Question: Why are male birds more colorful than female birds?

Answer: Robert Heinsohn is a professor of biology. He thinks he has the answer.

Theory About Evolution

Charles Darwin helped explain this. He created a theory about evolution. Evolution is an idea about how life developed over the years. It explains how animals change from generation to generation.

One way that animals change is through mating. When two animals have children, their children share their traits. The traits that are most likely to attract a mate are also most likely to be passed on.
Attractive To Female Birds

There are two main traits that are attractive to female birds. First are traits that allow males to fight. Second are decorative traits. These attract the female birds’ attention.

Color is used in contests between males. It can signal a bird's territory. It can also show that a bird is ready to fight.

Color also indicates health. Females use the brightness of a male bird’s color to tell how healthy he is. House finches are a good example of this. Males can be orange or red. The brightness of the color is directly related to how good their food is.

Females are usually busier than males. They have to incubate their eggs. They also have to raise their chicks. That means that males must compete for the chance to mate with them.

Most Likely To Have Bright Colors

Birds see more colors than people do. Some species seem the same color to humans. Males in these species often have bright colors that humans cannot see.

Some species have reversed roles. This means that males incubate the eggs. Meanwhile, females defend territories. They also fight amongst themselves to mate with the males. In these species, the females are more colorful. These prove the rule. They demonstrate that the competitive sex is the one most likely to have bright colors.

For Camouflage And Show

Some species have a blend of camouflage and showiness. Some male parrots in Northern Australia have to find food for the females. They spend more time out and about. This puts them more at risk of encountering a predator. So, their colors blend in with the leafy foliage. Still, their shiny green stands out to other parrots.