

# Parrot understands concept akin to zero

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A Brandeis University researcher in Massachusetts has shown that an African grey parrot understands a numerical concept akin to zero.

Zero is an abstract notion that humans don't typically understand until ages 3 or 4.

Alex, a 28-year-old African grey parrot, lives in the lab run by comparative psychologist and cognitive scientist Dr. Irene Pepperberg. The parrot spontaneously and correctly used the label "none" during a testing session of his counting skills to describe an absence of a numerical quantity on a tray.

The discovery prompted a series of trials in which Alex consistently demonstrated the ability to identify zero quantity by saying the label "none."

The findings, published in the current issue of *The Journal of Comparative Psychology*, add to a growing body of scientific evidence that the avian brain, though physically and organizationally different from the mammalian cortex, is capable of higher cognitive processing than previously thought.

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