

STUDY FINDS SEXISM RAMPANT IN NATURE

SAN DIEGO—According to a University of California—San Diego study, sexism is rampant throughout the natural world, particularly among the highest classes of vertebrates.

“When we first decided to examine attitudes and behaviors toward gender roles among nonhumans, we were wholly unprepared for what we would find,” said Jennifer Tannen, leader of the UCSD research team, a joint venture between the school’s zoology and women’s studies departments. “Females living in the wild routinely fall victim to everything from stereotyping to exclusion from pack activities to sexual harassment.”

Nowhere is the natural world’s gender inequity more transparent, Tannen said, than in the unfair burden females assume for the rearing of offspring.

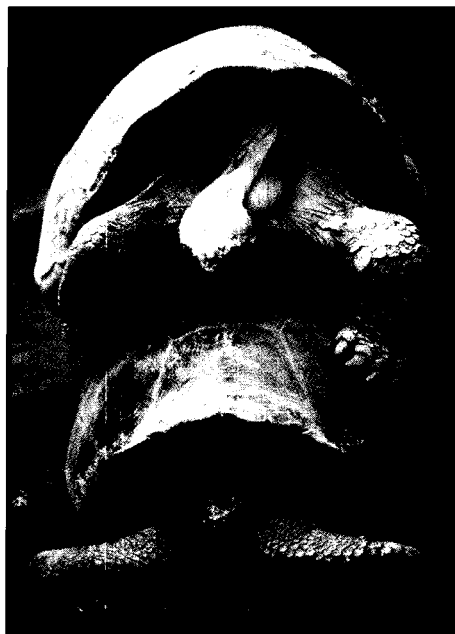
“Take the behavior of the ring-neck pheasant,” Tannen said. “After mating, the male immediately abandons the hen, leaving her responsible for the total care for the chicks. For the single mother-to-be, there is no assistance, either in the form of a partner or child support. It’s despicable.”

Tannen said pheasants are typical of the natural world, where a mere 5 percent of animal species mate for life. Among species that do form lasting pairs, the situation barely improves: Females must remain close to the nest to incubate eggs, nurse and keep watch over the burrow while males are free to go off hunting and fishing with their friends.

“The sexist attitude that childrearing is ‘women’s work’ is prevalent throughout nature and has been for generations, probably since reptiles first developed mammalian characteristics in the Triassic period,” Tannen said. “Sadly, most creatures never pause to challenge these woefully outdated gender roles.”

More seriously, in addition to an unfair division of labor, nature is rife with sexual abuse and harassment. The UCSD study estimates that in 2001 alone, more than 170 trillion cases of abuse occurred in the world’s forests, grasslands and oceans—all of them unreported.

“During the act of mating, the female moose is subject to excessive biting, nipping



and herding,” Tannen said. “The male has no qualms about using sheer brute force to overpower his sex partner, and the female, accustomed to this sort of rough treatment after millions of years of it, doesn’t even realize there’s something wrong.”

Adding insult to injury, Tannen said, the bull moose then heads off to mate with dozens more females over a period of two to three weeks, justifying his behavior as “part of the Mardi Gras-like atmosphere of ‘mating season.’”

With other species, darker situations unfold.

“To mate, the male Galapagos tortoise simply immobilizes the female with his weight, which, as far as I’m concerned, qualifies as nonconsensual sex,” Tannen says.

When female animals refuse to play along with prescribed gender roles, Tannen said, they are demonized. For example, female foxes, known throughout the animal kingdom for their aggressiveness, are labeled “vixen.”

“We’ve all heard the lurid tales about the female black-widow spider, who kills and eats her mate,” Tannen said. “The truth is, male spiders encourage their partners to kill them because it increases the time spent mating and, thus, the number of eggs fertilized by his sperm. But no one condemns the male for his part in this destructive relationship.”

UCSD researchers identified 24 distinct male behaviors designed to perpetuate gender inequity and preserve the prevailing power structure. Among these dominance-asserting behaviors are chest-puffing, plumage-spreading, and antler growth.

The UCSD study is not without its detractors. Glen Otis Brown, author of *Forced To Strut: Reverse Sexism In The Animal World*, countered that male animals are victims of “the beauty myth” as much as females.

“When given a choice, female green tree frogs gravitate toward males that call the loudest and most often,” Brown said. “Female *Poecilia reticulata* [guppies] go straight to the most brightly colored males. But when males evolve exaggerated secondary sexual traits to attract the opposite sex, suddenly they’re the bad guys.”

Annie Secunda, a Boston-based female-rights advocate, said swift action must be taken to address the problem of sexism within the animal kingdom.

“We need to provide tigresses, hens and all other females in nature with outreach programs and support networks,” Secunda said. “We also need to impose standards through intervention. The males of all species need to hear loud and clear the message that this kind of animal behavior is not acceptable.”

Secunda conducts numerous workshops aimed at creating female-friendly biomes and promoting a positive self-image of females on both land and in the sea. She also strongly advocates the legalization of infanticide, which would enable females to devour their newborn offspring when resources are limited.

Secunda spent much of 2001 in the Amazon rainforest, working to create safe spaces for female animals. These efforts, however, yielded mixed results: Females have avoided the lighted walkways she built in several dangerously dense areas, and leaflets encouraging females to learn how their own bodies work were ultimately used to line dens for the rainy season.

Far from discouraged, Secunda said she plans to embark on an intensive study of the sexuality of flora.

“Multicellular plants alternate sexually reproducing and asexually reproducing generations, with each plant producing both male and female gametes,” Secunda said. “It seems many plants have moved past conventional notions of male-female gender altogether. It’s so liberating, I can’t help but have hope for all those so-called ‘higher’ species of animals.”

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Arabian Fables (I)

How the Arabs soften up world opinion with fanciful myths.

Josef Goebbels, the infamous propaganda minister of the Nazis, had it right. Just tell people big lies often enough and they will believe them. The Arabs have learned that lesson well. They have swayed world opinion by endlessly repeating myths and lies that have no basis in fact.

What are some of these myths?

The "Palestinians". That is the fundamental myth. The concept of "Palestinians" is one that did not exist until about 1948, when the Arab inhabitants, of what until then was Palestine, wished to differentiate themselves from the Jews. Until then, the Jews were the Palestinians. There was the Palestinian Brigade of Jewish volunteers in the British World War II Army (at a time when the Palestinian Arabs were in Berlin hatching plans with Adolf Hitler for world conquest and how to kill all the Jews); there was the Palestinian Symphony Orchestra (all Jews, of course); there was *The Palestine Post*; and so much more.

The Arabs who now call themselves "Palestinians" do so in order to persuade a misinformed world that they are a distinct nationality and that "Palestine" is their ancestral homeland. But they are no distinct nationality at all. They are the same — in language, custom, and tribal and family ties — as the Arabs of Syria, Jordan, and beyond. There is no more difference between the "Palestinians" and the other Arabs of those countries than there is between, say, the citizens of Minnesota and those of Wisconsin.

What's more, many of the "Palestinians", or their immediate ancestors, came to the area attracted by the prosperity created by the Jews, in what previously had been pretty much of a wasteland.

The nationhood of the "Palestinians" is a myth.

The "West Bank". Again, this is a concept that did not exist until 1948, when the army of the Kingdom of Transjordan, together with five other Arab armies, invaded the Jewish state of Israel, on the very day of its creation.

In what can almost be described as a Biblical miracle, the ragtag Jewish forces defeated the combined Arab might. But Transjordan stayed in possession of Judea and Samaria and the eastern

part of Jerusalem. The Jordanians expelled all the Jews from the area that they occupied, destroyed all Jewish houses of worship, and renamed as "West Bank" the territories that had been Judea and Samaria since time immemorial.

The attempt, quite successful, was to persuade an uninformed world that these territories were ancestral parts of the Jordanian Arab Kingdom (itself a very recent creation of British power diplomacy).

Even after the total rout of the Arabs in the 1967 Six-Day War, in which the Jordanians were driven out of

Judea/Samaria and of Jerusalem, they and the world continued to call this territory the "West Bank", a geographical and political concept that cannot be found on any except the most recent maps.

The concept of the "West Bank" is a myth.

The "Occupied Territories". After the victorious Six-Day War, during which the Israeli army defeated the same cabal of Arabs that had invaded the country in 1948, Israel regained possession of Judea/Samaria, which the Jordanians had illegally occupied for 19 years; of the Gaza Strip, which had been occupied by the Egyptians, but which had never been part of their country; and of the Golan Heights, a plateau the size of Queens, which, though originally part of Palestine, had been assigned to Syria by British-French agreement.

The last sovereign in Judea/Samaria and in Gaza was the British mandatory power — and before it was the Ottoman Empire. All of Palestine, including what is now the Kingdom of Jordan, was, by the Balfour Declaration, destined to be the Jewish National Home. How then could the Israelis possibly be "occupiers" in their own territory? Who would be the sovereign and who the rightful inhabitants?

The concept of "occupied territories" in reference to Judea/Samaria and Gaza is an Arab propaganda myth.

"The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!"

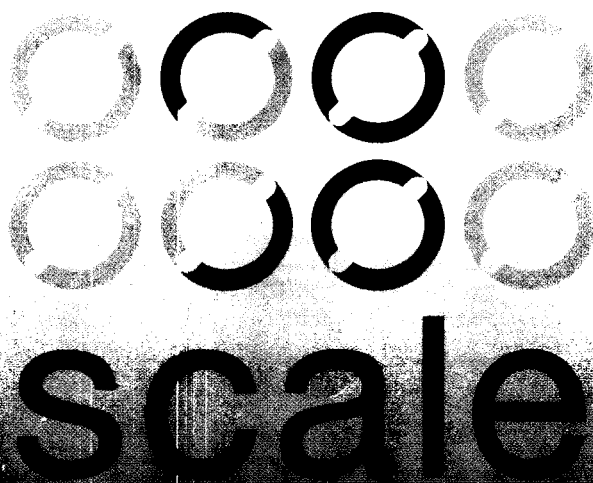
Unable so far to destroy Israel on the battlefield — though they are feverishly preparing for their next assault — the Arabs are now trying to overcome and destroy Israel by their acknowledged "policy of stages". That policy is to get as much land as possible carved out of Israel "by peaceful and diplomatic" means, so as to make Israel indefensible and softened up for the final assault. The web of lies and myths that the Arab propaganda machine has created plays an important role in the unrelenting quest to destroy the State of Israel. What a shame that the world has accepted most of it!

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