

Reporting Summary

Nature Portfolio wishes to improve the reproducibility of the work that we publish. This form provides structure for consistency and transparency in reporting. For further information on Nature Portfolio policies, see our [Editorial Policies](#) and the [Editorial Policy Checklist](#).

Statistics

For all statistical analyses, confirm that the following items are present in the figure legend, table legend, main text, or Methods section.

n/a Confirmed

- The exact sample size (n) for each experimental group/condition, given as a discrete number and unit of measurement
- A statement on whether measurements were taken from distinct samples or whether the same sample was measured repeatedly
- The statistical test(s) used AND whether they are one- or two-sided
Only common tests should be described solely by name; describe more complex techniques in the Methods section.
- A description of all covariates tested
- A description of any assumptions or corrections, such as tests of normality and adjustment for multiple comparisons
- A full description of the statistical parameters including central tendency (e.g. means) or other basic estimates (e.g. regression coefficient) AND variation (e.g. standard deviation) or associated estimates of uncertainty (e.g. confidence intervals)
- For null hypothesis testing, the test statistic (e.g. F , t , r) with confidence intervals, effect sizes, degrees of freedom and P value noted
Give P values as exact values whenever suitable.
- For Bayesian analysis, information on the choice of priors and Markov chain Monte Carlo settings
- For hierarchical and complex designs, identification of the appropriate level for tests and full reporting of outcomes
- Estimates of effect sizes (e.g. Cohen's d , Pearson's r), indicating how they were calculated

Our web collection on [statistics for biologists](#) contains articles on many of the points above.

Software and code

Policy information about [availability of computer code](#)

Data collection	Birds of the World database: Birds of the World. Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology, Ithaca, NY, USA. (2020). DOI: https://birdsoftheworld.org/bow/home .
Data analysis	All analyses were carried out within R statistical environment (2022) including packages 'MCMCglmm', 'lme4' and 'phylolm'.

For manuscripts utilizing custom algorithms or software that are central to the research but not yet described in published literature, software must be made available to editors and reviewers. We strongly encourage code deposition in a community repository (e.g. GitHub). See the Nature Portfolio [guidelines for submitting code & software](#) for further information.

Data

Policy information about [availability of data](#)

All manuscripts must include a [data availability statement](#). This statement should provide the following information, where applicable:

- Accession codes, unique identifiers, or web links for publicly available datasets
- A description of any restrictions on data availability
- For clinical datasets or third party data, please ensure that the statement adheres to our [policy](#)

The datasets generated during the current study are available in the repository, <https://osf.io/g4xra/>

Human research participants

Policy information about [studies involving human research participants](#) and [Sex and Gender in Research](#).

Reporting on sex and gender

This information has not been collected.

Population characteristics

See above

Recruitment

See above

Ethics oversight

See above

Note that full information on the approval of the study protocol must also be provided in the manuscript.

Field-specific reporting

Please select the one below that is the best fit for your research. If you are not sure, read the appropriate sections before making your selection.

Life sciences Behavioural & social sciences Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences

For a reference copy of the document with all sections, see nature.com/documents/nr-reporting-summary-flat.pdf

Ecological, evolutionary & environmental sciences study design

All studies must disclose on these points even when the disclosure is negative.

Study description

A large comparative study using species data in birds.

Research sample

We surveyed as many as bird species in the Birds of the World database for which sex provides parental care in each of the three forms — nest building, incubation, and offspring provisioning — across a reproductive cycle.

Sampling strategy

We collected 1533 species description data in the birds of the world database.

Data collection

We took notes of the parental care features for each species from the breeding section of the species' account and then classified them into four categories for each form of care.

Timing and spatial scale

Data collection carried out from 2011-2022.

Data exclusions

In rare cases (N=49 species), the parental care information was recorded with uncertain words, such as "reportedly" or "probably" in one or more care forms (e.g., White-throated Bulbul: nest reportedly built by both sexes; ... incubation possibly by both sexes, period 13 days; chicks fed by both parents). All statistical models were run by first including and then excluding those uncertain data.

Reproducibility

We used different statistical ways and models to analyze data. Results from these different models are consistent.

Randomization

We set up objective sampling rules and procedures before data collections. Following the procedures, we collected 1533 species with 'full data' (i.e., information about sex roles in all three care forms; 651 non-passerines and 882 passerine species).

Blinding

Data collection followed sampling rules and procedures as stated above. Data analyses was blinding before statistical tests.

Did the study involve field work?

Yes No

Reporting for specific materials, systems and methods

We require information from authors about some types of materials, experimental systems and methods used in many studies. Here, indicate whether each material, system or method listed is relevant to your study. If you are not sure if a list item applies to your research, read the appropriate section before selecting a response.

Materials & experimental systems

n/a	Involved in the study
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Antibodies
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eukaryotic cell lines
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Palaeontology and archaeology
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Animals and other organisms
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Clinical data
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Dual use research of concern

Methods

n/a	Involved in the study
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	ChIP-seq
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Flow cytometry
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MRI-based neuroimaging