

Fish Behavior Study

Fish study may give insight into human behavior.

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A recent UK study examined whether groups of threespine stickleback fish could be led by robot fish into neutral or potentially dangerous situations. Single fish followed the robot leader toward a model of a predator, while larger groups ignored it. Two or more robot leaders always influenced the larger groups to swim toward danger.

The results show that social animals recognize that a single group member may act irrationally in a situation, but the odds are slim that two individuals would act strangely. This means that we won't follow one irrational individual, but two is enough to persuade us to go along. This response has been shown in studies of invertebrates such as ants, bees and cockroaches, but this is the first study showing this following discretion in animals with complex brains.

Next the researchers plan to study pedestrians in large cities to see how many people it takes to lead a crowd across the street against a red light. They think we'll act like the sticklebacks —turns out we may not be more complex than fish when it comes to decision making!

(Salleh, Anna. "It Might Take Just Two to Fool a Crowd." www.abc.net; "Research: Fish Study Leads Way to Understanding When to Follow the Leader." www.UnderwaterTimes.com)