

Current theory proposes that stress, condition, and ornamentation are linked through energy stores, with condition reflecting the pool of available energy that is needed for both ornamentation and body maintenance. Efficiency of cellular respiration is the core aspect of a prospective mate about which a choosing female should most desire information, and ornamentation gives females essential and otherwise imperceptible information about the cellular respiration of prospective mates. I further propose that condition-dependent ornamental traits evolved specifically as signals of cellular respiration and the capacity to resist the disruptive effects of stressors.