

"A friend in need is a friend indeed", said the Water thick-knee to its unlikely friend the crocodile.

And the sentiment was returned. The bird and the reptile lay their eggs in close proximity to one another for maximum protection. While the crocodile cools down in the refreshing water, the thick-knee stands guard to spot intruders, such as the Nile Monitor. Following the bird's warning call, the crocodile immediately returns to their common nesting place and saves all the eggs—whichever species they belong to!

It's the type of 'odd couple' relationship that has evolved all around the world—and it works. Sri Lanka's Hanuman langurs and spotted deer are always on the alert to detect their common enemy: the Sri Lankan leopard. They work together to make sure the big cat goes hungry—again.

Give and take relationships enter dubious territory when it comes to the Mountain tree shrew and the Giant pitcher plant of Borneo. The tree shrews know the location of every pitcher plant in their territory. These carnivorous plants are important sources of nectar for the shrew. But where's the give and take here? While it licks the nectar from the glands of the pitcher plant's 'lid', the tree shrew deposits its droppings in the plant's pitcher—providing a valuable, if perhaps not so tasty, source of nutrients for the plant.

It's tit for tat in the animal kingdom! Or ... is it?

Enter the parasites. Like Ostrich flies, tiny blood-suckers that cling to their hosts like glue. The hotter and drier it gets the more intense their presence becomes. While the ostriches can't flee this unwelcome pest, other birds have found ways to escape the pesky parasites that make life unbearable. Swallow bugs can infest the nests of cliff swallows to such an extent that they become uninhabitable. No problem for the swallows, they're happy to build an entirely new colony from scratch.

If you can't beat them, join them. Some birds have adopted their own parasitic lifestyles. Crafty cowbirds swoop into undefended nests to lay their eggs, leaving their future chicks to be raised with the sweat of another birds' hard work.

Banded mongooses that pick warthogs clean; ants that lovingly care for caterpillars; oxpeckers that attach themselves to giraffes and zebras; Aztec ants that defend their host plant against intrusive monkeys; and fish that simply feed on any leftovers that drop from the sky—wild relationships can be found everywhere, from the driest deserts to the deepest, darkest jungles.

Be it taking advantage of others, a case of give and take or living in symbiotic harmony with others, our planet is filled with every possible type of strange, wild relationship!



NATURE



MAD MATCH NATURE'S STRANGEST RELATIONSHIPS

1 x 50 min.

Written and produced by **Petra Lederhilger**

HD, 5.1 and Stereo

Executive producer: **Sabine Holzer**



TERRA MATER
Factual Studios

Terra Mater Factual Studios GmbH, Wambachergasse 2, 1130 Vienna/Austria,
phone +43-1-87003-0, fax +43-1-87003-27609, office@terramater.at

www.terramater.com