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The Language of Chameleons: how the animals, which cannot talk and do not hear, communicate

Silhouette

PETR NEČAS,
with illustrations of ANASTASIIA SHIRIAEVA and photos of PETR NEČAS

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Note: this text is an example from the book dealing exactly with this topic, this is just a sample

SILHOUETTE

SHOW ME YOUR SILHOUETTE SO I KNOW, WHO YOU ARE!

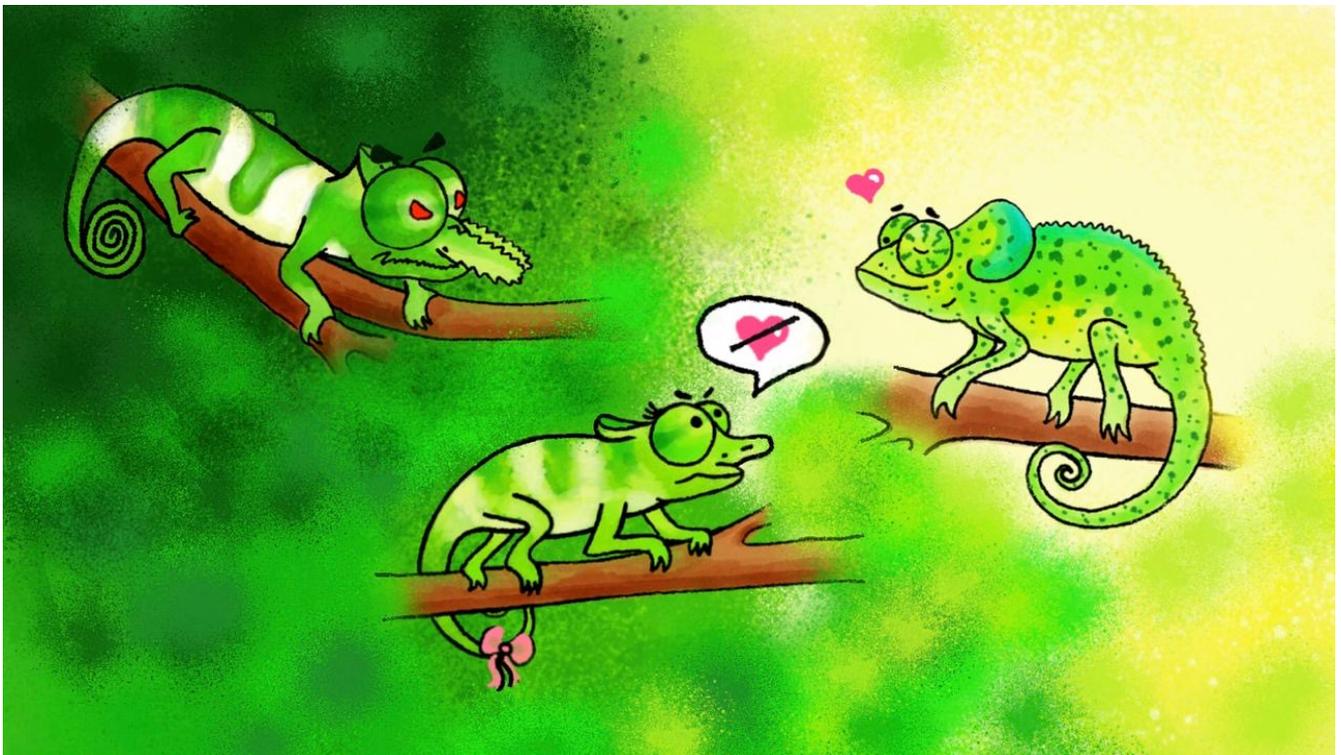
Chameleons are mainly oriented in the environment through their vision. Their vision is crucial and it prevails over their other senses. In most cases, when a female chameleon sees a male chameleon approaching her, she sits in the middle of the bush or canopy and the male approaches her from above and from outside. Because of this, the female will see the male mostly against light and once the male will start imposing the female, it will turn its body sidewise, so the female can see it from the side. Therefore, the silhouette is the most important way for the male chameleons to expose themselves to the female. Based on the specific features that are visible as a black and white picture of the silhouette (horns, spikes, length of the tail, body form etc.) the female recognizes whether the male is a member of the same species and it is a potential sexual partner for her, or this is a member of a different species, which has to be rejected.



Trioceros jacksonii jacksonii, male, Machakos, Kenya
Photo PETR NEČAS

A male Flap-Necked Chameleon (*Chamaeleo dilepis*) meets a female of the Giant Monkey-Tailed Blade-Horned Chameleon (*Kinyongia matschiei*)...

- Male: "Hey, darling! I would like to invite you to a walk close to the skies to the highest top of the tree to watch the sunset."
- Female: "Let me see you first, show yourself properly from the side!"
- Male: "Look how big I am! I have a big crest on my back and large occipital flaps; I hope you like me!"
- Female: "I'm not interested in dating with you! My boyfriend doesn't have such an ugly crest and funny flaps - he has two lovely blade-like horns."
- Male: "I have no horns but I am cutely spiky! And look, what I can do with the flaps!"
- Female: "Hey, please beware and step back, otherwise he might come and hurt you."



Silhouette, Drawing ANASTASIIA SHIRIAEVA



Kinyongia matschiei, male, Usambara Mts., Tanzania, Photo PETR NEČAS



Kinyongia matschiei, male, Usambara Mts., Tanzania, Photo PETR NEČAS



Chamaeleo dilepis, male, Usambara Mts., Tanzania Photo PETR NEČAS