

Octopia Octopuses

To use the classic Mad Scientist trope: it seemed a good idea at the time. It always does, doesn't it? Then again, if it was a bad idea then most people wouldn't try it, by definition.

Anyway, when researchers discovered that octopuses (don't start) were busily [creating cities](#) -- in the sense that video games create cities, which means that there's about a dozen or so of them vaguely wandering around each other amid a somewhat sketchy amount of infrastructure -- most people said "Huh." A few said "That's interesting." And one said "A-ha! This sounds like it will be the perfect place to test out my Neuro-Physio Octopode Mutation Serum! Mwhah bah hah hah hahh!!!!!" Because of course.

The actual Mad Scientist is irrelevant to this conversation, actually -- she eventually got bored, and is now trying to teach mutated raccoons how to fight in MMA-style cage matches -- but what's important is that she found a colony of Common Sydney Octopuses that was otherwise unknown, and that her Serum worked. The octopuses in the 'Ocotopia' city are now healthier, have a lifespan of about thirty years, and about twenty percent larger. The

lifespan is the important one, as it turns out that the major limiting factor for octopus intelligence is that members of the species typically only last three, four years tops. Thirty years is going to be enough time to pass concepts along to the next generation. The altered colony has already worked out how to swarm-kill interloping sharks and dolphins; whether or not they're going to develop anything like a language is unknown, but a couple have begun to use ink sprays to get concepts across. So maybe?

The fly in this ointment? It turns out that smarter octopuses are absolutely awful. They're cruel, somewhat xenophobic, aggressively territorial -- and this is all going to get worse as the species spreads its genetic mutation throughout the octopus population. They dimly get that humans are odd sorts of predators, and so when they encounter humans up close for the first time the octopuses will at first be curious. This will swiftly turn to murderous hate, because, again, Octopian octopuses are absolutely awful. Although, to be fair, the humans will probably cut up a few octopuses before they realize that they're dealing with a potentially sentient species. By then it will be too late to quell the inevitable Octopus War. Which humanity would probably win, but at what cost to our fishery industry?

One last note: the Serum used to uplift the Common Sydney Octopus is reproduced in all mutated males' spermatophores -- and, yes, that means that it's an infectious agent for female octopuses. Including ones that wouldn't normally be fertile with the Common Sydney Octopus. If the Octopian octopuses ever work that all out, the oceans could become much more unfriendly for anything that isn't an octopus. There are rumors of giants out there, in the open sea.

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