

## MSU Research Finds Birds Choose Sweet-Smelling Mates

For most animals, scent is the instant messenger of choice for quickly exchanging personal profiles. Scientists, however, have long dismissed birds as odor-eschewing Luddites that don't take advantage of scent-based communications. In a first-of-its-kind study, however, a Michigan State University researcher has demonstrated that birds do indeed communicate via scents, and that odor reliably predicts their reproductive success. The study appears in the current issue of *Animal Behaviour* and focuses on volatile compounds in avian preen secretions. Birds' preen glands are located near their tails. Using their beaks, birds extract oil from the glands and rub it on their feathers and legs. Historically, this activity was thought to simply bolster the strength of feathers. Danielle Whittaker, managing director of MSU's [BEACON Center for the Study of Evolution in Action](#), and her research team, however, have shown that it plays a key role in signaling reproductive health. PRESS RELEASE: [MSUTODAY](#)

