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Because most animals that reproduce sexually, people are familiar with the idea of pregnancy, with the otherwise outlandish notion that one animal carries a genetically different individual inside its body for an extended period of time before expelling the latter through an orifice. If you are a man, you might feel relieved that this weighty reproductive imposition has been delegated to females in *Homo sapiens*, and if you are a woman, the thought of becoming pregnant might elicit any of a gamut of feelings from joy and contentedness to fear or even loathing. Such powerful emotional responses within and between the sexes are understandable given the profound impact that pregnancy can have not only on one's mortal life but also on one's genetic legacy. In short, pregnancy is a huge deal both personally and evolutionarily.

However, the standard mammalian perspective on pregnancy is much too parochial for this book. Instead, I explore the fascinating diversity of pregnancy-like phenomena in the many animal species that provide extensive gestational services for their offspring. Such evolutionary diversity is impressive in several regards. With respect to duration, a pregnancy may last just a few days or several years, depending on the species. With respect to the number of embryos, a pregnant parent may brood just one offspring at a time or many thousands (as in some fishes and invertebrates). With respect to a parent's energetic investment in offspring, pregnancy in various species can range from a rather minor inconvenience to one of life's greatest physiological challenges. With respect to gender of the gestating parent, anything goes, as evidenced by the fact that males become pregnant in more than 200 fish species, females do so in many others, and even some hermaphroditic