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The Evolution of Problem-solving Abilities in Carnivores: Badgers and Bears to Snow Leopards and Spotted Hyenas

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THURSDAY, JULY 30th 2015, 5:30pm

“The evolution of problem-solving abilities in carnivores: Badgers and bears to snow leopards and spotted hyenas”

Sarah Benson-Amram, Assistant Professor
University of Wyoming

How do you give a hyena an IQ test? How do you design an IQ test that is fair for both a 1-pound dwarf mongoose and an 850-pound polar bear? In this talk, Dr. Sarah Benson-Amram will discuss her attempts to solve these problems. Specifically, this talk will summarize several research projects: one study that investigated whether wild spotted hyenas can count the number of intruders in their territory, a second project that examined whether wild and captive spotted hyenas can solve a puzzle they have never seen before and identified what distinguished successful from unsuccessful individuals, and a third project that investigated the problem-solving abilities of 43 species of carnivores in zoos and asked whether a species’ brain size predicts its ability to solve a novel problem.

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