

Ornithophily

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Pollination is a process where pollen grains are transferred from the stamens (male part) to the stigma (female part) of the flower; if it happens on the same plant it is called self pollination or if on another plant of the same species it is termed cross pollination. Pollination, however, is an accidental process that happens when animals such as bees, flies, wasps, moths, butterflies, bats, ants, beetles, and birds forage for food such as pollen and nectar from the flower. It also happens when the wind blows the pollen to the stigma of flowers. Wind pollinated flowers are usually dull, small, without petals, and unscented. On the other hand, those flowers pollinated by animals are usually brightly-coloured and attractive, has a good amount of nectar or has a strong scent which can be sweet or foul smelling.

Ornithophily is the term used for pollination carried out by birds. Among the common pollinators are sunbirds, honeyeaters and humming birds which pollinate deep throated flowers while reaching for nectar at the base of petals with their long beaks; they are also either capable of hovering flights or lightweight enough to perch on the flower structures while feeding and carrying the pollen grains which adhere to their feathers. Many ornithophilous flowers are often red and copious in nectar; birds have good eyesight and sensitive to red colour winning over the bees that cannot see red. Examples include the common *Etlingera elatior* (Kantan) and *Erythrina* spp. (Coral Tree) which are pollinated by hummingbirds while the ornamental *Callistemon* spp. (Red Bottlebrush) and *Delonix regia* (Flame of the Forest) are pollinated by sunbirds.

