

# ODD COUPLES

## *Extraordinary Differences between the Sexes in the Animal Kingdom*

Daphne J. Fairbairn

Princeton University Press, 2013

Introducing readers to important new discoveries in animal behavior and evolution, **ODD COUPLES: Extraordinary Differences between the Sexes in the Animal Kingdom** (Cloth \$27.95, ISBN: 9780691141961) explores some of the most extraordinary sexual differences in the animal world. While we joke that men are from Mars and women are from Venus, our gender differences can't compare to those of other animals. For instance: the male garden spider spontaneously dies after mating with a female more than fifty times his size. Female cichlids must guard their eggs and larvae—even from the hungry appetites of their own partners. And male blanket octopuses employ a copulatory arm longer than their own bodies to mate with females that outweigh them by four orders of magnitude. Why do these gender gulfs exist? From the fields of Spain to the deep oceans, evolutionary biologist Daphne Fairbairn uncovers the unique and bizarre characteristics—in size, behavior, ecology, and life history—that exist in these remarkable species and the special strategies they use to maximize reproductive success.

Fairbairn describes how male great bustards aggressively compete to display their gorgeous plumage and large physiques to watching, choosy females. She investigates why female elephant seals voluntarily live in harems where they are harassed constantly by eager males. And she reveals why dwarf male giant seadevils parasitically fuse to their giant female partners for life. Fairbairn also considers humans and explains that although we are keenly aware of our own sexual differences, they are unexceptional within the vast animal world.

Looking at some of the most amazing creatures on the planet, **ODD COUPLES** sheds astonishing light on what it means to be male or female in the animal kingdom.

### **About the Author:**

**Daphne J. Fairbairn** is professor of biology at the University of California, Riverside. She has written widely on the science of sexual differences and is the coeditor of *Sex, Size, and Gender Roles*.

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### **Praise for ODD COUPLES:**

"Balancing descriptive natural history with probing evolutionary biology, Fairbairn (*Sex, Size & Gender Roles*, coeditor), professor of biology at the University of California Riverside, examines eight striking cases of extreme size differences between males and females of the same species. . . The conclusion she draws from this amazing diversity is as profound as it is simple: 'there is

no "normal" or "typical" pattern of sexual differentiation across the animal kingdom."--  
***Publishers Weekly***

"I found reading the book like taking a holiday in a foreign land with an enthusiastic and expert guide. You will come back with good stories, and a new appreciation of the amazing diversity of life on Earth and the forces shaping it."--**Suzanne Alonzo, *Nature***

"I understand much more about these creatures now that I've read this lively new book. . . . [L]ike all of the examples in this fine book, it's far from a traditional marriage."--**Laurence A. Marschall, *Natural History***

"Such insights into the lives of animals are what makes *Odd Couples* so enjoyable, and Fairbairn always takes an evolutionist-eye view to try to understand them."--**Kate Douglas, *New Scientist***

"When we discuss gender roles, we tend to think only of a narrow range of species conforming to our preconceptions about dominant men and domestic women. Fairbairn explodes these preconceptions. . . . [F]ascinating reading."--**Danielle Clode, *Australian***

"The author has thought deeply about this topic and writes clearly about the many influences and consequences of sexual and natural selection and how they impinge upon reproductive fitness for different animal lineages. An utterly fascinating book that will change how you think about sexual differences."--***GrrlScientist***

"Recommended."--***Library Journal***

"[A]n amazing story. . . . [A]n easy and enjoyable read. . . . It is ambitious, it is an excellent natural history chronicle and it is a nice encyclopedia of sexual differences. Overall, a good one for the library."--**D. J. Hosken, *Current Biology***

"Looking at some of the most amazing creatures on the planet, *Odd Couples* sheds astonishing light on what it means to be male or female in the animal kingdom."--***Northeastern and Southeastern Naturalist***

"[T]his accessible volume is well organized, and its impressive helpings of technical details never impede readability."--**Adrian Barnett, *BBC Wildlife Magazine***

#### **ADDITIONAL ENDORSEMENTS:**

"If you want to find out why adult male elephant seals can weigh more than four times as much as an adult female, whereas female blanket octopuses are truly enormous compared to their tiny male partners, this fascinating book is for you. Daphne Fairbairn not only introduces us to some exceptional animals but she also provides evolutionary explanations for why males are much larger (or much smaller) than females of their species. A great topic and a great read for layperson and biologist alike."--**John Alcock, author of *Animal Behavior: An Evolutionary Approach***

"Odd couples indeed! Fairbairn takes us on a journey through oceans, grasslands, beaches, and backyards, plunging us into the worlds of nature's most weird and wonderful creatures, all to answer one question: why are males and females different? By tackling extremes--such as male octopuses forty thousand times lighter than their mates, and parasitic male seadevils who fuse themselves to the bellies of females--she deftly illustrates how a common set of concepts can connect them all. A thoroughly enjoyable read."--**Doug Emlen, coauthor of *Evolution: Making Sense of Life***

"A fascinating natural history account of some extreme and unfamiliar examples of sexual differences among animals. A real eye-opener."--**Mark Elgar, University of Melbourne**

"This unique, ambitious, and engaging book educates general readers about animal behavior, physiology, life history, and evolution using sex differences as its theme. Quite an achievement and a pleasure to read."--**Allen J. Moore, University of Georgia**

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