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Flashy fathers risk offspring safety

In a population of blue-black grassquits, song birds found in the tropics of South America, nests within territories of displaying males are at greater risk of predation by avian predators than areas without them, suggesting a trade-off exists for fathers between attracting new mates and protecting their existing offspring.

Blue-black Grassquit, *Volatinia jacarina*
Wikipedia Commons/Dario Sanches

R. Dias, et al., "Experimental evidence that sexual displays are costly for nest survival," *Ethology,* 116:1011-19, 2010.

Spiders duped by bug predator

By comparing spiders' reactions to different stimuli landing in their web, researchers found that assassin bugs trick their spider prey by mimicking the vibrations on the web made by the spider's own struggling prey, causing the spiders to come within striking range.

A. Wignall, et al., "Assassin bug uses aggressive mimicry to lure spider prey," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences,* AOP, doi: 10.1098/rspb.2010.2060, 2010.

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Predators influence offspring in ovo

Female sticklebacks exposed to the threat of predators tend to produce offspring that stay closer together when shoaling, researchers found. When in the egg, these offspring exhibited higher levels of cortisol, suggesting a hormonal mechanism might explain how the information about the predatory environment influences offspring behavior.

E. Giesing, et al., "Female stickleback transfer information via eggs: effects of maternal experience with predators on offspring," *Proceedings of the Royal Society: Biological Sciences,* AOP, doi:10.1098/rspb.2010.1819, 2010.

Queens conquer unrelated hives

Normally queen bees either leave with a swarm of workers to establish a hive of their own or supersede a mother queen after she dies. Now researchers have found evidence that nascent queens occasionally take over unrelated hives nearby as well.

Queen bee surrounded by workers
Wikipedia Commons/Waugsberg

T. Wenseleers, et al., "Intraspecific queen parasitism in a highly eusocial bee," *Biology Letters,* AOP, doi: 10.1098/rsbl.2010.0819, 2010.

The bird who cried wolf

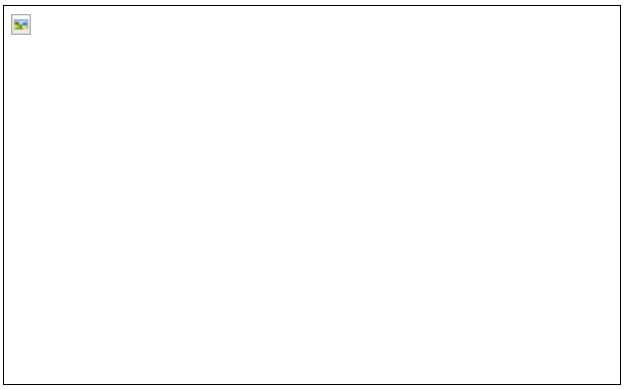
Fork-tailed drongo birds trick individuals of their own and other species into abandoning newly found food by making false alarm calls. In addition to their own alarm calls, researchers found that drongos can mimic the alarm calls of others species, perhaps as a ploy to sustain their trickery when animals stop responding to the drongos' calls.

T. Flower, "Fork-tailed drongos use deceptive mimicked alarm calls to steal food," *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences,* AOP, doi:10.1098/rspb.2010.1932, 2010.

Love songs stay classic

Courtship songs of chestnut-sided warblers appear relatively stable over evolutionary time compared to those used for territorial displays, which have changed considerably over the course of two decades, researchers found, suggesting the presence of two distinct traditions in song bird "culture."

B. Byers, et al., "Independent Cultural Evolution of Two Song Traditions in the Chestnut-Sided Warbler," *The American Naturalist,* 176:476-89, 2010.



Meat, the ultimate pacifier

Despite the need for the protection of meat resources in the wild for primate ancestors, researchers found that the sight of meat makes people less aggressive. Research subjects looking at pictures of meat were less likely to dictate punishment than those looking at neutral images, suggesting meat actually has a calming effect.

F. Kachanoff, et al., presented at McGill University's annual undergraduate science symposium, 2010.

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