

CHILDREN'S TELEVISION WORKSHOP EXPLORES THE WORLD

JUNE 1995

3 2 1 **Contact**®

Hangin' out
Upside
Down
Animals

Secrets
of Your
Tongue
Revealed!

Dog
Umbrellas
And Other
Wacky
Inventions

Monthly Contest:
You Can
Win a
Boom box!



By Jordan Brown

Flipped

**These
Upside-
Down
Animals
Will
Make
You
Dizzy**

Most animals, humans included, do whatever they can to stay right side-up.

But a few unusual creatures live with their heads pointed down. For them, being upside down comes naturally.

Give these creatures a hand—or a handstand!

Bat

The most famous upside-down creature is upright only when flying, getting rid of body waste or giving birth. In fact, right after a baby bat is born, its mother returns to a hanging position.

Bats hang from special claws, which are sometimes called “coat hanger” feet. Researchers once removed hibernating bats from their perches, weighed them and re-hooked them—without waking any up!

A bat’s body is specially designed for living upside down. The valves in its circulatory system work in the opposite direction to ours. This prevents blood from rushing to a bat’s head. Otherwise it might go batty!

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Cassiopeia

This jellyfish faces down, and each of its tentacles faces up, towards the sun—the opposite of other jellyfish. The cassiopeia (say: *kass-ee-OH-pee-uh*) lives in shallow tropical waters. It gets nutrients from algae living on its tentacles and under its body. Returning the favor, the jellyfish gives the algae a sunny place to live and grow. The cassiopeia is also human-friendly. Unlike most jellyfish, it doesn't sting.

Blue-Crowned Hanging Parrot

Can you guess the nickname of this parrot that acts like a bat? The answer: bat-parrot. Well, duh!

This strange bird lives on islands north of Australia. It often suspends itself head down when sleeping, eating or playing with other hanging parrots. Some experts think it does this to hide behind thick, leafy trees. When upside down, its colorful feathers are less likely to be spotted by enemies flying overhead. Other scientists think hanging upside down helps the parrots reach their food (nectar and pollen) more easily.

no

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Colugo

Look, up in the tree! It's a bird! It's a plane! No, it's Super Colugo!

Colugos use sharp claws to dangle upside down in the rain forests of Southeast Asia.

This mammal also seems to "fly" from tree to tree. But it actually glides downward from one branch to another. Its secret is a parachute-like skin, which stretches across its body—from neck to fingers to tip of tail. 🦎

Upside-Down Catfish

Most times, when a fish floats on its back, it's sick or dead. But when the upside-down catfish looks that way, you can bet it's healthy and happy.

Found in African rivers, the catfish spends much of its life swimming on its back. The only time it doesn't swim upside down is when it's close to the bottom of the river. Otherwise, it might crash into rocks or plants.

Scientists think it started swimming upside down due to a food shortage near the river bottom. The catfish needed to flip over in order to be able to eat food from the underside of floating plants. Sounds fishy, but it's true.

PHOTO © MIRIAM ALSTERMAN/ANIMALS



Sloth

Sloths are champs at hanging upside down from branches. Found in the forests of Central and South America, these creatures eat, give birth and sleep with their heads pointing south! Even their body hair is "reversed." It's parted along the belly instead of the back, so rain easily runs off the sloth's body.

It's easy for sloths to hang by their arms and legs. They have large, curved claws at the end of each limb. The claws let them grip branches tightly. So it's a breeze for sloths to eat all the leaves, blossoms and fruit they want.

But their curved claws make it a royal pain for sloths to travel on the ground. In fact, when sloths have to crawl on their stomachs, they move forward—verrrry, verrrry slowly. ♦

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