

Does courtship behavior of male lance-tailed manakins affect offspring survivability?

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According to the “good genes” model, females choose males with advantageous genetic traits as mates to increase fitness by ensuring offspring survivability and subsequent reproductive success. Lance-tailed manakins are lekking birds, common to Central American rainforests, that rely heavily on female choice as an evolutionary driver. In this study, we will experimentally investigate if male displaying behavior plays an indirect role in offspring survival by luring nearby predators, thus lowering nest mortality in those closest to these dance perches. Colorful males use a cooperative mating strategy at display sites to court females via a flashy dance of choreographed aerial hops between alpha and beta males. Females assess male dance competence to choose a mate, and care for offspring without male assistance. In the field, I will add artificial eggs to discarded manakin nests and place them within a 20m, 40m, and 60m range to a male dance perch to measure predation. If eggs further from the male display site are damaged, then nest predation could be higher when a male decoy is absent.

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