

Introduction to Series

An exciting eight-part television series that reveals the dramatic rise of the animal kingdom as it is being pieced together through new scientific discovery.

Episode 1: “Origins”

Today, scientists are piecing together the dawn of animal life. And for the first time ever, they believe they have gathered substantial evidence that points to a single animal group of creatures that gave rise to all animals, including humans. Join this fast-paced detective story as we search for – and find – the origins of the animal kingdom.

Episode 2: “Life on the Move”

When we think of animals, we think of movement. Surprisingly, the diverse and graceful ballet of movement may have started with a single group of creatures whose descendants were the first to harness the power of muscles and nerves. How did their dramatic forays forever transform the world?

Episode 3: “The First Hunter”

The first animal to develop a head, eyes and a brain also pioneered a new way to survive: it would become earth’s first hunter. Dramatic new evidence points to an unlikely and oddly charismatic subject...a flat worm-like creature, whose hunting and sexual exploits helped mark a defining moment in the shape of life.

This episode discusses sexual reproduction in terms that might not be appropriate for children and early teens.

Episode 4: “Explosion of Life”

According to fossil evidence, it appears as if in one dramatic moment – the Cambrian Explosion – an amazing menagerie of animals suddenly appeared on earth. What animals appeared? What caused this sudden proliferation of life? Surprisingly, one of the least suspecting and simplest of these new life forms – the annelid worms – would help shape the world we know today.

Episode 5: “The Conquerors”

For hundreds of millions of years, animal life resided only in the oceans. And then, in one extraordinary event, something happened that enabled one group of animals to emerge from the sea. Follow scientists as they track how the shape of life transformed to create the animals that led the first successful land invasion and were the first to pioneer flight.

Episode 6: “Survival Game”

To survive, all animals rely on incredible offensive and defensive strategies. Octopus, squid, cuttlefish, and snail – all molluscs – evolved from the same animal design. How did the struggle for survival lead to such different variations? What secret do they reveal about the survival game?

Episode 7: “Ultimate Animal”

At first blush, one might believe that animals like us – creatures with heads, eyes and brains – are evolution’s crowning achievement. Yet there are animals with no head, eyes or centralized brains that accomplish feats impossible for us even to attempt. Enter their bizarre world as we try to determine if there’s an ultimate animal on earth.

Episode 8: “Bones, Brains and Brawn”

From the beginning of human history, we have told stories to explain our place among the animals. Today’s scientists are writing new tales, populated by faceless creatures, giant gelatinous blobs, killer dragons and monstrous dinosaurs. How is it possible that our big, brawny, brainy bodies owe their very existence to some of the oddest creatures of the animal kingdom?