

Opposites do not attract

November 13 2006



Copyright to Marin Moravec 2003.

A study conducted at the University of California, Irvine, found that a female budgerigar prefers to mate with a male that sounds like her. Biologists Marin Moravec, Professor Nancy Burley and Professor Georg Striedter conducted the study, which was published in *Ethology* in early November. The study also found that males that paired with more similar-sounding females gave more help to the females when they were nesting.

Budgerigars, small Australian parrots commonly kept as pets, produce highly variable contact calls. Previous research showed that male

budgerigars spontaneously imitate the calls of females that are potential mates. In addition, females were known to prefer males that had been trained to produce calls similar to theirs. The current study is important because it shows that female budgerigars preferentially pair with males that sound like them at their first meeting, before any imitation has occurred.

Parrots display a gift, rare among most animals, of learning new vocalizations throughout their lifetime. A highly social, monogamous species, the budgerigar likely uses multiple aspects of vocalizations when choosing mates and maintaining long-term relationships. This study adds to our understanding of the social functions of vocal learning. It also provides an interesting avian example of a familiar mate choice strategy: choosing a mate with whom you have something in common.

Citation: Marin L. Moravec, Georg F. Striedter, and Nancy Tyler Burley (2006). Assortative Pairing Based on Contact Call Similarity in Budgerigars, *Melopsittacus undulatus*. *Ethology* 112, 1108-1116.

Source: Blackwell Publishing Ltd

Citation: Opposites do not attract (2006, November 13) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2006-11-opposites.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.