

REPRODUCTION IN BIRDS

Most male birds lack external sex organs. However, males do have two testes which become hundreds of times larger when they produce sperm during the breeding season. The testes are generally asymmetric with most species having the left testis larger than the right. The female's ovaries also become larger, but is usually only the left ovary that functions. However, if the left ovary becomes damaged in any way, the right ovary will usually try to assume the breeding function.

In those species where the male is without a phallus (see below), sperm is stored in the seminal glomera within the cloacal protuberance prior to copulation. During copulation, the female moves her tail to the side and the male either mounts the female from behind or moves very close to her. The cloacae then touch, and the sperm enters the female's reproductive tract. This can happen very fast, sometimes in less than half a second.

The sperm is then stored in the female's sperm storage tubules for between one to fifty-two weeks, depending on the species. Individual eggs are then fertilised as they leave the ovaries, and before the outer shell hardens.

Many waterfowl, and some other species, such as the turkey and ostrich, possess a phallus. It is hidden within the proctodeum compartment within the cloaca, just inside the vent, except when utilised for copulation.

After the eggs hatch, parents provide varying degrees of care in terms of food and protection. Precocial birds can care for themselves independently within minutes of hatching; altricial hatchlings are helpless, blind, and naked, and require extended parental care. The chicks of many ground-nesting birds such as quail and waders are often able to run virtually immediately after hatching; these species are called nidifugous. The young of hollow-nesters, such as parrots, are usually incapable of unassisted survival.

R.V.C. with help from Wikipedia