

Animal communication - bluffing, lying, impressing, and sometimes even information

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Abstract

The purpose of transmitting information in the animal world is to gain some kind of advantage for the sender, or to evade unpleasant consequences. Evolution has led to a kind of arms race, where the sender tries to give as favourable an effect as possible, whereas the receiver tries to see through the bluffing. It is only in birds and mammals that we see an awareness of the meaning of the message - it is mostly produced by innate mechanisms - but in the great apes we find intentional lies and bluffings. The similarities to human non-verbal communication are obvious.