

Feral February Episode 10 – An amphibious Valentine’s Day

Description

Throughout the month of February, which I am calling –œFeral February,–œ I am going to do something a little bit different –œ I –œ™m going to create a series of theme posts every week day about my favourite things in the world: Animals.

Today –œ™s animal is the Surinam toad.

In honour of Valentine’s Day, I figured I would highlight an animal with one of the most bizarre mating and breeding practices I have ever come across. There are many animals throughout the animal kingdom with odd behaviours to attract a mate, like the bizarre displays of the birds of Paradise, the parasitic male angler fish (which latches onto a female and dissolves into nothing more than a pair of testes), the hermaphroditic flatworms that use their penises to fence one another, with the loser being stabbed and inseminated by the winner, and there are countless others. But today’s focus is on the Surinam toad, where the female gives everything, even the skin off her back, to keep her young safe.

The Surinam toad has a grey flat body with a triangle-shaped head, which help camouflage it among leaf litter and muddy water. It also has small eyes, no teeth and no tongue, but has a highly developed sense organ along its side to detect vibrations in the water, small tentacle-like projections on the ends of its fingers to detect food, eyes on the top of its head to see above the surface and the ability to draw in prey using suction.



Surinam toad. Photo courtesy of helixblue. [Source](#).

But the mating and breeding practices of the Surinam toad are what turn an odd-looking amphibian into a sight to behold.

When a male and female Surinam toad mate, the male latches on to the female and they somersault in the water. As they do so, the female releases an egg, the male fertilizes it, and the egg lands on the female's back, where her skin grows and encapsulates it. When the whole process is complete, the female can have up to 100 fertilized eggs in her back, which develop into young after a few months. Then, like something out of a science fiction movie, the young squeeze and wriggle their way out of their mother's back.

Now that's love.

Daily dose of trivia:

The unusual matting and breeding practices wasn't enough? Take a look at the video below and let me know.

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Date Created

February 14, 2014

Author

mrmanly2hotmail-com

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