

Aging In The Wild

5 x 60'

EPISODIC BREAKDOWN

1. Longevity

Aldabra Tortoise, Matriarch Elephants, Kittiwakes, Honey Bees, Hydra, Lions

In this episode of Aging in the Wild, we explore the physiological secrets and factors that determine life expectancy in various animal species. From the seventy-year-old elephant to the quasi-immortal hydra, and the more than a hundred-year-old tortoise, we explore life expectancy, longevity and senescence. Can we distinguish between the effects of the environment and the internal adaptations that lead to longevity? What are some of the benefits associated with aging in nature?

2. Reproduction

Lions, Chimpanzees, Turtles, Roe Deer, Gannets

Reproduction is not only a concern of the young and restless: this episode of Aging in the Wild brings a light-hearted look at the issue of sexuality and camaraderie in older animals. We illustrate, for example, the link between the age of an elephant and its reproductive success. What are the reproductive benefits of these animals as they grow older? Through hearing their stories, we learn of some of the advantages - and disadvantages - of late-life reproduction.

3. Dominance

Bighorn Sheep, Elk, Male Elephants, Marmots, Baboons, Rhinos

Observing two massive elk clashing their antlers is to witness a true demonstration of power. For other species, such as the European marmot, remaining in power is a matter of collaborating with family and community. Are these animals forced to give up their hard-won social status as they age? Through this lens, we take a deep and entertaining look at the challenges faced by those in power ... and what it takes to stay there.

4. Wisdom

Grizzly Bears, Orcas, Elephants, Wolves, Olive Baboons

In many human cultures, elders play a vital role in the well-being of communities and are responsible for passing down knowledge and culture. Is it any wonder to find that the orca, the elephant, and the wolf, have been found to transmit their respective cultures to the younger generations? Young animals learn by observing their elders. Judging when to fight or take flight, deciding how to choose a life partner, learning where to find food, these are just some of the skills passed down through the generations as elders share their wisdom.

5. The Circle of Life

Salmon, Bears, Beluga Whales, Naked Mole Rat, Bacteria, Aspen Trees

In this episode, we explore how different animal species react to impending death. We explore the factors that lead animals to their final resting places: disease, injury, predation, drought, famine. Some species, such as the naked mole rat, while not immortal, seem to be able to effectively protect themselves from certain diseases such as cancer. This raises questions about what is no doubt a sensitive subject, one that brings to mind our own mortality as we speculate about the reasons for this kind of resilience in our animal counterparts. What lessons can we learn from the animal kingdom? We follow individuals to their last breath ... not as voyeurs, but as spectators attuned to the circle of life.