object lacking these signals. Secondly, our earliest sexual experiments are of a very tentative nature. We start by falling in and out of love very frequently and very easily. It is as if the process of full imprinting lags behind the other sexual developments. During this `searching' phase we typically develop a large number of minor `imprints', each one being counteracted by the next, until eventually we arrive at a point where we are susceptible to a mayor imprinting. Usually by this time we have been sufficiently exposed to a variety of sexual stimuli to have latched on to the appropriate biological ones, and mating then proceeds as a normal heterosexual process.

It will perhaps be easier to understand this if we compare it with the situation that has evolved in certain other species. Pair-forming colonial birds, for example, migrate to the breeding grounds where the nest sites will be established. Young and previously unmated birds, flying in as adults for the first time, must, like all other birds, establish territories and form breeding pairs. This is done without much delay, soon after arrival. The young birds will select mates on the basis of their sexual signals. Their response to these signals will be inborn. Having courted a mate they will then limit their sexual advances to that particular individual. This is achieved by a process of sexual imprinting. As the pair-forming courtship proceeds, the instinctive sexual- clues (which all members of each sex of each species will have in common) have to become linked with certain unique individual recognition characters. Only in this way can the imprinting process narrow down the sexual responsiveness of each bird to its mate. All this has to be done quickly, because the breeding season is limited. If, at the start of this stage, all members of one sex were experimentally removed from the colony, a large number of homosexual pair-bonds might become established, as the birds desperately tried to find the nearest thing to a correct mate that was available.

In our own species the process is much slower: We do not have to work against the deadline of a brief breeding season. This gives us time to scout around and 'play the field'. Even if we are thrown into a 85