

1. Animal instinct versus human reasoning

'Ee!' say young animals.

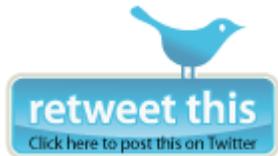
Or 'Ee! Ee!' when elaborating on the theme.

Much of what they say is expressed as they dedicate themselves to what we term 'arsing around' in a naïve, cuddly fashion. High on the agenda is becoming their proper size and frivolity until all of a sudden they turn nasty on a whim, baring their teeth in a lairy kind of way, effectively shouting aggressive, uncompromising things like 'Raaaar!' in place of their former squeak. Animals decide from this moment that they would rather digest those they once played with.

Remarkably, encoded in this very vocal shift is the way in which these animals act to unite their sperm and eggs.

The instant transition from a high-pitched playful 'Ee!' to an anger-unmanaged, low-pitched roar exemplifies how they react to situations armed with a limited range of stock responses. How they act impulsively on what we call their 'animal instincts'. Birds expecting egg emergence will act to construct a twiggy nursery. Honeybees will dance to communicate the location of a food source, the equivalent in human terms to a

restaurant critic with a favourable review ditching the write-up in favour of intercepting people in the street and performing something akin to a GPS-enhanced Irish jig. And so at maturity, animals trust to instinct to answer urgently the nagging call to consolidate sperm and egg. 'Speed mating' is key because the deed is limited to very narrow time-windows, at most a couple of hours out of every year, in what are described as 'seasons' when they pick up on visual and smelly cues, galvanise themselves into wildly frisky activity and knock each other over in a tumultuous frenzy. The clumsy intent is imperative because animals are under pressure to 'knock out' when they can, not one but numerous litters in their lifetime.



The big litter strategists' emphasis is more on selection of the fittest after birth. Turtles lay around a hundred eggs in the sand, of which one might hatch and manage to scamper down the beach into the sea before predatory seagulls can eat its head. To make sense of this we might imagine turtles in a human context. A nurse in the

maternity ward comes up to the mother and says, 'Congratulations Mrs Atkins, you've given birth to 52 boys and 48 girls.'

'Oh, I always wanted 52 boys,' beams the mother.

'Oh, OK,' answers the nurse, hesitantly. 'Have you chosen any names?'

'Yes I have, actually,' says the mother, excitedly.

'Well, you might have to scale back a bit. Maybe go with say your Top Five? Top One, even?'

'Why?'

'Two words – seagulls, heads.'

Less prolific species, such as human beings, select the fittest before birth. In contrast to instinctive animals, humans possess the capacity to observe and analyse situations, to use something we call 'human reasoning'. Upon sighting small animals lolling about in a family grouping we respond, for example, by saying things like,

'Awwgh look, there's a little one!' Should our little friends be furry, it is our desire to stroke them and say 'Aah!' as they tussle with each other, play-acting the biting off of other animals' heads in later life. Shrewdly, we recognise that the small animal we observe would make a perfect study for an online viral video. Perhaps sprawling around to such a degree that it is in danger of spilling out of a comically overturned wicker basket, or tumbling around with a youthful animal of another species it would not be seen dead with in adult life. Inevitably it is this juxtaposition, this precarious situation, which elicits mirth. In other words, we *Homo sapiens* are capable of rational thought; of seeing things as they truly are.

The reasoning human female needs to be more cautious in making her choice of gene investment. Typically, she is restricted to producing one offspring at a time, saddled with a long gestation period during which she has to eat gherkins and coal for her tea.

The seasonal synchronisation of libidos exhibited by the big litter strategists is rarely observed in human society except notably in the case of Club 18-30 holidaymaking communities. The Club 18-30 holiday company offers vacations for a

younger demographic on idyllic islands, similar to Bermuda and the Cayman Islands; the type of location where it is possible to suntan and sup piña coladas while enjoying tax exemption and favourable terms of business. The prospect of a so-called 'shag' on the Spanish island of Ibiza is therefore for them associated with a favourable offshore investment.

Additionally, youthful holidaymakers are primed and seduced by the Club 18-30 holiday brochure before their embarkation. The promotional literature is replete with propagandist photographs of beautiful frolickers splashing around in the surf, barely suppressing their delight at attaining 'near-bogging off' intimacy. The indications are that they will eagerly do this with anyone who has sent a completed booking form and a crossed cheque covering the deposit, and has read and understood the terms and conditions of the agreement. Though, unfortunately, these lovely frolicking people never seem to repeat book, the fact remains that they did look better on the brochure as representatives of club clientele than the more genuine article, the so-called 'pissed-up' people encountered at after-drinks eateries, whose major success of the evening is ordering comfort food like 'saveloy and chips' via the omission of vowel sounds.

While humans are less prolific droppers, they are able to reproduce year round. For us, the onus is shifted from being so intensely preoccupied with sex at any one time. With more time and less pressure to consider our moves, we have a phase between being attracted to a member of the opposite sex and making an approach, a period in which we are said to have our 'eye on someone'. In animals, this stage is almost non-existent because there is a very short lapse of time between attraction and frenzied mounting, so instead of an eye we could say such animals mark this phase at best by having a 'gonad on something'. (Note: a gonad on 'something' rather than 'someone' as dogs, for instance, will what we term 'dry hump' anything ranging from a human leg to a Roman obelisk.)

With a more leisurely approach to mating, human beings tend to rely on more subtle cues for identifying a sexual partner.

