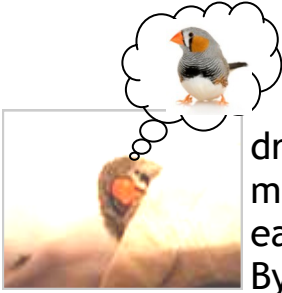


TO SLEEP, PERCHANCE TO DREAM



Researchers studying the neuron activity in Zebra Finch brains have discovered that, like ourselves, they dream when they are asleep. And their brain activity mirrors the same patterns that occur during bird song. It is easy to see why a song might be important to a Zebra Finch. By advertising his fitness and versatility through a song, the male finch is increasing its chances of reproduction. Male finches use special brain cells that are needed for original songs...neurons that show a unique ability to regrow each season. Just as human babies do, Zebra Finch chicks find their voices in a series of developmental milestones. First there is a universal "babbling" step of random sounds. By listening to other singers during a sensitive stage of development, the birds refine their songs and ultimately develop the virtuoso ability to adjust their singing depending upon their audience. Tests have shown finches can easily recognise one another by their individual songs.

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BIRD KEEPING IN AUSTRALIA