

Research provides new insights on the impact of wild birds' social networks

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New research looks into how social networks among wild great tits, as they forage in flocks during the winter, carry over into shaping the set locations at which the birds breed and raise their young during the spring.

Experts found that [spatial structure](#) during breeding, both in terms of how close individuals nest to one another and with whom they form territory boundaries, is underpinned by prior social associations occurring as individuals search for food over the winter. By shaping where individuals locate themselves, social networks may have population-level effects by influencing the birds' future environmental conditions and social settings they experience.

"This work shows how individuals may base [important decisions](#) around their close social counterparts, and also illustrates how social associations occurring at one point in their life may carry-over into an important time in the future" said Dr. Josh Firth, co-author of the *Ecology Letters* research.

More information: Josh A. Firth et al, Social carry-over effects underpin trans-seasonally linked structure in a wild bird population, *Ecology Letters* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/ele.12669](https://doi.org/10.1111/ele.12669)

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