Physical Cognition & Nest Building in Birds

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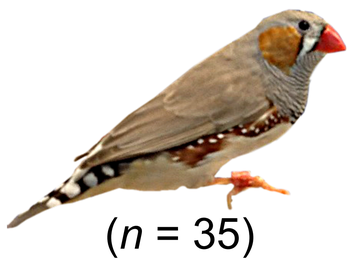
Introduction

- Recent evidence shows that **nest building** in birds **involves flexibility** and **learning**.
- Nest building is therefore a model system to investigate material-choice decisions.
- **Do birds base their choice of nest material on the physical properties of those materials?**

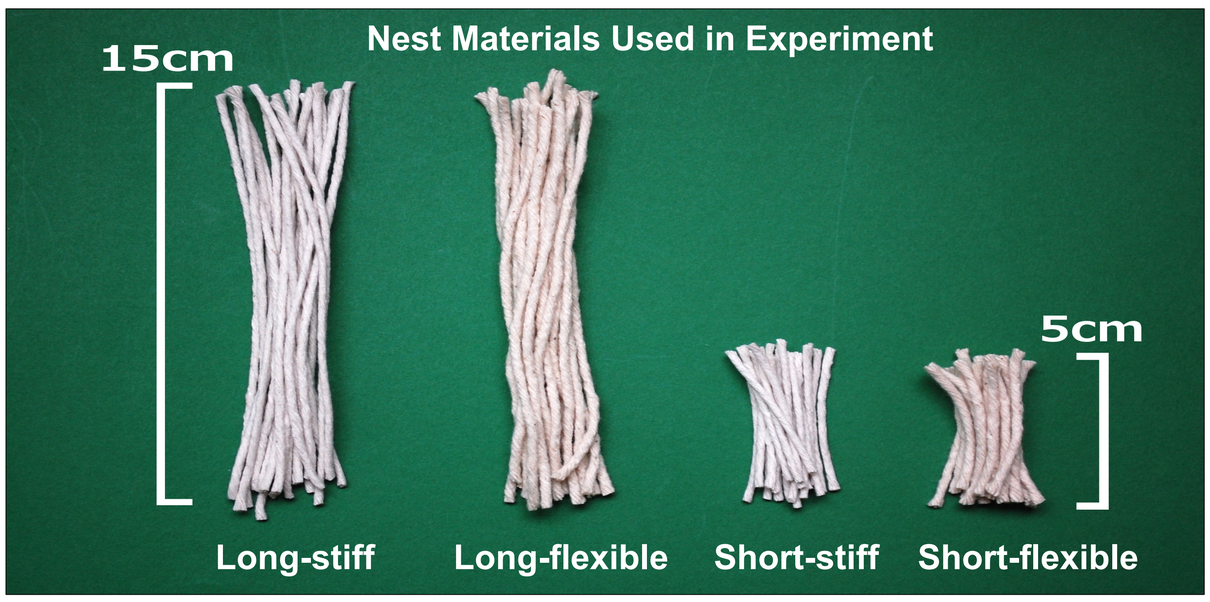
Methods

Male Zebra Finch



(*n* = 35)

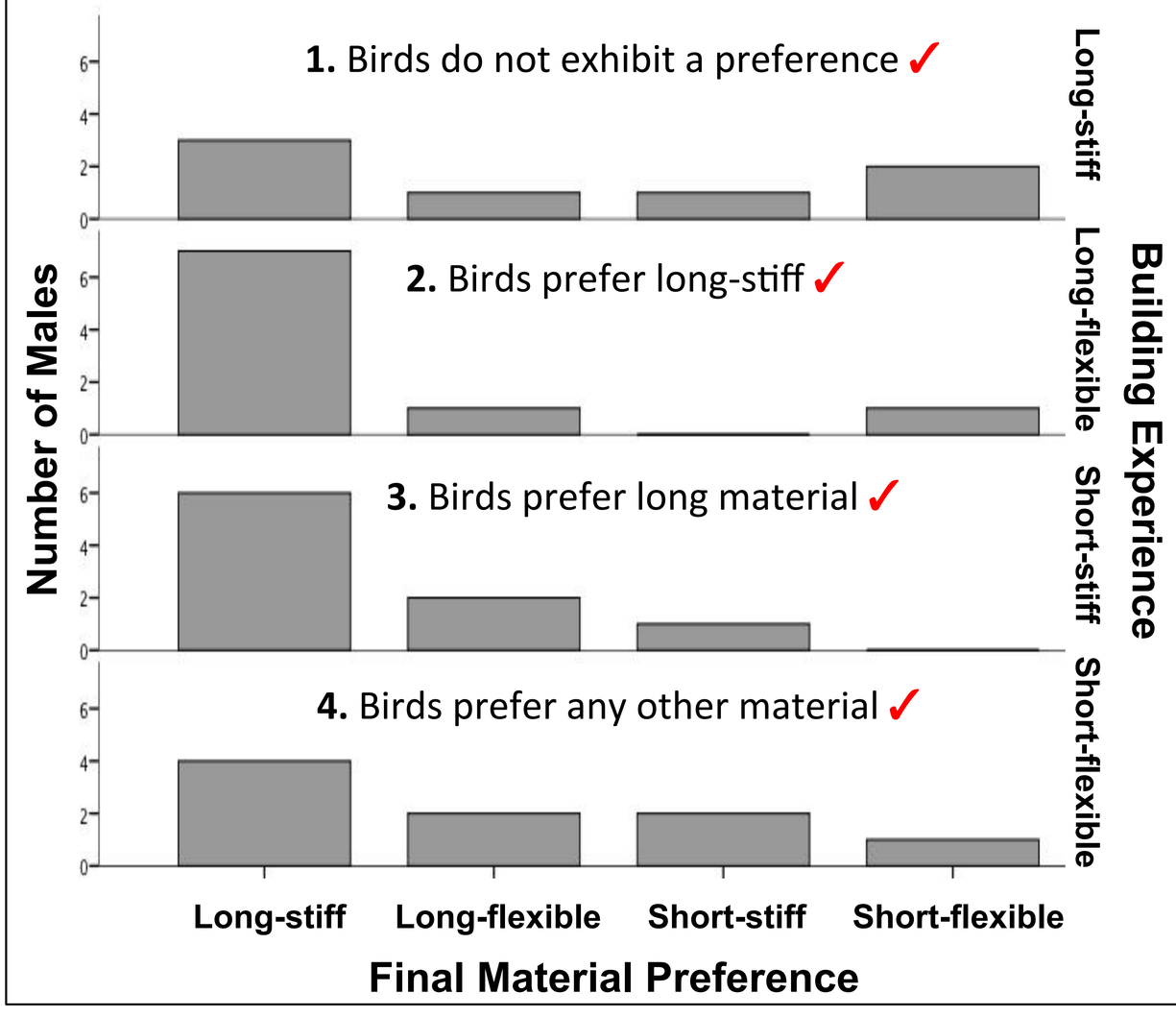
1st Preference Test → Build with one Material → 2nd Preference Test



	Building Experience	Predicted Final Preference
1.	Long-stiff	Long-stiff *or* none
2.	Long-flexible	Long-stiff *and/or* long material
3.	Short-stiff	Long-stiff *and/or* long material
4.	Short-flexible	Any other material

Results

Building experience predicts change in material preference.



Conclusions

- Males attend to and learn about multiple physical properties of nest materials.
- Physical cognition is a key component in nest building.
- Therefore nest building & tool use may be more alike than is currently recognized.