

63 - Animal Sex Changes

Can Animals Change Sex? Did you know some animals change from being boys to girls or girls to boys? What animals do this and why?

Do you think animals change sex because: A. Girls have more fun? B. Boys get more attention? C. It's their true identity? Or, D. To insure the survival of the species? If you said, D -- you're right! Take for instance, a species that starts running low on males in the population. Well, thanks to *sequential hermaphroditism* they can just make more.

Sometimes animals change sex naturally. The animals are *supposed* to change -- they're biologically designed to do so. But sometimes, it means something's not quite right with their environment. Many scientists think bearded dragons are changing from male to females because of the rise in temperatures all over the world. Same goes with some corals due to rising ocean temperatures.

When the environment gets too warm, whether in the water, on land, or inside an egg, it can cause chemicals inside the animal's body to release hormones. So even if the bearded dragon, or a duck, or a fish was *supposed* to be male or female, it will look and act like the opposite sex because the changing temperature caused different hormones to be released.

What You'll Learn

1. Which animals change sex and why?
2. Do animals change sex naturally/by design or because of outside influences like environment
3. Why do most of the animals that change sex live in the ocean?

Activities

1. You can make your own clownfish with [these](#) great instructions!
2. Are starfish more your style? You can learn how to make one [here](#).
3. Ducks are also known to change sex when they need to. Check out [how to make your own duck](#) here!

Additional Resources

While many different kinds of animals are able to change sex, a large section of them live in water. Check out [this](#) virtual tour of the National Aquarium in Baltimore! Can you spot any of the animals WhoSmarted? talked about today? Do you have a favorite?

Kid News

Some dogs are able to learn a new word after hearing it only four times! A recent study by scientists in Hungary showed that some very smart dogs are able to understand what a word means after hearing it four times. Unfortunately, unlike children, the dogs were not able to retain the information after 10 minutes without more training. Read about these remarkable dogs [here](#).¹

¹ This activity guide is for the Who Smarted? podcast www.WhoSmarted.com