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Colour changes of *Octopus rubescens* during attacks on unconditioned and conditioned stimuli

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Abstract

Octopus rubescens exhibits a sequence of skin colour changes when it attacks and captures prey. These displays were observed during attacks on (1) free-swimming crabs, (2) crabs of different sizes impaled on thin rods, and (3) positive and negative discriminative stimuli. Animals were housed separately in light-blue aquaria which also served as experimental apparatuses. Animals in each condition showed the same typical sequence of colour displays. This sequence is (1) before detection of crab: various colours, (2) on detection and during a free-swimming attack: colours ranging from light orange to grey, (3) on landing: colourless and nearly transparent, (4) on seizing the crab: spotted or mottled, and (5) afterward: various colours. The colour changes may be tied to locomotor acts and postural adjustments.



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