to an already explored cache. When the subject went back  
233 to such a cache, the experimenter would immediately interrupt searching and terminate the trial.  
234 A cache was coded as explored once the subject touched wood chips within the cache  
235 boundaries, even if the subject did not retrieve the hidden item.

236 In the first individual spatial memory condition, the subjects were confronted with the  
237 1x9 row distribution, and with the 3x3 matrix distribution in the second. Each condition  
238 consisted of 35 pseudo-randomized trials, that is, of five trials with each number of caches from  
239 three to nine (three or four, or five, or six, or seven, or eight, or nine). In the test trials on the  
240 row distribution, the experimenter always cached the items in adjacent dishes, and on the matrix  
241 distribution, the experimenter cached the items in random dishes. The row-individual condition  
242 was always preceded by three training trials, in which the subject had to retrieve all items from  
243 three non-adjacent caches (Figure 2). To proceed to the test, the subject had to reach the  
244 criterion of 67% successful trials, which was always reached within the first three training trials.  
245 The matrix-individual condition always commenced after the row-individual condition, and  
246 followed the same rule, and therefore did not require any training trials. It also solved another  
247 issue: because in the matrix-individual condition the caches were always randomly distributed,  
248 a training trial with three caches would always be in principle identical to a test with three  
249 caches. We expected that both the humans and the ravens would be able to transfer the rules of  
250 the task from the row to the matrix distribution because it has previously been shown that  
251 corvids are able to transfer abstract rules across tasks (Veit & Nieder, 2013).

252 In the ravens, the trials were administered in one session per day, in five to ten trials per  
253 session. Between the trials, the raven was allowed to leave the experimental setup and cache  
254 the retrieved items, and the humans returned the collected items to the experimenter. If the  
255 raven did not return to the apparatus within five minutes, the session was terminated for the  
256 day. In the humans, the individual trials were always administered on the same day, in a single  
257 session per condition, but after ten trials the experimenter asked whether the subject needed a  
258 break. There was a ten-minute pause between the row-individual and the matrix-individual  
259 condition.

### 260 **2.3.2. Short-term observational spatial memory tests**

261 After the individual spatial memory tests, both the ravens and the humans participated in pairs  
262 in two short-term observational spatial memory tests. They were always paired with the same  
263 partner. First, they observed the actions of the partner, and were thereafter allowed to explore  
264 the caches left unexplored by the partner. If the subject explored a cache that had been touched  
265 by the partner, but still contained a food item, it was allowed to continue the search, either until  
266 it retrieved all items or touched an empty cache. Again, the subject was not allowed to touch an  
267 already explored cache.

268 In the first observational spatial memory condition, the subjects were first confronted  
269 with the 1x9 row distribution, followed by the 3x3 matrix distribution. Again, each condition  
270 consisted of 35 pseudo-randomized trials. At the beginning of the trial the experimenter  
271 prepared a certain number of caches, and then stepped back to allow the partner to approach  
272 and retrieve a part of the caches: half of them for the even numbers, and a half minus one for  
273 the odd numbers. Once the partner finished recovering the last cache, the experimenter would  
274 step forward and say “Thank you” to signal that the partner should move away. The raven was  
275 let into to another compartment, and the human stepped back to the side of the apparatus. The  
276 experimenter ensured that the subject’s view of the apparatus was not obstructed. Next, the

277 experimenter would let the subject approach the apparatus, either by letting it in the  
278 experimental compartment (the ravens) or by saying “Please start”/ “You can start now” (the  
279 humans).

280 Both social conditions, regardless of the distribution, were preceded by three training  
281 trials (Figure 3). In the row-social condition, the subject trained on a total of four non-adjacent  
282 caches, and in the matrix-social condition, on a total of two randomly located caches. At the  
283 beginning of a trial, the subject could only observe the caches from behind a mesh. The partner  
284 gained the access to the caches first, and could explore roughly a half of the caches (1 out of 2  
285 or 2 out of 4 in the training trials; 1, out of 3, 2 out of 4, 2 out of 5, 3 out of 6 etc. in the test  
286 trials), being observed by the subject. Once the partner explored the allowed number of caches,  
287 the subject would be allowed to explore the rest. Again, to proceed to the test, the subject had  
288 to reach the criterion of 67% successful trials, which was reached by all subjects within the first  
289 three training trials. The matrix-social condition always commenced after the row-social  
290 condition.

291 In the ravens, the trials were administered in one session per day, in three to seven trials per  
292 session. The subject (observer) and the partner (demonstrator) would switch their roles within  
293 a pair unexpectedly across the session to reduce attention lapses. For instance, if the observer  
294 completed seven trials in a session, it would first complete three trials, after which it would act  
295 as the demonstrator for the other subject for some trials. At some point in the session the roles  
296 are again swapped, and so on. Such role-swaps served two purposes: on the one hand, it  
297 alleviated the cognitive load because acting as the observer required more attentional resources  
298 than acting as the demonstrator; and, the role-swaps made each session different and  
299 unpredictable as the swap could occur after any number of trials. Between the trials, the ravens  
300 were allowed to leave the apparatus and cache the retrieved items, and the humans returned the  
301 collected items to the experimenter. If the observer did not look at the demonstrator’s actions,

302 the session was terminated for the day. The ravens always completed a single session per day,  
303 and, therefore, the overall data collection took about 50 days. In the humans, the social trials  
304 were always administered on the same day, in a single session per condition, but after ten trials  
305 the experimenter would ask if the subject needed a break. There was a ten-minute pause  
306 between the row-individual and the matrix-individual condition. Four subjects completed the  
307 individual and the social trials on the same day, with a 2-hour lunch break in between, and two  
308 subjects completed the experiment on two separate days.

### 309 **2.3.3. Shortened Complex Span Tasks**

310 In the humans, the short-term spatial memory tests were preceded by three complex  
311 span tasks: operation span (OSpan), symmetry span (SymSpan) and rotation span (RotSpan;  
312 Foster et al., 2014). These were computerized tasks, used as a validated measure of human  
313 working memory capacity to examine if scores in the spatial memory tasks corresponded to  
314 scores in the span tasks. In each of the span tasks, subjects are presented with a sequence of two  
315 to seven to-be-remembered items (such as a sequence of letters). Between the presentations of  
316 the sequences, subjects have to complete distractor tasks. For instance, in the OSpan tasks, the  
317 subject needs to remember sequences of letters, but has to complete simple math problems  
318 between the sequences. In addition, after the completion of all span tasks and all spatial memory  
319 tasks, the subjects were asked which strategies (if any) they used when solving the spatial tasks.

### 320 **2.4. Coding**

321  
322 All trials were video-recorded, and for each trial several variables were coded:

- 323 1. *Success rate* (a continuous variable), defined as a ratio of correctly touched caches to  
324 all caches available in a trial.
- 325 2. *Score* (a binary variable), defined as success if all caches were touched without making  
326 a mistake.

327 3. *A- and B-mistakes* (a nominal variable), defined for the individual and the social  
328 conditions separately (only in the failed trials).

329 a. Individual conditions: an A-mistake was coded if the subject returned to a cache  
330 that it previously explored, but not immediately preceding the last correct cache,  
331 and a B-mistake was coded if it returned to a previously explored cache  
332 immediately preceding the last correct cache.

333 b. Social conditions: an A-mistake was coded if the subject touched a cache  
334 previously explored by the partner in its second or later choice, and a B-mistake  
335 was coded if the subject touched such a cache in its first choice.

336 In both conditions, B-mistakes were so simple that they likely resulted from attention lapses  
337 rather than memory failures; A-mistakes could result from both shortcomings. If B-mistakes  
338 were more frequent than A-mistakes in a given condition and a given species, it suggested  
339 that the subjects did not pay attention even to their first choice; on the other hand, if A-  
340 mistakes were more frequent than B-mistakes, it would suggest that the subjects in general  
341 paid attention to their first choice.

342 4. *Retention interval* (a continuous variable [in seconds]), defined as an interval between  
343 the experimenter's last touch on the last cache and the first touch of the subject's  
344 hand/beak on the first cache.

345 5. *Duration per cache (DPC)*; a continuous variable [in seconds]), defined as an interval  
346 between the first touch of the subject's hand/beak on the first cache and the first touch  
347 on the last correctly chosen cache, divided by the number of all correctly chosen caches.

348 6. *First cache explored by the subject* (a nominal variable), coded for the first cache  
349 touched by the subject at the beginning of a search.

350 7. *First cache made by the experimenter* (a nominal variable), coded for the first cache  
351 made by the experimenter at the beginning of a trial.

- 352 8. *Last cache made by the experimenter* (a nominal variable), coded for the last cache  
353 made by the experimenter before the subject approached and started its search.
- 354 9. *Overall delay [s]* (a continuous variable), defined as a sum of *Retention Interval [s]* and  
355 *Duration per cache [s]* multiplied by a number of correctly touched caches in a given  
356 trial.

357 For the humans, individual overall scores (defined as a number of successes) on each  
358 condition were compared with the absolute scores on the span tasks. Although partial scores  
359 were also available and are favored over the absolute ones in some situations (Conway et al.,  
360 2015), the absolute scores were a better match for the overall scores in the spatial tasks. In the  
361 individual and the observational spatial memory tasks, a score of 1 was given only if the subject  
362 recovered all available caches, that is, if it was 100% accurate. The criterion of 100% accuracy  
363 is also prerequisite for receiving a non-zero absolute score in the span tasks. In our case, to  
364 match the partial score, the success rate could be used, but variability in the success rate was  
365 much lower than in the score between the subjects in the individual and the observational spatial  
366 memory tasks.

367 The strategies reported by the subjects are available in Table S1.

## 368 **2.5. Statistics**

### 369 **2.5.1. Fail probability**

370 This experimental setup allowed for different strategies of cache recovery. For instance, the  
371 subject could explore the caches randomly, or by using a fixed pattern (e.g., from left to right),  
372 or by using memory of the already explored caches; and each of these strategies would lead to  
373 different patterns in (1) fail probability over trials, and (2) success rate over trials. For a list of  
374 the possible strategies and the corresponding patterns see Table S2.

375 Whenever the subject chose the caches in a random manner, (1) fail probability should  
376 follow a specific pattern, different in the individual and the social condition (Figure 4). These



377 patterns were compared with those observed, generated by each subject within each condition.  
378 In each case two-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (two-sided) was used to determine whether  
379 the two patterns were significantly different (ks.boot function from Matching package in R).

### 380 **2.5.2. Success rate**

381 For all conditions together and for each species separately, general linear mixed-model analysis  
382 was used to determine the effects of the number of caches, cache distribution, social context  
383 and retention interval on the success rate, controlling for a random effect of subject ID. Beta  
384 distribution best fitted the success rate in both the ravens and the humans (glmmTMB function  
385 from glmmTMB package in R, Anova function from car package in R). To determine the  
386 highest number of caches, after which the ravens' performance significantly dropped, a post-  
387 hoc test was performed. Effect sizes were estimated with r2 function from sjstats package in R.

### 388 **2.5.3. Score**

389 For all conditions together and for each species separately, general linear mixed-model analyses  
390 were used to determine the effects of the number of caches, cache distribution, social context  
391 and retention interval on the score, controlling for a random effect of subject ID. Binomial  
392 distribution best fitted the success rate in both the ravens and the humans (glmer function from  
393 lme4 package in R, Anova function from car package in R). Effect sizes were estimated with  
394 r2 function from sjstats package in R.

### 395 **2.5.4. Mistakes**

396 Binomial distribution was a best fit both in the ravens and in the humans (glmer function from  
397 lme4 package in R, Anova function from car package in R). Two-sided exact binomial test was  
398 subsequently used to determine whether there was a significant difference between a number  
399 of A-mistakes and a number of B-mistakes (binom.test in R). Effect sizes were estimated with  
400 r2 function from sjstats package in R.

### 401 **2.5.5. Duration per cache [DPC]**

402 Each subject was allowed to take unlimited time to explore each cache. First, to compare the  
403 intervals spent on each cache in each trial between the humans and the ravens, and, second, to  
404 determine the effect of the number of caches and the success rate a general linear mixed-model  
405 analysis was used, with subject ID as a random variable. Log-normal distribution best fitted the  
406 DPC distribution in both species (glmmPQL function from MASS package in R). Effect sizes  
407 were estimated with r2beta function from r2glmm package in R.

408 For each species separately, an additional general linear mixed-model analysis was used  
409 to determine the effect of the number of caches, the success rate, cache distribution and the  
410 social context on DPC, with subject ID as a random variable (glmmPQL function from MASS  
411 package in R). Effect sizes were estimated with r2beta function from r2glmm package in R.

412 Furthermore, only for the successful trials (score=1) and for each species separately, a  
413 general linear mixed-model analysis was used to determine the effect of the number of caches,  
414 cache distribution and social context on the DPC (glmmPQL function from MASS package in  
415 R). Effect sizes were estimated with r2beta function from r2glmm package in R.

#### 416 **2.5.6. Span tasks vs. spatial memory tasks**

417 To determine whether there was any correlation between the absolute scores in the span tasks  
418 and the scores in the spatial memory tasks, linear regression was used (lm function in R).

#### 419 **2.5.7. Serial position effect in individual spatial memory tasks**

420 For each of the individual conditions (row and matrix) and for each species separately, a general  
421 linear mixed-model analysis was used to determine the effects of the first and the last cache  
422 made by the experimenter on the first cache explored by the subject, controlling for a random  
423 effect of subject ID. Gamma distribution best fitted the success rate in both the ravens and the  
424 humans (glmmPQL function from MASS package in R, Anova function from car package in  
425 R). Effect sizes were estimated with r2beta function from r2glmm package in R.

#### 426 **2.5.8. Overall delay and retention intervals**

427 For each of the individual conditions and for each species separately, a general linear mixed-  
428 model analysis was used to determine the effect of the overall delay on the subject's success  
429 rate, controlling for a random effect of the subject ID. Beta distribution best fitted the success  
430 rate in both the ravens and the humans (glmmTMB function from glmmTMB package in R,  
431 Anova function from car package in R).

432 To compare retention intervals between the two species, a Wilcoxon signed rank test  
433 with continuity correction was used (wilcox.exact function from exactRankTests package in  
434 R), as the intervals were not distributed normally. Because distributions of this variable were  
435 right-skewed in both species, medians (Mdn) and median absolute deviations (MAD) are  
436 reported.

### 437 **2.5.9. Learning effect**

438 For each condition and for each species separately, to test for the learning effect between the  
439 second and the first half of trials, a paired Wilcoxon signed rank test with continuity correction  
440 was used (wilcox.exact function from exactRankTests package in R).

441

## 442 **3. Results**

### 443 **3.1. Fail probability**

444 Whereas none of the humans explored the caches randomly in neither of the experimental  
445 conditions, some of the ravens did so, especially in the individual conditions (Figures S2-S3).  
446 Further details are provided in Supplementary Information 1.

447

### 448 **3.2. Success rate**

449 In the ravens, there was a significant main effect of the number of caches ( $\chi^2(6)=39.38$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  
450  $R^2=0.12$ ), a significant main effect of cache distribution ( $\chi^2(1)=7.12$ ,  $p=0.008$ ,  $R^2=0.74$ ), and a  
451 significant interaction effect of cache distribution and social context ( $\chi^2(1)=6.51$ ,  $p=0.011$ ,

452  $R^2=0.49$ ) on the success rate. Specifically, the success rate was significantly higher in 3-cache  
453 trials than in 6- ( $z=3.099$ ,  $p=0.031$ ), 7- ( $z=4.382$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), 8- ( $z=4.052$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and 9-cache  
454 trials ( $z=4.447$ ;  $p<0.001$ ) and in 4-cache trials than in 7- ( $z=3.797$ ,  $p=0.002$ ), 8- ( $z=3.466$ ,  $p=0.01$ )  
455 and 9-cache trials ( $z=3.866$ ,  $p=0.002$ ). There were no significant differences in the success rates  
456 between trials with 5 or more caches. Furthermore, the success rate was significantly higher in  
457 the row individual condition than in the matrix individual (weakly:  $z=2.568$ ,  $p=0.05$ ), row social  
458 ( $z=3.615$ ,  $p=0.002$ ) and matrix social ( $z=2.673$ ,  $p=0.039$ ). In the humans, none of these effects  
459 were significant (Figure 5).

460

### 461 **3.3. Score**

462 In the ravens, there was only a significant main effect of the number of caches on the score  
463 ( $\chi^2(6)=91.81$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.205$ ; Figure 6A). Specifically, the score decreased as the number  
464 of caches increased; the difference in the score was significant between three caches and five  
465 to nine caches, between four caches and five to nine caches, and between five and nine caches.  
466 In the humans, only a main effect of the social context on the score was significant ( $\chi^2(1)=13.27$ ,  
467  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.208$ ; Figure 6D). Specifically, the score was significantly higher in the  
468 individual than in the social conditions ( $z=3.64$ ,  $p<0.001$ ).

469

### 470 **3.4. Mistakes**

471 In the ravens, only a main effect of social context on the mistake type was significant  
472 ( $\chi^2(1)=11.62$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.095$ ; Figure S4A). Specifically, in the individual conditions, there  
473 was no significant difference between a number of A-mistakes (likely memory failures) and B-  
474 mistakes (likely attention failures;  $p=0.624$ ), but in the social conditions, there were  
475 significantly fewer B-mistakes than A-mistakes ( $p<0.001$ ). In the humans, the main effect of  
476 social context was on the verge of significance ( $\chi^2(1)=3.51$ ,  $p=0.06$ ,  $R^2=0.233$ ), likely due to a

477 limited dataset, as the humans made fewer mistakes than the ravens. However, the same  
478 relationships were found for the individual and the social conditions as in the ravens (Figure  
479 S4B). Specifically, in the individual conditions, there was no significant difference between a  
480 number of A-mistakes and B-mistakes ( $p=1$ ), but in the social conditions, there were  
481 significantly fewer B-mistakes than A-mistakes ( $p<0.001$ ).

482 Both in the ravens and in the humans, the absolute number of B-mistakes was similar  
483 regardless of social context. However, in both groups, the absolute number of A-mistakes  
484 (likely memory failures) was much higher in the social than in the individual condition (Figures  
485 S4C-S4D).

486

### 487 **3.5. Duration per cache**

488 For both species together, there was a main effect of species ( $\chi^2(1)=7.78$ ,  $p=0.005$ ,  $R^2=0.052$ )  
489 on the mean DPC (duration per cache), with subject ID as a random variable. There was also  
490 an interaction effect of species and the success rate ( $\chi^2(1)=6.08$ ,  $p=0.014$ ,  $R^2=0.091$ ), as well as  
491 a weak significant interaction effects of the number of caches and the success rate ( $\chi^2(6)=12.32$ ,  
492  $p=0.055$ ,  $R^2=0.098$ ), and species and the number of caches ( $\chi^2(6)=11.07$ ,  $p=0.086$ ,  $R^2=0.094$ )  
493 on the mean DPC, with subject ID as a random variable.

494 In the ravens, there was only a main effect of the success rate on the DPC ( $\chi^2(1)=21.71$ ,  
495  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.045$ ; Figure S5A). Specifically, the mean DPC increased as the success rate  
496 increased. In the humans, on the other hand, there was only a main effect of the number of  
497 caches ( $\chi^2(6)=115.43$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.136$ ; Figure S5B). Specifically, the mean DPC increased  
498 as the number of caches increased.

499 Only for successful trials (score=1) in the ravens, there was a main effect of social  
500 context ( $\chi^2(1)=7.71$ ,  $p=0.006$ ,  $R^2=0.14$ ), and an interaction effect of cache distribution and  
501 social context ( $\chi^2(3)=7.16$ ,  $p=0.007$ ,  $R^2=0.15$ ). Specifically, the ravens spent significantly more  
502 time per cache in the social than in the individual conditions ( $z=2.78$ ,  $p=0.006$ ; Figure S6B),

503 and in the matrix-social condition than in all other conditions (row-individual:  $z=4.11$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  
504 matrix-individual:  $z=2.78$ ,  $p=0.027$ ; row-social:  $z=-5.01$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; Figure S6A). In the humans,  
505 there was also a main effect of social context on the DPC ( $\chi^2(1)=6.08$ ,  $p=0.014$ ,  $R^2=0.16$ ), and  
506 an interaction effect of cache distribution and social context ( $\chi^2(3)=16.33$ ,  $p<0.001$ ;  $R^2=0.23$ )  
507 Specifically, the humans spent significantly more time per cache in the individual than in the  
508 social conditions ( $z=-2.47$ ,  $p=0.014$ ; Figure S6D), and significantly less time per cache in the  
509 matrix-social condition than in all other conditions (row-individual:  $z=-3.82$ ,  $p=0.001$ ; matrix-  
510 individual:  $z=-3.1$ ,  $p=0.01$ ; row-social:  $z=0.06$ ,  $p=0.05$ ; Figure S6C).

511

### 512 **3.6. Scores on the Span tasks**

513 Interestingly, there was a significant negative correlation between the total score on the span  
514 tasks and the total score on the spatial memory tasks ( $F(1,4)=18.732$ ,  $p=0.012$ ; adjusted  
515  $R^2=0.653$ ; Figure S7A). Specifically, the significant negative correlation was found between  
516 the total score on the span tasks and the total score on the observational spatial memory tasks  
517 ( $F(1,4)=10.401$ ,  $p=0.032$ ; adjusted  $R^2=0.78$ ; Figure S7B), but not the individual spatial memory  
518 tasks ( $F(1,4)=0.442$ ,  $p=0.543$ ; adjusted  $R^2=-0.126$ ; Figure S7C).

519

### 520 **3.7. Serial position effect**

521 In the ravens that did not recover the caches in a random manner (for details see Supplementary  
522 Information 1), there was only a main effect of the first cache made by the experimenter on the  
523 first cache explored by the subject, both in the row-individual ( $\chi^2(1)=29.296$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  
524  $R^2=0.197$ ) and in the matrix-individual condition ( $\chi^2(1)=11.232$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.11$ ).  
525 Interestingly, this effect was found in the successful (row-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=15.751$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  
526  $R^2=0.182$ ; matrix-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=9.391$ ,  $p=0.002$ ,  $R^2=0.176$ ), but not in the failed trials (row-  
527 individual:  $\chi^2(1)=1.789$ ,  $p=0.181$ ; matrix-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=2.463$ ,  $p=0.117$ ). No effects of the

528 first and the last made cache on the first cache explored by the subject were found in the ravens  
529 that recovered the caches in a random manner.

530 The humans displayed a similar pattern in their performance. In the humans, again there  
531 was only a main effect of the first cache made by the experimenter on the first cache explored  
532 by the subject, both in the row-individual ( $\chi^2(1)=44.866$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.316$ ) and in the matrix-  
533 individual condition ( $\chi^2(1)=10.357$ ,  $p=0.001$ ,  $R^2=0.052$ ). Because there were no failed trials in  
534 the row-individual and only two failed trials in the matrix-individual condition, a separate  
535 analysis for the failed trials would not be statistically meaningful. The humans that always  
536 recovered the caches in a fixed pattern (from left to right) in the row-individual condition were  
537 excluded from this analysis.

538

### 539 **3.8. Overall delay and retention intervals**

540 In the ravens, there was no effect of the overall delay on the success rate in any of the conditions  
541 (row-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=2.27$ ,  $p=0.132$ ; matrix-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=3.411$ ,  $p=0.07$ ; row-social:  
542  $\chi^2(1)=1.904$ ,  $p=0.168$ ; matrix-social:  $\chi^2(1)=1.13$ ,  $p=0.288$ ). Likewise, in the humans, there was  
543 no effect of the overall delay on the success rate in any of the conditions (row-individual:  
544  $\chi^2(1)=0.028$ ,  $p=0.867$ ; matrix-individual:  $\chi^2(1)=0.015$ ,  $p=0.902$ ; row-social:  $\chi^2(1)=0.06$ ,  
545  $p=0.806$ ; matrix-social:  $\chi^2(1)=0.003$ ,  $p=0.953$ ; Figure S8).

546 Interestingly, the median of retention intervals in the ravens was three times longer than  
547 in the humans ( $W=296140$ ,  $p<0.001$ ; ravens:  $Mdn=12.985$  s,  $MAD=11.727$  s,  $Max=217.3$  s;  
548 humans:  $Mdn=4.015$  s,  $MAD=1.794$  s,  $Max=65.22$  s).

549

### 550 **3.9. Learning effect**

551 In both species, there was no significant difference in the scores between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> half  
552 of the trials in any of the four conditions. For further details see Supplementary Information.

553

554 **4. Discussion**

555 Only few ravens (four on the row, three on the matrix) used memory outside of the social  
556 context, contrary to the humans that always seemed to do so. The ravens' performance did not  
557 drop in the social conditions compared to the individual ones, contrary to the humans who  
558 demonstrated such a drop. The ravens seemed to use simpler and likely less cognitively  
559 demanding strategies in the individual conditions, such as making random choices, whereas the  
560 humans (except for two subjects in the row-individual condition) relied on more complex  
561 strategies, such as chunking. In the social condition, however, the ravens clearly used more  
562 complex strategies. In general, in the social conditions both the ravens and the humans made  
563 more memory mistakes (A-mistakes) than in the individual conditions, suggesting that their  
564 memory was impaired in presence of others. Neither the ravens nor the humans seemed to reach  
565 the limit of their short-term memory, but this requires further studies. Humans, but not ravens,  
566 needed more time per cache as the number of caches increased, but neither humans' nor ravens'  
567 performance depended on retention intervals. Further, both humans and ravens exhibited the  
568 primacy effect in the individual spatial memory tasks, but in the ravens, this was true only for  
569 the successful trials. In line with our predictions, scores on the Span tasks correlated with the  
570 spatial memory tasks; however, contrary to these predictions, the correlation was negative. We  
571 have not detected learning effects within conditions. It is unlikely that such effects occurred  
572 across conditions in the ravens, as the success rate was the highest in the first administered  
573 condition, that is, the row-individual condition. While this might suggest that the drop in the  
574 success rate in the subsequent conditions was caused by e.g., a drop in attention or motivation,  
575 it is also unlikely. If such a drop occurred, the ravens should have, for instance, spent less time  
576 on each cache in the subsequent conditions. However, this was not the case.

577

578 **4.1. Primacy effect and retention intervals**



579 Overall, it seems that similar memory processes underlay the ravens' and humans'  
580 performance because the primacy effect (better recall for the first caches made by the  
581 experimenter) was detected for both species in the individual conditions, and only in trials in  
582 which they used memory-based strategies and managed to recover all caches. The primacy  
583 effect occurs when the neural network responsible for encoding becomes fatigued, the more  
584 items it has to encode, especially if the items are very similar (Tulving, 2008). This effect  
585 emerges after relatively long delays (retention intervals) between the presentation of the last  
586 item in a series and the onset of the test (Tulving, 2008). Right after the presentation of all  
587 items, a subject typically shows the best recall for the last presented items (so-called recency  
588 effect). After intermediate delays there are similar levels of recall for the last and the first  
589 presented items (so-called intermediate effects). Only after a longer delay the recall becomes  
590 better for the first presented items, that is the primacy effect emerges with time. What a  
591 relatively long delay is to the subjects differs between species, and is shorter in some animals  
592 than in humans (e.g., 10 s in pigeons and 100 s in humans; Wright, 1985). This suggests that  
593 the neural network in some animals become fatigued faster, and therefore are prone to loss of  
594 more information over time than is the case for humans. However, we found no such differences  
595 between ravens and humans in this study. Although the retention intervals were on average  
596 longer in the ravens than in the humans, we detected a similar primacy effect in the ravens and  
597 the humans. Moreover, we did not find a drop in performance in either of the two species when  
598 the overall delay got longer (the interval between the end of experimenter's caching and the  
599 end of the subject's search). These results show that the ravens were not more susceptible to  
600 information loss over time than the humans, and that the time delays in the tasks had no effect  
601 on the differences in absolute scores between the two species.

602 As delay length cannot explain the differences in overall absolute scores between ravens  
603 and humans, there must be other reasons for this disparity; at least four non-mutually exclusive

604 explanations can be identified: (1) ravens have a limited short-term memory capacity regarding  
605 number of items that can be processed as compared to humans; (2) the ravens might differ in  
606 attentional capacities; (3) the ravens' motivation was lower than the humans' (resulting in lower  
607 attention); (4) the two species used different memory strategies.

608

#### 609 **4.2. Score, success rate and mistakes**

610 A lower capacity regarding the number of items that can be encoded does, however, not  
611 seem to explain the results. A recent study showed that another corvid species (*Corvus corone*)  
612 had a working memory capacity of four items (Balakhonov & Rose, 2017), which is similar to  
613 the capacity repeatedly shown in humans (Cowan, 2001). The crows and the humans were  
614 tested in different setups; however, this similarity gets further support from the current study,  
615 as both species were able to keep a stable (flat) success rate when the task became more and  
616 more demanding, on the trials with five or more caches. For instance, the humans would  
617 perform with 100% accuracy and the ravens with a 65% accuracy on all numbers of caches –  
618 that is the ravens *could* remember up to nine caches. A similar sharp drop in performance, but  
619 above four items, was also observed in the previously mentioned study on crows. The authors  
620 explained this as a result from changes in motivation, or a possible difference in short-term  
621 memory mechanisms between corvids and primates (Balakhonov & Rose, 2017).

622 It is likely that there was a drop in attention in the ravens when the number of caches  
623 exceeded five. Interestingly, the ravens exhibited more memory failures in the social conditions  
624 than in the individual conditions, but the number of attention failures was similar regardless of  
625 the context. This suggests that the presence of others was detrimental for both humans' and  
626 ravens' memory performance, even though such presence did not seem to affect the ravens'  
627 scores in the task. This suggests that, contrary to the humans, the ravens could deal with the  
628 demands of the social conditions without suffering a drop in overall gain from the task.

629           There are also some indications of differences in attention/motivation and strategies  
630 between the ravens and the humans. A comparison between the groups, based solely on the  
631 absolute scores, is not straightforward. In fact, different factors were responsible for the drop  
632 in the absolute score in the two species: the ravens' scores got lower as the number of caches  
633 increased, and the humans' scores got lower when they participated with the partner.

634

### 635 **4.3. Duration per cache**

636           The humans and the ravens dealt differently with the demands of increasing numbers of  
637 caches. Humans spent gradually more time (on average) on the individual caches. Ravens, on  
638 the other hand, spent the same average amount of time per cache within a trial, regardless of  
639 the number of caches involved. However, the average time spent on caches differed between  
640 trials, and in the trials in which they were more successful, the average time per cache was  
641 higher than in the unsuccessful ones. In other words, the humans kept high accuracy levels over  
642 trials, but got slower as the task got more difficult. The ravens, however had lower accuracy  
643 over trials, but did not get slower on average within trials when difficulty increased.

644           The human tradeoff between speed and accuracy could be a result of linguistic  
645 processing, which allows for complex strategies such as assigning abstract symbols (numbers)  
646 to the caches, which at the same time slows down the performance. Indeed, the two humans  
647 that had the highest scores in all conditions, reported to have used linguistic strategies.  
648 Interestingly, the same subjects reached the lowest overall scores on the computerized working  
649 memory (Span) tasks, which cannot be encoded with such strategies. This might suggest that  
650 these subjects had learned to compensate their limitations in working memory with pronounced  
651 linguistic strategies. This shows the importance of such strategies for short-term spatial  
652 memory, and how it can buffer limitations of the working memory; however, this relationship  
653 calls for further investigation in the future.

654           The differences within the ravens between successes and fails, seems to be best  
655 explained by attention and motivation. As mentioned, even if there was no difference of average  
656 time spent per cache within trials, the average time differed between trials and correlated with  
657 success: the longer, the better. That is, the ravens could be as successful as the humans if they  
658 spent more time per cache, but they did not always do this. Perhaps because it required more  
659 expended effort than in the humans, and that this effort was not motivated by the gains, which  
660 might be true even if the effort was not greater than in humans (the ravens got rewards in every  
661 trial anyway, and rarely consumed all of them). That the difference between time spent per  
662 cache per trial was a result of motivational factors becomes clearest in the social conditions.

663           The ravens spent more time on the caches in the social condition than in the individual  
664 conditions, indicating a higher motivation spurred by the social context. Interestingly, the  
665 humans did the opposite, and spent less time in the social conditions. The most pronounced  
666 differences between the species were found in the matrix condition, where the ravens spent  
667 more time and the humans spent less time than in any other condition.

668

#### 669 **4.4. Strategies**

670           That the motivation increased for the ravens in the social conditions seems evident, but  
671 it also suggests that they used different strategies from the individual conditions, or used more  
672 complex strategies more often in the social conditions. Ravens compete for resources with  
673 conspecifics and spend a lot of time caching and recaching food when potential competitors are  
674 present (Bugnyar, 2013). The matrix social condition appears to be the most ecologically valid  
675 condition from this perspective, which might explain the use of strategies requiring more time  
676 per cache.

677           The humans, on the other hand, might have been hindered in their strategies by someone  
678 else being involved in the task, which is indicated by decrease both in time spent per cache as

679 well as in overall success. When asked for their strategies, they reported that they used one  
680 strategy for all conditions as long as possible, such as operating on numbers assigned to  
681 individual caches or planning the order of search before they approached the setup. This was  
682 obviously less effective in the social conditions. Theoretically, the subjects could also have  
683 used another strategy: of remembering, which caches are empty and not which are still baited.  
684 Although none of the humans reported this strategy, it might have been used by the ravens.

685         This study cannot clearly disentangle what strategies were used more precisely by the  
686 ravens in the social conditions, which makes any comparisons with the human strategies  
687 difficult. It is however reasonable to assume that ravens might have predisposed memory  
688 strategies for a competitive caching context. If one were to further speculate, it could be the  
689 case that human short-term memory in social contexts is more attuned to cooperative task, while  
690 the opposite might be true for ravens. This requires further studies.

691         Neither the ravens nor the humans seemed to reach the limit of their short-term memory  
692 in our tasks because they could keep track of up to nine items in all conditions. To complete  
693 the tasks, the subjects had to represent the number of the caches, maintain it on-line in working  
694 memory and execute accurate movements following cognitive processing (e.g., inhibit going  
695 back to the already explored caches). Nine caches go beyond the working memory capacity in  
696 both species, so to succeed with remembering them some memory strategies must have been  
697 used. Using such strategies, in turn, requires representing the number of caches, and updating  
698 the representation during the search. As it has previously been shown that corvids can represent  
699 numericities ranging from 1 to 30 (Ditz & Nieder, 2015; Ditz & Nieder, 2016), the ravens  
700 should have been able to represent the varying numbers of caches and therefore could have  
701 used memory strategies, which may partly explain their performance.

702         Further studies should compare short-term memory performance between the species in  
703 cooperative tasks. Our setup could be adapted to such tasks. For instance, subjects could

704 recover tokens instead of food rewards, and only if the subject and its partner collected a full  
705 set of tokens, the set could be exchanged for food rewards divided equally between the  
706 subject and the partner. This would not only allow for a comparison between short-term  
707 memory performance in a cooperative setup between the species, but could increase the  
708 overall levels of motivation in all conditions, increase the level of attention in the social  
709 conditions and limit provisions for fake recoveries in the social conditions. Moreover, corvids  
710 and other food-hoarding animals could be further tested in setups that do not rely on cache  
711 recovery; such studies would reveal whether the effect of social context is confined only to  
712 predisposed domains.

713

#### 714 **Ethical approval**

715 All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the  
716 ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964  
717 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

718 All applicable international, national, and/or institutional guidelines for the care and use of  
719 animals were followed. The facility and the care taking routines were approved by the Swedish  
720 Agricultural Board (No 5.2.18-5395/16). Ethical approval for the procedures was granted by  
721 the regional ethics board for animal research in the county of Skåne (No M 333-12).

722

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866

867 *Figure captions*

868 **Figure 1.** A display of experimental set ups for the ravens. Two cache distributions were  
869 used: a. a 9x1 row, b. a 3x3 matrix.

870 **Figure 2.** A display of training (A-C) and test (D-F) trials in the row-individual condition. In  
871 the training, always three single items were inserted into three nonadjacent caches (A), and  
872 then covered with wood chips and/or stones (B). The subject was then expected to retrieve all  
873 three items (C). In the test, several single items, here five, were inserted into several adjacent

874 caches (D). Once they were completely covered with wood chips and/or stones (E), the  
875 subject was expected to retrieve all hidden items (F).

876 **Figure 3.** A display of training (A-C) and test (D-F) trials in the row-social condition. In the  
877 training, always four single items were inserted into four nonadjacent caches (A), and then  
878 covered with wood chips and/or stones (B). The partner was then allowed to retrieve two  
879 items, and only then the subject was allowed to retrieve the remaining items (C). In the test,  
880 several single items, here five, were inserted into several adjacent caches (D). Once they were  
881 completely covered with wood chips and/or stones (E) and the partner retrieved a half of the  
882 items, the subject was expected to retrieve the remaining, in this case three, items (F).

883 **Figure 4.** A display of fail probabilities for three-item trials in the (A) individual and the (B)  
884 social conditions. (A) In the individual condition, upon the first choice all caches contain an  
885 item, and so the first choice is always correct. The second choice is also always correct  
886 because the subject can either keep exploring the same cache or choose another out of the two  
887 that still contain an item. Upon the third choice, the subject has two options: an empty,  
888 already explored cache or a cache that has not been yet explored. Therefore, fail probability in  
889 the third choice equals 50%. (B) In the social condition, upon the first choice, one cache has  
890 already been emptied by a partner, which means that a chance of choosing this cache is 33%.  
891 Upon the second choice, only one non-empty cache is left, which means that there is 50%  
892 chance of an incorrect choice.

893 **Figure 5.** A display of a main effect of task on the success rate in the ravens (A) and in the  
894 humans (C), and an interaction effect of the cache distribution and the social context in the  
895 ravens (B) and in the humans (D).

896 **Figure 6.** A display of significant main effects on the score in the ravens (A), and in the  
897 humans (D). There was a main effect of the number of caches on the score in the ravens, and

898 a main effect of the context in the humans. However, there was no main effect of the number  
899 of caches in the humans (B), and no main effect of the context in the ravens (C).