

**Sawfish 'virgin births' astonish science**  
野生锯鳐单性繁殖

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研究人员首次发现了一种生活在佛罗里达州河口的鳐锯能够单性繁殖后代。人们推测这是此类物种的一种生存机制。此发现被刊登在《当代生物学》杂志上。以下是 Jonathan Webb 的报道。

Despite growing up to 12 feet in length with a vicious-looking **snout**, the smalltooth sawfish is **critically endangered**. Researchers from Stony Brook University in New York were doing a survey of the creatures to check on their **genetic diversity**.

They were surprised to find seven female fish that had no sign of a genetic father. They were all daughters of a **virgin birth** or parthenogenesis – this **bizarre** mechanism in which embryo grows from an **unfertilised egg** may be more common than scientists thought.

In captivity, sharks, reptiles and turkeys have all been known to surprise zookeepers and farmers with virgin births. But these fish are the first **vertebrate** virgin **offspring** ever found in the wild.

## Questions

1. How did the scientists find out there was something different about these fish?
2. What sex are these special fish?
3. True or false? *Virgin births are something scientists have come across before.*
4. Which words are used to describe animals kept in a farm, a lab or a zoo?

## Vocabulary and definitions

<b>snout</b>	大长鼻
<b>critically endangered</b>	极度濒危的
<b>genetic diversity</b>	遗传多样性
<b>virgin birth</b>	单性生殖
<b>bizarre</b>	离奇的
<b>unfertilised egg</b>	未受精的卵子
<b>vertebrate</b>	脊椎动物
<b>offspring</b>	后代

## Answers to the questions:

1. How did the scientists find out there was something different about these fish?  
**Answer: They were doing a survey on the creatures' genetic diversity.**
2. What sex are these special fish?  
**Answer: They are all females.**
3. True or false? *Virgin births are something scientists have come across before.*  
**Answer: True. It has happened to sharks, reptiles and turkeys.**
4. Which words are used to describe animals kept in a farm, a lab or a zoo?  
**Answer: Animals kept in captivity.**