

## Is same-sex coupling a matter of genetics or choice?

Same-sex animal couples have long been used as proof of sexual preference being a matter of genetics, not choice. The Laysan albatross is one of the more interesting examples, with a new report finding that 31% of the albatross pairs on Oahu are same sex couples.

Biologist Lindsay Young and her colleague, Eric VanderWerf, analyzed ten years of field notes for every female Laysan albatross on Oahu—all 145 of them for a new report. They analyzed the data to try to find an evolutionary explanation for the prevalence of same-sex pairings among the birds. According to a new article, “the answer they’ve reached is an intricate one—and it hinges on what it means to be an albatross, not a human.”

“Over the course of the study—from 2003 to 2012—Young and VanderWerf observed a number of same-sex pairs sticking together for years,” writes National Geographic’s Carl Zimmer. “Each breeding season, the females would find male albatrosses to mate with. Then they’d return to their own nest to lay their eggs. Like male-female pairs of albatrosses, they would take three-week shifts. But a pair of albatrosses can only incubate a single egg, and so when both females laid one, one of their eggs died. From year to year, it appears, the females alternate between which bird gets to lay an egg.”

**Read the full, original story here: [Same-Sex Mothers: Letting Albatrosses Be Albatrosses](#)**

### **Additional Resources:**

- [“Do your genes influence who you love?”](#) Smithsonian
- [“Homosexuality linked to epigenetics,”](#) Medical Daily
- [“The mysterious genetics of homosexuality,”](#) Chronicle of Higher Education