



FINCHES

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Birds

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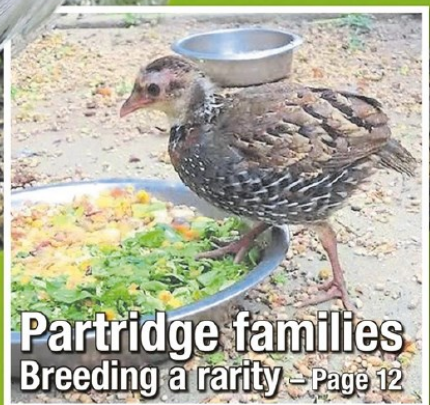
It takes two, baby... or actually is it better to fly solo? – **Page 8**

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YOUNG BIRDS
AND MORE



Summertime stunner

Pied flycatcher: a charming softbill but a challenge to keep – **Page 14**



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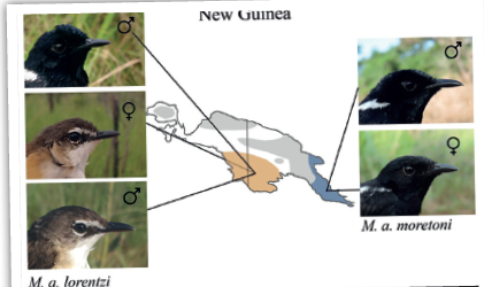
Bright showy plumage may stop birds feeling off colour

PLUMAGE
COLOURFUL OR IRIDESCENT plumage may not only attract a mate but also result in a healthier bird, says new research.
In a comparison of two subspecies of white-shouldered fairywrens (*Mahurus alboscapulatus*) those with more iridescent feathers had fewer microorganisms (such as a bacterium, virus, or fungus) "contaminating" them and a significantly higher feather microbial diversity than matte black or brown birds of either sex. This indicates that the colourful pigment of a bird might make it

more microbial resistant.
Veronika Gvoždíková Javurková from the Department of Animal Science, Czech University of Life Sciences, led the research.
She said: "We show that the presence or absence of iridescent plumage, not melanised plumage per se, was associated with differences in feather microbiota in free-living populations of a tropical bird. Iridescent black males had the lowest feather microbial load and the highest microbial diversity."
Most existing research suggests that these characteristics are driven in the most part by transmission of microbes



The white-shouldered fairywren Photo: Wikimedia Commons/John Gould/William Matthew Hart



Researchers sampled white chest feathers from the *M. a. lorentzi* subspecies' brown females and first-year males, and black chest feathers from iridescent males. In the *M. a. moretoni* subspecies, black chest feathers from ornamented black males with iridescent plumage and black females with matte plumage were sampled

from the environment between members of the same species (but not between mother and offspring). But this new data shows microbial similarities between iridescent individuals from two distinct populations living in different environments.
Ms Javurková concluded: "Chemical composition of preen gland secretions or physical properties of iridescent feathers based on UV reflectance and absorbance of solar radiation may be more important contributors to feather microbiota diversity

and community structure in iridescent individuals.
"Possible fitness consequences could be the better protection against pathogenic microorganisms via more or less intense investment into preening in these plumage phenotypes," she said, adding that if iridescence is an additional factor keeping microorganisms in feathers under control, this plumage phenotype may be of benefit to birds, or may be coupled with preening effort.
This could be the subject of a future study.

Positive response to climate change by some birds

RESEARCH
FIFTY YEARS OF data gathered by citizen scientists show that not all is doom and gloom when it comes to how birds respond to climate change.
A study of 68 breeding bird species in England reveals that for almost a third of them, changes in their populations are linked to temperature or rainfall. For 13 of these 24 species including corn bunting, goldcrest and long-tailed tit, populations seem to have grown by at least 10 per cent as a result of climate trends. However, at least three species –

cuckoo, little owl and reed warbler – fell by the same percentage.
The majority of the effects were related to English climatic conditions, particularly for resident species during summer and winter. The study used information collected from 1966 to 2015 by members of the public working collaboratively with the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO).
James Pearce-Higgins, BTO director of science and the paper's



Little owl numbers have fallen by at least 10 per cent as a result of climate change, a new study warns Photo: BTO/Jill Pelkesham Left: but corn bunting populations appeared to be at least 10 per cent larger Photo: BTO/Arny Lewis



Annual variation in population growth rates, including cuckoos, from 1966 to 2015 for UK birds were modelled using a combination of climatic variables from England and along the birds' migration routes

lead author, said: "Given the changeable British weather, it can be difficult for us to see the long-term impacts of climate change, but by monitoring bird populations we can track impacts upon the natural environment. Thanks to the efforts of our volunteer bird surveyors, we can show that climate change is already affecting about

one-third of breeding bird populations monitored.
"While some of these impacts have resulted in population increases, as harsh winters which naturally limit the populations of some resident species have become less common, there are also species which appear to have declined too."
The research was published in the BTO's journal *Bird Study*.

WHAT'S ON
in your area
this weekend

FOR A FULL LIST OF OPEN SHOWS, SEE AUGUST 28 ISSUE

KENT ZEBRA FINCH CLUB OPEN SHOW SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28

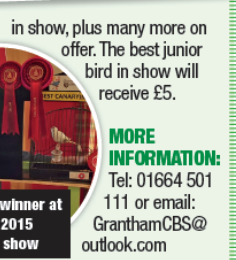
VENUE: Joydens Wood Community Centre, 9 Birchwood Drive, Wilmington, Kent DA2 7NE.
KEY FACTS: This show opens to the public at 1pm, after judge Brian Rudling has finished his duties. There will be a raffle.
MORE INFORMATION: Email: keith.sims@sky.com or visit the Kent Zebra Finch Club Facebook page.



In 2016, Bob Moulton won the show's best champion young bird award with a pair of CFWs

GRANTHAM CBS CANARY, BRITISH AND FOREIGN BIRD OPEN SHOW SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

VENUE: Bottesford Commemoration Hall, Bottesford NG13 0BG.
KEY FACTS: Cash specials include £25 for best canary, best British and best foreign birds in show, plus many more on offer. The best junior bird in show will receive £5.
MORE INFORMATION: Tel: 01664 501 111 or email: GranthamCBS@outlook.com



M. Turner, winner at the club's 2015 all-variety show

NORFOLK FBA OPEN SHOW SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29

VENUE: Spixworth Exhibition Hall, Crostwick Lane, Spixworth, Norwich, Norfolk NR10 3NQ.
KEY FACTS: This 42nd premier open show is open to the public 2-4pm. Judges are as follows: zebra finches, Jim

Andrews; Bengalese finches, Tony Edwards; foreign birds, Robbie Young and Terry Sayers. Hot and cold food and drink will be available all day.
MORE INFORMATION: Tel: 07876 298 321 or email: downness999@hotmail.com



Jim Andrews has been engaged to judge the zebra finches