



## News



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Press Release 06-130

## Bird Moms Manipulate Birth Order to Protec

Hormonal changes affect egg laying and development



A mated pair of house finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*) perform an aerial display. [Credit and Larger Version](#)

**September 19, 2006**

According to a new study by scientists at the University of Arizona, female house finches are able to change their hormonal makeup to ensure male birds hatch later, grow and spend less time in the nest than their sisters. The strategy is nature's way of protecting vulnerable male hatchlings that appear to be more sensitive to nest mites than their female siblings are.

Once breeding female finches are exposed to mites, their bodies make hormones that affect the order of egg laying and accelerate development of their sons while still in the egg. The scientists say that helps make sure male chicks are exposed for a shorter period and allows both the sons and daughters to survive long enough to leave the nest.

And not to worry, the researchers say, the male chicks that grow up during mite-infested times end up just as big as ones from the mite-free time of the year.

The work, which is scheduled to be published in the early online edition of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* the week of Sept. 18, was funded by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the National Science Foundation and the Memorial Research Awards.

To read the University of Arizona news release go to <http://uanews.org/cgi-bin/WebObjects/UANews.woa/4/wa/SRStoryDetails?ArticleID=13101>.

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#### Related Websites

Alexander Badyaev Web site: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~abadyaev/>

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