

Submitted: 23. 09. 2020

Published: 12. 10. 2020

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

Leaf Walking

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

LEAF WALKING

FOUL THE PREDATORS BY IMITATING A LEAF IN THE WIND.

Chameleons adapted a very strange way of moving, known also from some insects such as stick-insects and preying mantis. When they walk either on a leafless branch or on the ground, they feel they aren't secure and they feel exposed. It is because under normal circumstances, they sit

in the bush and in the leaves and are hard to detect because they are inconspicuous. On a place where they are well visible, they use a perfect trick: they do not hide, on contrary, they make themselves even more visible while moving very strange dancing-like and shaking there and back to imitate a leaf in the wind. This way they on one side draw attention to their body but also foul the potential predator by giving the impression that it is not something to eat, just a leaf moving in the wind.



Leaf walking *Furcifer pardalis* (N Madagascar); Foto PETR NEČAS

A chameleon, walking across the pedestrian zone on the ground, is meeting a cat...

Cat: "Is there anything to eat?"

Chameleon: "Nothing, nothing, there is no thing, no, no, no thing, nothing..."

Cat: "Hey, there is something I can see on the ground! It is moving: that must be alive!"

Chameleon: "No-no, it is a leaf, it is a leaf, a dead leaf, moving in the wind, as the wind blows, the leaf is moving... It is nothing to eat, really nothing."





Leaf walking 2; Drawing ANASTASIIA SHIRIAEVA