

# Are you cuckoo? What your emailing style says about you

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Credit: Keagan Renaud

(Phys.org)—Most people have an email address these days and electronic mail has superseded letters and facsimiles as the primary method of written communication between individuals, particularly in business.

However, the increased use of email in business has also resulted in the development of particular idiosyncratic patterns of emailing behaviour that can either delight or enrage.

Researchers at the University of Glasgow and the University of the West of Scotland have examined these different [behaviours](#) and matched them to typical bird-like behaviours.

Dr Karen Renaud, senior lecturer in the School of [Computing Science](#),

said: "Email has rapidly become a vital business communication tool and a lot of people we spoke to say they would not be able to do their jobs without it.

"However, many people have gripes about email. Some people find themselves checking email all the time, even during evenings, weekends and holidays, others complain about how other people behave when using email.

"When we analysed all the findings we realised we could categorise email behaviours and match them to the characteristics of some well-known birds."

The researchers identified a total of 12 bird-like characteristics of email users, including:

- Compulsive [Woodpecker](#): Can't resist reading email at all hours of the day and night.
- [Hibernating](#) Poorwill: Reads email only occasionally so that senders can never rely on them.
- Caterwauling [Peacock](#): Broadcasts emails to all and sundry, claiming that people "need to know" when actually is just grandstanding.
- Back-Covering Emu: Sends emails in order to be able to prove, at a later date, that the information was passed on.
- Echoing Mynah: Acknowledges all emails. For example engages in exchange something like: "thanks", then "my pleasure", then "thanks again".
- Boorish Parrot: Sends abusive or inappropriate emails and fails to understand why others get upset by them.
- [Night Owl](#): The midnight emailer, who fails to understand that others do wish to have "time out".

There was one type of bird associated with perfect email manners: the robin. These people are admired for not allowing email to dictate their lives and making time to speak to people in person whenever they can.

Dr Renaud added: "It is likely most people will be able to identify some of their email correspondents with these behaviours and perhaps even recognise their own email style.

"What the research really highlights is that email is a great source of stress for many people. Too often, email is used instead of a more suitable means of communication like actually talking to someone.

"People send email without thinking of the cost to the recipient, but if everyone does this we all become much less efficient and no-one wins. People need to think before they send an [email](#): is this the best way of communicating? Even if it is, still think before you click!"

The research, carried out with Judith Ramsay at the University of the West of Scotland, is published in *Interfaces*, the quarterly magazine of the British Computer Society.

### **More information:**

The full list of email behavioural types is listed below:

- Compulsive Woodpecker: Can't resist reading email at all hours of the day and night.
- Hibernating Poorwill: Reads email only occasionally so that senders can never rely on them.
- Incommunicado Ostrich: Reads emails but doesn't reply to them. Often to be seen with the Hibernating Poorwill.

- Caterwauling Peacock: Broadcasts emails to all and sundry, claiming that people "need to know" when actually he is grandstanding.
- Pesky Crow: "Leans" on others by means of email, sending multiple versions of the same document, or sending multiple emails about the same topic. This bird inspires fear and loathing in the hearts of other birds.
- Buck-Passing Cuckoo: Sends emails to others asking them to carry out some task she should do herself, and then leaves quickly and mimics the Incommunicado Ostrich so that the unfortunate recipient is left carrying the baby.
- Back-Covering Emu: Sends emails in order to be able to prove, at a later date, that the information was passed on.
- Camouflaging Woodcock: Uses blind copy to send copies of emails to other recipients without the main recipient's knowledge. Unlike the Back-covering Emu, this bird is seldom seen in all its glory.
- Echoing Mynah: Acknowledges all emails. For example engages in exchange something like: "thanks", then "my pleasure", then "thanks again".
- Boorish Parrot: Sends abusive or inappropriate emails and fails to understand why others get upset by them.
- Echolalia Mockingbird: A serial forwarder, sending chain emails, online petitions and anything else that takes his fancy. Most of these emails have a subject line starting with "FW". This bird is easily ignored by other birds, but doesn't know why.
- Night Owl: The midnight emailer, who fails to understand that others

do wish to have "time out". This bird flocks with the Lightning Response Hummingbird.

- Hoarding Magpie: Keeps hundreds of emails in the inbox but can never find exactly the one they are looking for.
- Lightning-Response Hummingbird: Responds immediately to email, and expects an immediate response in return.
- Popular Robin: Simply does not allow email to dictate. They take the time to speak to people whenever possible and do not let email to take over their lives. This bird is the, favourite amongst all the birds.

Provided by University of Glasgow

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