



# The Dawn of the Deed: The Prehistoric Origins of Sex

*John A. Long*

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We all know about the birds and the bees, but what about the ancient placoderm fishes and the dinosaurs? The history of sex is as old as life itself—and as complicated and mysterious. And despite centuries of study there is always more to know. In 2008, paleontologist John A. Long and a team of researchers revealed their discovery of a placoderm fish fossil, known as “the mother fish,” which at 380 million years old revealed the oldest vertebrate embryo—the earliest known example of internal fertilization. As Long explains, this find led to the reexamination of countless fish fossils and the discovery of previously undetected embryos. As a result, placoderms are now considered to be the first species to have had intimate sexual reproduction or sex as we know it—sort of.

Inspired by this incredible find, Long began a quest to uncover the paleontological and evolutionary history of copulation and insemination. In *The Dawn of the Deed*, he takes readers on an entertaining and lively tour through the sex lives of ancient fish and exposes the unusual mating habits of arthropods, tortoises, and even a well-endowed (16.5 inches!) Argentine Duck. Long discusses these significant discoveries alongside what we know about reproductive biology and evolutionary theory, using the fossil record to provide a provocative account of prehistoric sex. *The Dawn of the Deed* also explores fascinating revelations about animal reproduction, from homosexual penguins to monogamous seahorses to the difficulties of dinosaur romance and how sexual organs in ancient shark-like fishes actually relate to our own sexual anatomy.

*The Dawn of the Deed* is Long’s own story of what it’s like to be a part of a discovery that rewrites evolutionary history as well as an absolutely rollicking guide to sex throughout the ages in the animal kingdom. It’s natural history with a naughty wink.

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