



Robin mom fooled by fake egg

Cowbirds are the ultimate deadbeat parents: They sneak their eggs into the nests of other birds. Such behavior has prompted the evolution of eggs of many shapes, sizes, colors, and patterns and a recognition system to help duped parents identify their own eggs. To study this arms race, animal behaviorist Mark Hauber of Hunter College in New York City is using 3D printers, working out the right materials to use to make fake eggs convincing. This week in *PeerJ*, Hauber and colleagues highlight the importance of color: They report that robins accepted 3D eggs painted blue, like real robins' eggs—but rejected beige 3D “cowbird” eggs. And egg patterns may be even more important than color, which is limited in variability because nature has only two eggshell pigments to work with, Hauber and colleagues reported last week in *Biology Letters*. To test patterns' importance, the team is using a device called EggBot, which paints precision patterns for Easter eggs and other decorations, to “make incredibly faithful replicas and fine-tune variations on the theme,” Hauber says.

3D printed robin's egg (at left) fits right in.

Barack Obama on 16 December 2014, contained \$150 million for the project. <http://scim.ag/ITERpushpull>

Big cuts to non-'core' sciences

WASHINGTON, D.C. | You won't actually find the numbers anywhere in the bill, but a congressional spending panel has endorsed a 16% cut in funding next year for the social and geosciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF). The cuts result from a new formula created by the chair of NSF's spending panel, Representative John Culberson (R-TX), which requires NSF to spend 70% of its research dollars on four directorates. Although NSF's overall research spending in 2016 would grow by only 0.7% in the bill, Culberson provides an 8% boost to the favored disciplines and holds other research activities at 2015 levels. That leaves the social and geosciences directorates with \$255 million less than they have this year.

Gay marriage study retracted

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA | An author of a study concluding that even relatively short conversations with a gay canvasser could make voters more supportive of gay marriage and equality has asked that it be withdrawn. Last week, political scientist Donald Green of Columbia University sent a retraction request to *Science* after he became

convinced that his co-author Michael J. LaCour, a political science Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Los Angeles, had made up data for the December 2014 paper. The study drew on apparent in-person and Internet surveys of some 9500 registered voters in California. However, researchers attempting a follow-on study found that the survey company cited by the paper claimed no knowledge of the project. A tweet on LaCour's Twitter account last week said he is preparing to offer a defense “at my earliest opportunity.” *Science* has added an Editorial Expression of Concern to the paper. <http://scim.ag/gaymarret>

New RIKEN head's tenure plan

WAKO, JAPAN | New RIKEN President Hiroshi Matsumoto wants to introduce a tenure system at Japan's network of national laboratories. As elsewhere, beginning scientists in Japan are on a treadmill of short-term appointments. This has skewed research toward quick results needed to burnish resumes for recurring job hunts and “creates a very difficult situation for young researchers,” Matsumoto said at a press conference last week. A tenure scheme would offer the hope of a stable career path and help retain the best young talent. Matsumoto also intends to push RIKEN scientists and administrators to routinely use English to smooth international cooperation. He wants to give researchers

more flexibility in spending appropriated funds and to hire more technicians, too. “My mission is to support the capabilities and the ideas of researchers,” he said.

NEWSMAKERS

Famed mathematician dies

John Forbes Nash Jr., who shared the 1994 Nobel memorial prize in economics, died on 23 May at the age of 86. Nash did trailblazing work in algebraic geometry, the theory of partial differential equations, and the theory of noncooperative games. His 1950 doctoral dissertation from Princeton University explored the Nash



equilibrium, a strategic deadlock that can arise in several-player games. Researchers have applied the concept to topics including arms control, macroeconomics, and political science. Nash suffered from a decades-long mental illness, described in the biography *A Beautiful Mind* and a film by the same name. His honors included the John von Neumann Theory Prize; the 1994 Nobel; and the 2015 Abel Prize, presented by the king of Norway. Nash and his wife, Alicia de Lardé Nash, were returning from the Oslo award ceremony when their taxi lost control and crashed, killing both.