



Sexual Selections: What We Can and Can't Learn about Sex from Animals

Marlene Zuk

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Scientific discoveries about the animal kingdom fuel ideological battles on many fronts, especially battles about sex and gender. We now know that male marmosets help take care of their offspring. Is this heartening news for today's stay-at-home dads? Recent studies show that many female birds once thought to be monogamous actually have chicks that are fathered outside the primary breeding pair. Does this information spell doom for traditional marriages? And bonobo apes take part in female-female sexual encounters. Does this mean that human homosexuality is natural? This highly provocative book clearly shows that these are the wrong kinds of questions to ask about animal behavior. Marlene Zuk, a respected biologist and a feminist, gives an eye-opening tour of some of the latest developments in our knowledge of animal sexuality and evolutionary biology. *Sexual Selections* exposes the anthropomorphism and gender politics that have colored our understanding of the natural world and shows how feminism can help move us away from our ideological biases.

As she tells many amazing stories about animal behavior--whether of birds and apes or of rats and cockroaches--Zuk takes us to the places where our ideas about nature, gender, and culture collide. Writing in an engaging, conversational style, she discusses such politically charged topics as motherhood, the genetic basis for adultery, the female orgasm, menstruation, and homosexuality. She shows how feminism can give us the tools to examine sensitive issues such as these and to enhance our understanding of the natural world if we avoid using research to champion a feminist agenda and avoid using animals as ideological weapons.

Zuk passionately asks us to learn to see the animal world on its own terms, with its splendid array of diversity and variation. This knowledge will give us a better understanding of animals and can ultimately change our assumptions about what is natural, normal, and even possible.

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