



Unscrambling Eggs

Despite extensive study, no one has been able to determine why some bird eggs are shaped more like a sphere than other eggs or why some are more symmetrical than others. Recently, though, researchers used geometry, vectors, polar coordinates, and partial differential equations to analyze eggs from 1,400 bird species. After gathering data, they plotted each species' eggs on a graph with one axis representing the degree of elongation—how elliptical an egg is—and the other representing the amount of asymmetry—how pointy it is at one end—and found that the most streamlined birds have the most streamlined eggs. That is, overall, the best fliers, and occasionally swimmers, tend to lay the least spherical and least symmetrical eggs.

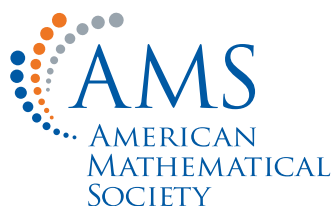


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