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THE RED-EYED MUTANT JEWEL WASP (RIGHT) STARING DOWN AT THE MERE UNMOI

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Scientists have created a hellish mutant wasp with bright red eyes in their lab. Typical scientists, eh?

While it looks like the work of mad scientists under the control of an evil genius, this little experiment serves as further proof that scientists are getting to grips with CRISPR, one of the most powerful breakthroughs in gene-editing.

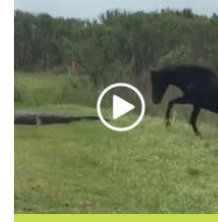
As explained in their study, recently published in Nature's [Scientific Reports](#), the ruby-eyed parasitic jewel wasps (*Nasonia vitripennis*) were created by the University of California Riverside's Akabari lab using CRISPR-Cas9 gene-snipping technology. This technique allows scientists to essentially "cut and paste" proteins in and out of DNA with far greater accuracy and speed than before. The technique is still relatively new, but it holds the potential to be truly revolutionary.

Testing out the technology on this species is a pretty big deal as it was one of the first gene disruption-based techniques conducted in a hymenopteran insect, the third-largest order of insects including wasps, bees, and ants. It's also important because jewel wasps are increasingly being used to study evolution, as they are



By Tom Hale

21/04/2017, 16:51



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quick and easy to breed. They are also small, being only the size of a small bean and with eggs a quarter of the size of a rice grain.

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"You have to use a very-very fine needle and a microscope and individually inject hundred to thousands of embryos," lead author Omar Akbari, an assistant professor of entomology, said in a [statement](#). "You need a really steady hand and it requires a lot of patience in micro manipulation that one can learn over time. Ming Li, a postdoctoral researcher in our lab has mastered the technique."

In this experiment, they decided to "slice" out the genes that control the color of the wasp's normally black eyes.

"We wanted to target a gene that would be obvious, and we knew from previous studies that if the gene for eye pigmentation was knocked out, they would have red eyes, so this seemed like a good target for gene disruption," Akbari added. "Big beautiful red eyes are something you won't miss."

Since the cuts in the DNA created a mutant wasp with heritable traits, it also means that these red eyes will be passed down to all their offspring. Just, for the love of god, don't let them out of the lab.

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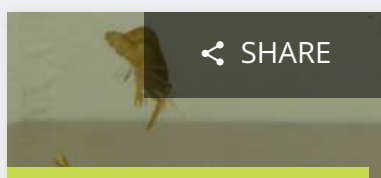


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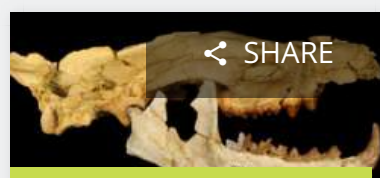


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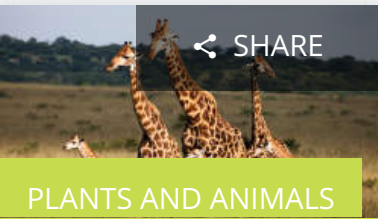
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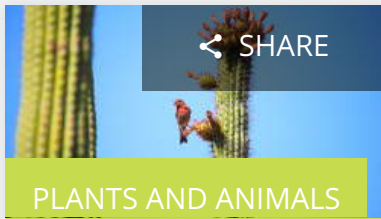
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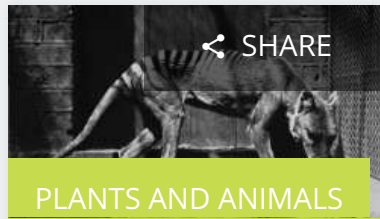
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