

# Did I Have a Daddy?

## A Parthenogenetic Problem

### What Is Parthenogenesis?

Parthenogenic species have the ability to reproduce asexually, without need of a male, mating or pollination. Parthenogenesis comes from the Greek words parthenos meaning “maiden” or “virgin” and genesis meaning “origin” or “birth.” In parthenogenic animals, the offspring are usually all the same sex, and in certain species like whiptail lizards, the entire species is female. Parthenogenesis often happens where there are few or no males of a species in the area.

In some cases, should males make a reappearance, the species can still make use of sexual reproduction. Recently in zoos, reptiles like komodo dragons and file snakes were discovered to be capable of this reproductive back-up plan.

**Q1: Why is parthenogenesis considered an adaptation?:** \_\_\_\_\_

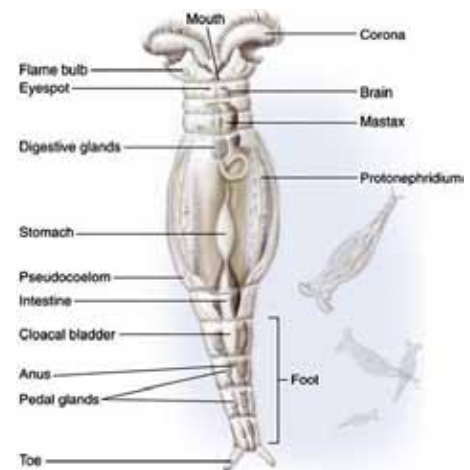
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### Bdelloid Rotifers

Rotifers are a group of microscopic aquatic animals that have evolved into many separate species over the past 40 million years without sexual reproduction. The research has focused on bdelloid rotifers, which live in ponds, rivers, and occasionally wet habitats like soils, mosses, and lichens. Biologists Ridego Fontaneto from the University of Milan and Timothy Barraclough from Imperial College London found evidence of distinct species of the bdelloid rotifers by comparing DNA sequencing and jaw measurements of animals living across the U.K., Italy, and other parts of the world. Asexual animals can evolve and mutate over time, but usually do not diversify or last long. However, records of the bdelloid rotifers show they have been around for more than 40 million years and they have evolved into hundreds of species individually adapted to their environments allowing some to now live in hot springs or the Antarctic waters.



### Komodo Dragons

Komodo dragons, the largest of the lizards, are under threat as wild populations become smaller. Two female Komodo dragons have been kept at separate zoos and have produced offspring, having always been isolated from males. One of these females then produced additional offspring sexually after being introduced to a male. This indicates that Komodo dragons can switch between asexual and sexual reproduction. One of the dragons had never been kept with a male but has produced a clutch of 25 eggs, of which 11 seemed to be viable. Three of the eggs collapsed but the remaining eight eggs developed normally. The parthenogenic adaptation creates

homozygous populations in zoos and drastically decreases genetic diversity in these populations.

### Whiptail Lizards

Whiptail lizards (genus *Aspidoscelis*) from Mexico and southwestern U.S. are made up entirely of females and manage to produce well-bred offspring without the aid of male fertilization. The new research by Peter Baumann of Stowers Medical Research Institute reveals that these lizards maintain genetic richness by starting the reproductive process with twice the number of chromosomes as their sexually reproducing cousins. This asexual species resulted from the hybridization of different sexual species, a process that instills the parthenogenic lizards with a great amount of genetic diversity at the beginning. And the researchers found that these species could maintain their genetic diversity by never pairing their homologous chromosomes (as sexual species do by taking one set of chromosomes from each parent during meiosis) but rather by combining their own sister chromosomes instead through fusing two of their own reproductive cells together.



### Bonnethead Sharks (and other shark species)

Female sharks of several species have been observed producing young in institutions like Chicago’s Shedd Aquarium where no males were present. Shark pups have been analyzed genetically and the results of these findings have led scientists to believe that this process occurs more often in the wild than many have thought. Parthenogenesis in sharks raises concerns for shark scientists and researchers. With increased fishing and capture of sharks, the male population has decreased over recent years. Sharks have XY and XX sex chromosomes and females can only produce XX (females) with parthenogenesis. This means that sharks cannot restore the depleted male population with parthenogenesis alone, and must use sexual reproduction to produce more males.



**Q2: Which species discussed above can produce through either sexual or asexual means?**

**How does having these options benefit these species?** \_\_\_\_\_

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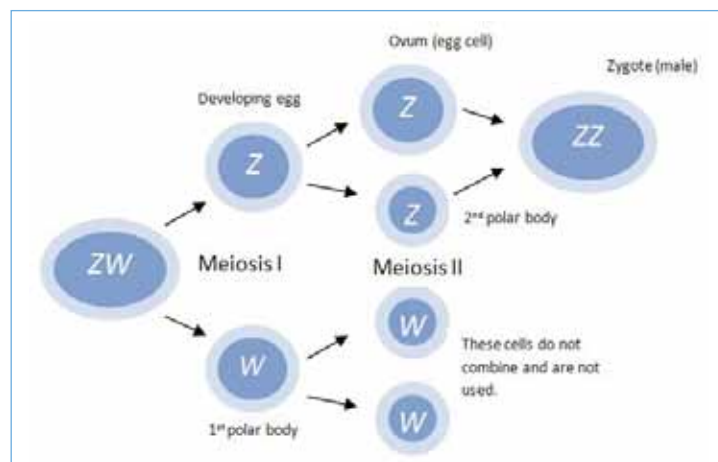
### Why One Sex?

Since species have differences in sex chromosomes, it impacts the sex of the offspring if produced asexually.

For example, like humans and other mammals, a female shark is XX and males are XY.

Since a female only has a pair of X chromosomes, she can only produce XX offspring (female).

Not all species follow the XX/XY design. Reptiles, for example, are the opposite of mammals. Females are XY (called ZW) and males are XX (called ZZ). A female komodo dragon is ZW so she can produce ZZ zygotes and WW zygotes after her chromosome pairs divide in meiosis. Since all organisms need a Z chromosome (or an X chromosome), then zygotes that are WW do not develop. Therefore, all offspring produced by a female (ZW) komodo dragon through parthenogenesis will be male (ZZ). Thus, female reptiles produce male offspring.



### A Cartilaginous Conundrum

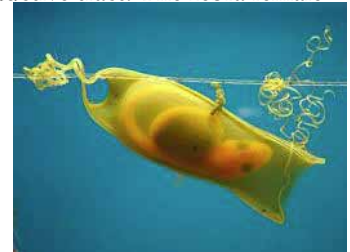
Sharks and rays are different from other fish as their skeletons are composed of cartilage, not bone. They live in many different types of aquatic ecosystems around the world and have adapted to a host of different environmental conditions. These organisms have been kept in zoos and aquaria and studied but still continue to surprise researchers, especially when it comes to how they reproduce.

Zebra sharks are long and sleek, allowing them to wriggle into reef crevices and caves to hunt for their food. Barbels (fleshy feelers) on their snouts help them search for their prey. Zebra sharks hunt at night; in the daytime they usually rest quietly on the bottom, “standing” on their pectoral (side) fins. To reproduce, male sharks use claspers (modifications of the pelvic fins) to transfer sperm into the female’s reproductive tract. The zebra female lays fertilized eggs in tough capsules covered with tufts of filaments, which attach the eggs to the seafloor. But these eggs are certainly not like the eggs most recognize! These are opaque and in a tough casing that protects the shark embryo and its yolk during development.



*Pictured left: Researcher performing ultrasound on shark egg.*

*Pictured right: Developing shark embryo with yolk within egg.*



Lise Watson, species coordinator and record keeper for all zebra sharks in North American institutions, must always be mindful of maintaining a healthy, genetically diverse population. Recently, three shark pups were produced and their parents were known. Blood samples from all individuals that inhabit the tank were sent to the laboratory for genetic analysis to determine who produced these pups. In the data provided below, there are individuals from the F1 generation and their offspring, F2 individuals. Be sure to take note of the gender of each individual. Seven (7) genes were genotyped and numbers were assigned. Observe the genotypes below.

ID Number	Name	Sex	Generation	Gene 1	Gene 2	Gene 3	Gene 4	Gene 5	Gene 6	Gene 7
SF03-07	Yin	F	F1	191/203	215/233	334/366	218/250	277/309	150/162	178/196
SF03-06	Yang	F	F1	177/199	227/229	334/338	214/218	269/285	150/162	168/182
SF06-10	Ping	F	F1	199/227	213/237	362/362	246/246	285/293	150/150	158/160
SF97-02	Pong	F	F1	189/197	227/227	334/350	218/234	297/313	150/162	194/196
SF06-11	Jaws	M	F1	197/223	201/233	350/366	234/250	277/281	150/150	182/202
SF12-12	Quinn	F	F2	197/197	227/227	334/334	218/218	313/313	162/162	196/196
SF13-109	Grace	F	F2	199/199	227/227	334/334	218/218	269/269	150/150	182/182
SF13-243	Ariel	F	F2	189/189	227/227	350/350	234/234	313/313	150/150	194/194

The goal of this aquarium is to produce sharks through sexual reproduction so that the gene pool is diverse and each individual has a different complement of genes to pass on to their own offspring. It is their hope that their male, Jaws, fathers offspring that contain some of his unique genes.

**Q3: What does heterozygous mean?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Write one heterozygous genotype from Individual SF06-10 here:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q4: What does homozygous mean?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Write one homozygous genotype from Individual SF06-10 here:** \_\_\_\_\_

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### Determining Parentage

To determine the parents of each of the F2 individuals, their genotypes must match with ALL of the genotypes of the parent. For Quinn, Grace and Ariel, look at F1 individuals and find the mother first. Then determine if the father contributed any alleles to the offspring.

**Q5: Who is the mother of Quinn?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q6: Is Jaws the father of Quinn? YES NO (Circle one)**

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q7: Who is the mother of Grace?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q8: Is Jaws the father of Grace? YES NO (Circle one)**

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q9: Who is the mother of Ariel?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q10: Is Jaws the father of Ariel? YES NO (Circle one)**

**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q11: Look at the F2 shark pups in the data table. What do all of the F2 individuals have in common?**

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**Q12: Based on your answer to the last question, what does this trend tell us?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q13: What could this trend do to the gene pool?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q14: What would the researchers want the F2 generation to look like?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q15: Would the gene pool of the sharks be more or less diverse if parthenogenesis was the main form of reproduction?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Why?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q16: How might this affect the fitness of the species?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Q17: How would meiosis look in a species like the whiptail lizards since the homologous chromosomes never pair and the sister chromosomes instead fuse? Draw a picture here to show how this might work.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Science always leads to more questions...**

**As you consider your results, write some questions below that you would need answers to in order to improve the chances of sexual reproduction.**

**A)** \_\_\_\_\_

**What information would you need in order to answer this question?** \_\_\_\_\_

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**B)** \_\_\_\_\_

**What information would you need in order to answer this question?** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Shedd'ing Some Light on Paternity

At Chicago's Shedd Aquarium, many successful shark offspring have been produced. However, in an effort to limit inbreeding and maintain genetic diversity in the managed population, paternity and maternity must be known so that relatedness can be determined. The data below came from the population of zebra sharks to determine (1) if the sharks were produced through sexual reproduction or parthenogenesis (asexual), and (2) who the father was if sexual reproduction occurred.

Also, pay careful attention to the hatch dates and determine if there were any changes in parentage over time. What could this tell us?

Possible Parent Sharks (F1 generation)										
ID#	Dam/Sire	Sex	Gen	Gene 1	Gene 2	Gene 3	Gene 4	Gene 5	Gene 6	Gene 7
394	Possible dam	F	F1	191/201	243/247	340/376	224/260	291/319	160/164	160/168
393	Possible dam	F	F1	187/193	203/203	336/368	220/248	283/311	152/168	170/178
565	Possible dam	F	F1	179/199	203/229	336/364	220/248	300/316	160/164	180/180
254	Possible sire	M	F1	187/209	205/229	336/368	220/252	291/291	152/164	182/196
395	Possible sire	M	F1	179/179	203/223	336/336	220/220	271/299	164/164	180/182
056	Possible sire	M	F1	199/201	233/235	336/344	220/228	303/315	164/164	174/188
346	Possible sire	M	F1	187/187	203/229	336/336	220/220	283/291	164/168	178/182

F2 Offspring											Sexual or Asexual?
ID#	Date of Hatch	Sex	Gen	Gene 1	Gene 2	Gene 3	Gene 4	Gene 5	Gene 6	Gene 7	
419	02/14/13	?	F2	187/187	203/229	336/336	220/248	291/311	164/168	170/178	
420	02/16/13	?	F2	187/187	203/229	336/336	220/248	283/291	152/168	178/182	
421	02/17/13	?	F2	187/187	203/229	336/368	220/252	283/291	152/164	178/182	
422	02/20/13	?	F2	187/193	203/205	336/364	220/248	283/291	152/164	170/182	
423	02/21/13	?	F2	187/193	203/205	336/364	220/248	291/311	164/168	178/196	
424	02/24/13	?	F2	187/193	203/205	336/364	220/248	291/311	152/152	178/182	
425	02/26/13	?	F2	187/187	203/229	336/336	220/220	283/291	164/168	178/182	
277	04/11/13	?	F2	187/199	203/233	344/364	228/248	303/311	164/168	170/174	
298	04/14/13	?	F2	187/201	203/233	336/344	220/228	283/303	164/168	170/188	
283	04/17/13	?	F2	193/201	203/233	336/336	220/220	283/303	164/168	178/188	
534	04/19/13	?	F2	187/193	203/229	336/336	220/220	283/291	164/168	178/182	
538	05/30/13	?	F2	191/209	229/247	Test fail	Test fail	291/319	152/164	168/196	
951	06/01/13	F	F2	179/209	203/205	336/336	220/220	291/300	160/164	180/182	

**Q18) What was the more favorable form of reproduction used in this population of sharks**

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**How do you know?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q19) Why is this is an advantage?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q20) Propose a hypothesis as to why some offspring may be produced through sexual reproduction**

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Using the genotypes provided in the table above, determine which parent gave each allele to the offspring. In the table below, write the identification numbers for each parent. If there was no father, put ABSENT in the box.

ID#	Mother ID#	Father ID#
419		
420		
421		
422		
423		
424		
425		
277		
298		
283		
534		
538		
951		

**Q21) Based on current reproductive technologies that are available today, what could be used with the sharks in order to increase the chances of having offspring through sexual reproduction?**

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**Explain what would be needed in order for this to be successful:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Design a Breeding Plan:**

Describe a plan in order to breed the F2 sharks above below. Who would you pair with whom? Which individuals would you breed? Of these chosen individuals, how many different aquaria would you need to ensure that each individual produces offspring to maintain genetic diversity? You can draw out or explain your breeding plan here:



