

Superb lyrebirds move to the music

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are deeply intertwined activities.

"Like humans, male superb lyrebirds have different [dance movements](#) to go with different songs," said Anastasia Dalziell of Australian National University. "Just as we 'waltz' to waltz music but 'salsa' to salsa [music](#), so lyrebirds step sideways with their tail spread out like a veil to one song—which sounds like a 1980s video-arcade game—while they jump and flap their wings with their tail in a mohawk position while singing a quiet 'plinkety-plinkety-plinkety.'"

The lyrebirds' [dance](#) movements are a voluntary embellishment to their singing; in other words, they can and do sing without dancing. Sometimes they also make mistakes in their dancing, an observation that suggests to Dalziell and her colleagues that dancing is challenging for the birds, just as it is for us humans (some more than others).



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As much as people love to dance, the activity is even more crucial for the birds. Before they can mate, males must impress [females](#) with their dancing skills. They put a lot of work into their dances, with years of practice before they reach maturity.

In the breeding season, female lyrebirds will visit several different males to watch their song-and-dance routines. Exactly what those females are looking for is still anyone's guess.

"Sometimes after what seems to me to be a perfectly wonderful display by a male, I watch a female leave and check out his neighbor," Dalziell said.

More information: *Current Biology*, Dalziell et al.: "Dance choreography is coordinated with song repertoire in a complex avian display." [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2013.05.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2013.05.018)

Provided by Cell Press

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