

Birdie Match-Up

Welcome to Birdie Match-Up! Did you know that many male and female birds of the same species can look very different from one another? This phenomenon is called “sexual dichromatism.” In most species of birds, females tend to have muted colours, while males of the same species are quite colourful and ornamental.

There are several theories as to why this happens. Here are just a few:

- Females tend to prefer brightly coloured males. Studies show that strong colouration in males is a good indicator of health and vitality.
- Females often spend a fair amount of time incubating eggs in a nest. Their brown colouration and muted colours help them to better camouflage from predators.
- Colourful males are better at defending their territories.
- Colour may help birds more quickly recognize one another.

Now that we have learned about this interesting trait, it's time to test our knowledge.

1. We have selected a variety of birds who express sexual dichromatism. Your first challenge is to cut out the bird portraits and separate the male birds from the females.
2. Next, try your best to match the female and male birds of the same species. How many species of birds are you able to identify and name? Check the provided answer key to see if you are right!
3. Once you have paired them all successfully, test your memory with a game of concentration. Lay out the pictures, face down, in a 6x3 grid. Turn one picture over, then another. If they match, you won the pair! Remove them from the group without disturbing any of the other pictures. If they are not a match, flip both pictures over and try again. The game ends when each bird has found its match. Play with your family and have a friendly competition to see who can collect the most pairs. Now it is time to meet our Bird Match-Up Participants!

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Cut out the birds and find the matches. Can you guess which birds are males and which are females?







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Answer Key



Male Mallard Duck



Female Mallard Duck



Male Northern Cardinal



Female Northern Cardinal



Male American Goldfinch



Female American Goldfinch



Male Wood Duck



Female Wood Duck



Male Hooded Merganser



Female Hooded Merganser

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Answer Key



Male American Widgeon



Female American Widgeon



Male Red-Winged Blackbird



Female Red-Winged Blackbird



Male Green-Winged Teal



Female Green-Winged Teal



Male Rose-Breasted Grosbeak



Female Rose-Breasted Grosbeak