

Female cowbirds prefer less intense male courtship displays

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In most species, females prefer the most intense courtship display males can muster, but a new study finds that female cowbirds actually prefer less intense displays. The full results are published May 2 in the open access journal *PLoS ONE*.

The researchers, led by Adrian O'Loughlen of University of California Santa Barbara, write that males direct more intense wing-spreading displays toward other males as aggressive communicative signals. It appears, however, that while these signals may communicate physical condition to other males, which may help avoid unnecessary physical combat, more intense displays are not optimal [courtship](#) behavior, because current physical condition is not the most reliable measure of male quality for females to use when choosing a mate.

"As yet, we don't why males direct these [visual displays](#) at females but we do know that the songs that accompany these displays are important in female mate choice", says Dr. Adrian O'Loughlen.

More information: *PLoS ONE* 7(5): e36130.
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