SEROPREVALENCE OF WEST NILE VIRUS AND OTHER ARBOVIRUSES AMONG CRESTED CARACARAS (*CARACARA CHERIWAY*) IN FLORIDA

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ABSTRACT: We documented seroprevalence of three arboviruses, St. Louis encephalitis (SLEV), eastern equine encephalitis (EEEV), and West Nile virus (WNV), in Crested Caracaras (*Caracara cheriway*; $n = 80$) in Florida from 2007-2008. Seroprevalence of WNV was higher (8.8%) than for the other viruses. Most seropositive birds were adults (≥3 yr of age), with 54.5% of adults testing positive for antibodies to at least one virus. Adults were significantly more likely to have antibodies to WNV than subadults and juveniles ($P < 0.001$). Seroprevalence of SLEV and EEEV among caracaras was 2.5% for each virus, and three adult caracaras had indistinguishable anti-flavivirus antibodies. The susceptibility of caracaras to adverse effects of WNV, SLEV, or EEEV infection remains unknown; however, we observed that some free-ranging individuals survived infection and remained productive. Knowledge of arboviral infection among Florida's caracaras is valuable in light of increasing pressure on this threatened population from rapid and extensive habitat alterations.