

Little bird uses a linguistic rule thought to be unique to humans

I can attest that my African Grey parrot uses human grammar rules – subject and predicate – consistently and with different words to convey his meaning. He seems to understand the difference between nouns and verbs and how to put them together. Rachel Feltman writes in the [syntax](#) developed because birds that didn't warn of danger before asking for a buddy to come over were less likely to survive. And no one wants to blunder into a predator's line of sight on the way to a friend's place.

The next step is to find out which other birds use rules like these. The Japanese great tit has close relatives in Europe, and the North American chickadee is a close cousin as well. They all have similarly complex calls – the chickadee gets its name for a “dee” sound that serves the same purpose as the “D” discussed in the study – and it's possible they all use syntax.

Even if the birds evolved this love of grammar way back in the days of a common ancestor, their specific rules could still be different.