



Headless Males Make Great Lovers: And Other Unusual Natural Histories

Marty Crump

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The natural world is filled with diverse—not to mention quirky and odd—animal behaviors. Consider the male praying mantis that continues to mate after being beheaded; the spiders, insects, and birds that offer gifts of food in return for sex; the male hip-pocket frog that carries his own tadpoles; the baby spiders that dine on their mother; the beetle that craves excrement; or the starfish that sheds an arm or two to escape a predator's grasp.

Headless Males Make Great Lovers and Other Unusual Natural Histories celebrates the extraordinary world of animals with essays on curious creatures and their amazing behaviors. In five thematic chapters, Marty Crump—a tropical field biologist well known for her work with the reproductive behavior of amphibians—examines the bizarre conduct of animals as they mate, parent, feed, defend themselves, and communicate. Crump's enthusiasm for the unusual behaviors she describes—from sex change and free love in sponges to aphrodisiac concoctions in bats—is visible on every page, thanks to her skilled storytelling, which makes even sea slugs, dung beetles, ticks, and tapeworms fascinating and appealing. Steeped in biology, *Headless Males Make Great Lovers* points out that diverse and unrelated animals often share seemingly bizarre behaviors—evidence, Crump argues, that these natural histories, though outwardly weird, are successful ways of living.

Illustrated throughout, and filled with vignettes of personal and scientific interest, *Headless Males Make Great Lovers* will enchant the general reader with its tales of blood-squirting horned lizards and intestine-ejecting sea cucumbers—all in the service of a greater appreciation of the diversity of the natural histories of animals.

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