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Upbringing gives birds a sense of style

Birds build their first nest differently depending on how they were raised, a study has indicated.

Like most humans, birds appear to pick up colour and style from adults around them. Researchers at the University of St Andrews examined the construction, speed and material of choice for a zebra finch's first nest.

Alexis Breen, the lead researcher, said: "Which environmental ingredients are needed, and when, for animals

to acquire technological know-how is a major outstanding question."

The team controlled the environment of the young birds. Each was hatched into a nest of a particular colour, then as a juvenile was given an unrelated adult group mate or material of a different colour, or both, or neither.

Lauren Guillette, co-author of the study published in the journal *Behavioral Ecology*, said that using different

material colours "allowed us to determine if birds model their choice of nesting material on the nest experienced as a chick, or on the material they encountered as a juvenile after leaving their nest".

Most birds chose for their first nest material of a colour they had access to as a juvenile, but only if they had also had an adult group mate. Finches without juvenile access to an adult or material were slower at nest building.