

## CHARACTER, NOT LOOKS WINS HENS

According to research carried out at the University of Exeter, and published in the journal *Ethology*, female Zebra Finches, *Taeniopygia guttata*, appear to prefer a confident, out-going male as a partner, rather than the “strong-man” type.

“Personality tests” were conducted on more than a hundred and fifty Zebras to measure levels of exploratory behaviour by assessing the birds’ willingness to relate to new objects and environment.

Each female was exposed to two brothers exploring strange cages. One of which was made to appear less exploratory than the other by restraining him in a box the female couldn’t see. The female was then placed in the cage with the two males to determine which she was more attracted too. Those hens with “exploratory personalities” were found to spend more time with males with “out-going personalities”, irrespective of their physical appearance. Those hens with of a less out-going nature showed no preference for either type of male.

Study leader, Dr. Sasha Dall, said: “This is strong evidence that females care about the apparent personality of their male independently of his appearance we (now) have the first evidence that it is important for partners to have compatible personalities in the mating game. This is something we would probably all agree is the case for humans but which has been overlooked for other species.”

Co-author of the article, Dr. Wiebke Schuett, from the Royal Veterinary College, said: “Exploratory females appeared to have the most to gain by choosing exploratory mates.” He went on to say: “We have shown previously that pairs of Zebra Finches that are both exploratory raise offspring in better condition than those that are mismatched or unexploratory (*sic*). Similar patterns have been seen in other birds and fish. However, this is the first time evidence that the personality of both partners plays a role in mate choice.”