

# The Eternal Creature That Ages in Reverse, yet Never Dies

These creatures never age and never die because of an ability to change one type of cell into another that allows them to grow younger until they start life all over again. You may live or visit a place where you see these creatures a lot, and I promise, you'll never view them the same way again.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- There are many species on plant Earth that live much longer than the longest-lived humans
- Scientists believe many animals with long lifespans may hold clues that can help enhance human health and the aging process
- One long-lived animal is the jellyfish. This fascinating creature actually ages in reverse, growing younger instead of older
- Elephants live 60 to 70 years, and despite their enormous size and long lifespan, they remain cancer free
- Red sea urchins are known to live 100 years or more, without any biological signs of aging

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## 10 Long-Lived Animals

- **Clam**



The ocean quahog, known by several other names including mahogany clam and black quahog, is a marine bivalve mollusk that can live to be 500 years or older. It's a species of edible clam native to the North Atlantic Ocean, and is about the size of a human fist.

Scientists believe the quahog's longevity comes from its ability to protect its proteins from damage. Understanding this mechanism could lead to treatments for diseases like Alzheimer's, which is caused by protein disturbances in the brain.

- **Naked mole rat**



This homely little creature's skin is like elastic, which scientists believe is its secret to a very long life for a rodent — up to 30 years. The naked mole rat may be immune to cancer, and it is believed molecules that make his skin so flexible may play a role.

- **Brandt's bat**



The Brandt's bat is native to Europe and Asia and lives to at least the age of 40. This bat species has mutations in its receptors for growth hormones, which scientists also believe play a role in human populations that live long, disease-free lives.

- **Thick-billed murre**



The thick-billed murre lives around 40 years or more, and never loses its ability to dive. Scientists hope to study how the bird maintains its strength and swiftness to gain insights into the link between aging and its effect on the human body.

- **Parrot**



**Parrots** can live into their 70s, and the New Zealand kakapo, considered the longest-lived species, can survive

to age 90. The secret to their longevity could be that kakapos live life in slow motion. For example, males don't reach breeding maturity until around age 4, and females around age 6.

- **Jellyfish**



The jellyfish is immortal. Instead of aging and dying, the jellyfish ages in reverse – he gets ever younger until he starts his life all over again. This is possible because these creatures have the ability to change one type of cell into another type of cell.

- **Elephant**



These magnificent animals live 60 to 70 years, and despite their enormous size and long lifespan, they remain cancer free. This is because elephants have multiple copies of a gene that destroys mutated cells before they cause disease.

- **Giant tortoise**



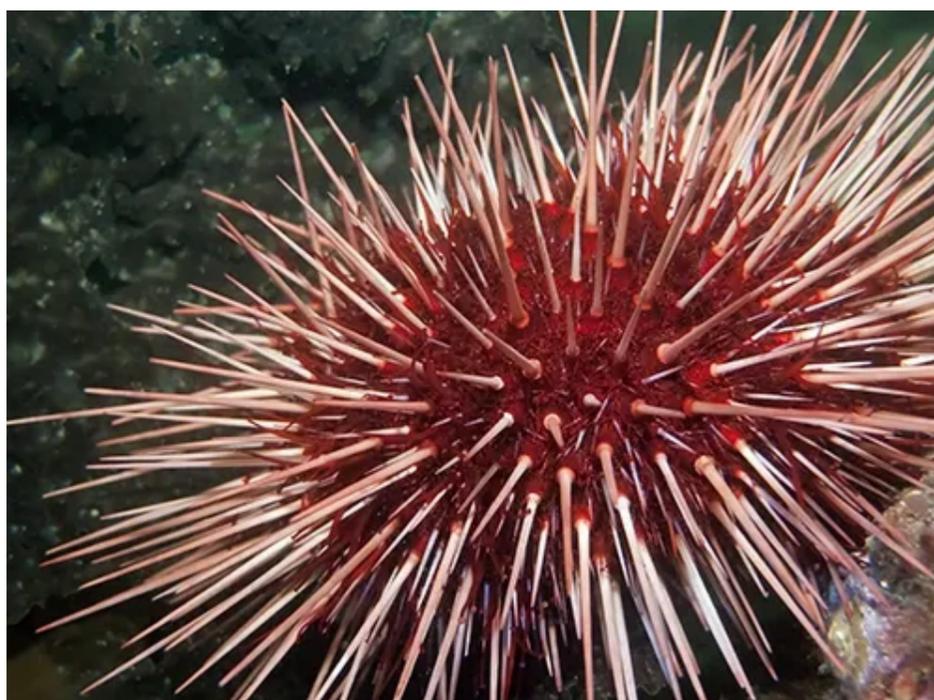
The giant tortoise often lives over 100 years, and scientists attribute this to his slow metabolism and a heart that beats at less than half the speed of a human heart.

- **Bowhead whale**



The bowhead whale is reported to live over 200 years and is thought to be the longest-living mammal. Scientists sequenced the genome of a bowhead whale and identified genes related to DNA repair, cancer and aging that could be responsible for the animal's very long life.

- **Red sea urchin**



These fascinating creatures are known to live 100 years or more, without any biological signs of aging. Red sea urchins have the ability to regenerate tissue, which may explain this phenomenon. Unlike in humans, the

urchins' telomeres (parts of cells involved in the rate at which aging occurs) don't appear to shorten as they age.

## Sources and References

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