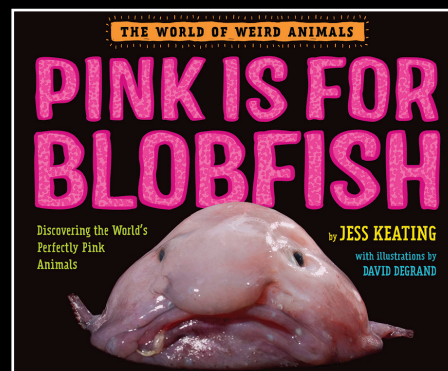
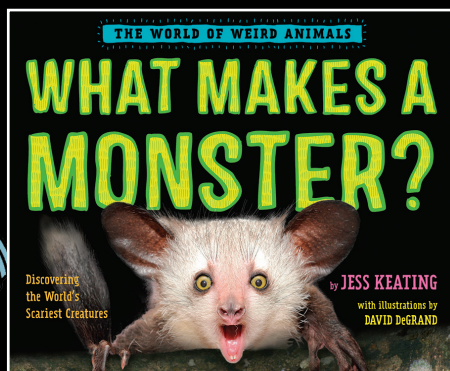
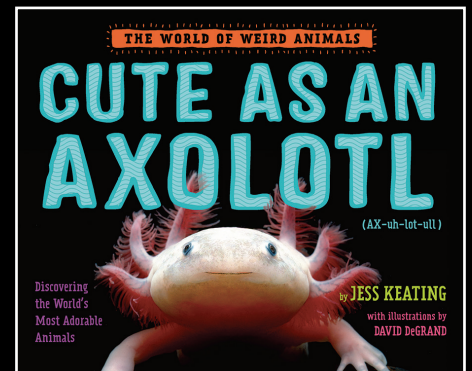
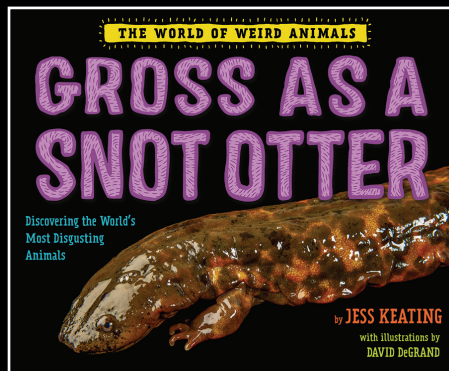
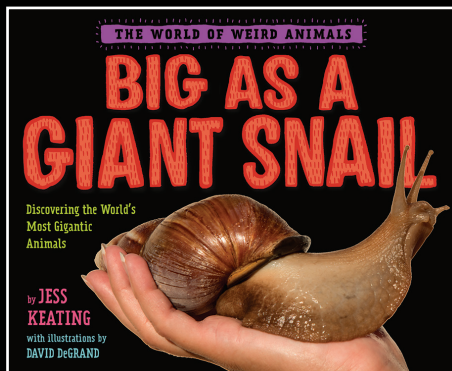


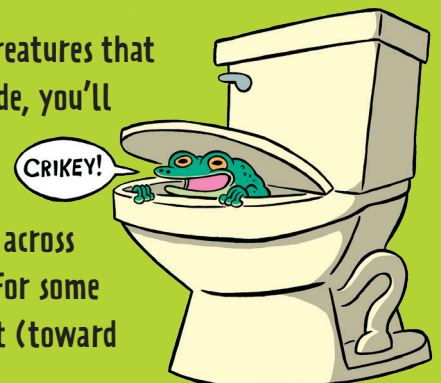
# THE WORLD OF WEIRD ANIMALS



## Discover some of the weirdest, wackiest, and most unique critters on Earth!



**About This Guide** Reading nonfiction about the bizarre and beneficial creatures that inhabit the planet helps build student knowledge about the world. In this guide, you'll find many ways to use the World of Weird Animals books as a springboard to research and as mentor texts. There are also activities for each specific book in the series, activities that span all the books, and activities that take the books across curriculum areas, from language arts to music and from geography to science. For some thoughtful fun, have students complete the reproducible "Weird as a" handout (toward the end of this guide) and compare themselves to an animal of their choosing.



# About the World of Weird Animals series

Books in the World of Weird Animals series by Jess Keating, illustrated by David DeGrand, explore various species and deliver wild, wacky, and fascinating facts about these incredible creatures and their unique adaptations.

In every book, each animal gets a double-page showcase that includes a vivid full-color photograph along with a goofy cartoon version of the animal that helps illustrate its unusual features or behaviors. Animal descriptions are full of humor and robust vocabulary, with sidebars detailing the animal's size, diet, habitat, predators, and threats.

Each book closes with an invitation to think and learn more, with an extensive glossary and questions to prompt reflection and analysis.

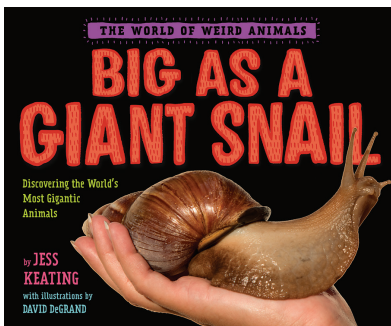
# About the Creators



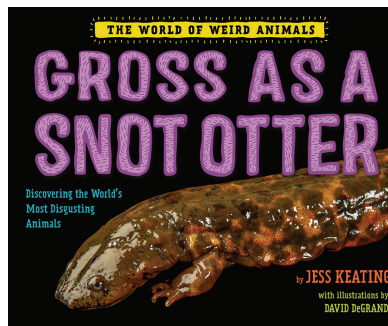
**Jess Keating** is a zoologist turned author who writes with the sort of wisdom you can only get from multiple crocodile bites and skunk sprays. At the age of eight, she started a library in her room (mainly so she could charge her brother late fees). You can find her online at [www.jesskeating.com](http://www.jesskeating.com) or on Twitter at @Jess\_Keating.

**David DeGrand** has been drawing cartoons since he was a kid. When he's not drawing goofy pictures of gross stuff, he plays video games, watches old cartoons and weird movies, and collects toys and books. His biggest goal is to create something his son will find cool someday.

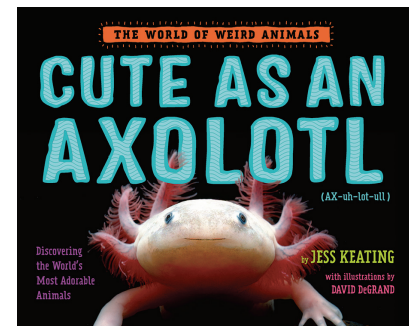
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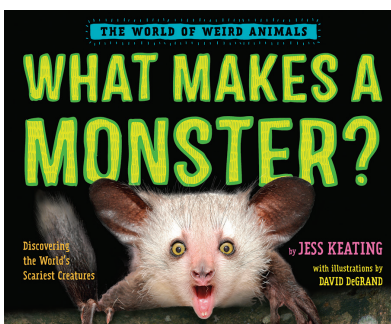
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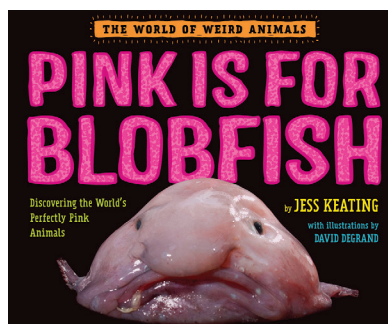
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HC: 978-0-553-51230-4  
EL: 978-0-553-51232-8



HC: 978-0-553-51227-4  
EL: 978-0-553-51229-8





# Getting Started

Click to hear  
**JESS KEATING** speak  
about the series and  
share additional  
activities!



## Discussion Notes and Questions

Be sure to take advantage of the back matter, which includes thought-provoking questions to prompt thinking, reflection, and discussion. Also, urge students to be active readers who ask questions as they read or listen. Are there questions kids have about an animal that the book did not answer? Provide sticky notes for independent readers to write their questions on or encourage notetaking during a read-aloud.

Here are a few questions to stimulate discussion.

- How does the size or the shape of an animal affect how you think about it?
- Would any of these animals be a good pet? Which one, and why?
- Choose an adaptation and describe how the adaptation is helpful to that animal. Is this an adaptation you would like to have?
- Did any animals you read about make you curious to learn more? How can you use the information the author provided to conduct your own research?

## Nonfiction Notes

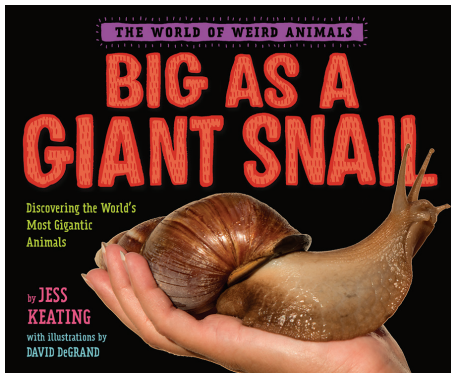
Begin by explaining that the books in the series are nonfiction. Define nonfiction. Talk about how nonfiction books are organized around a specific topic and can answer questions and confirm facts. Explain that the books may use unfamiliar words but that each book includes a glossary, which is a list of terms related to the book's topic and their definitions. The glossary words in the *World of Weird Animals* books appear in **bold** throughout the text. This indicates to readers that they could turn to the glossary to see what a specific word means. Encourage students to look up words that are unfamiliar but not in bold in a dictionary.

## Before Reading

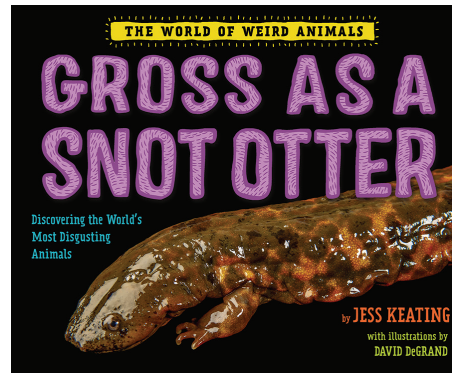
- Get kids thinking about what the word *weird* means. Ask them to define *weird* and explain what makes something weird. After reading, revisit the students' definitions of the word. Has it changed, and if so, how? Look up *weird* in the dictionary.
- Show students all the books in the series and ask which they are most interested in reading aloud. Would they rather read about pink animals or cute ones? Big animals or gross ones? Ask students to share the reasons for their choices.
- As you read, encourage curiosity and questions by wondering out loud, talking about facts you find interesting, or posing questions.



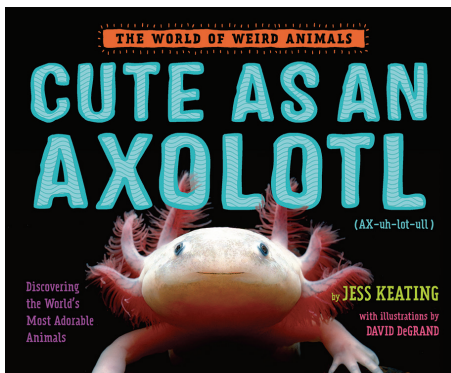
# Activities



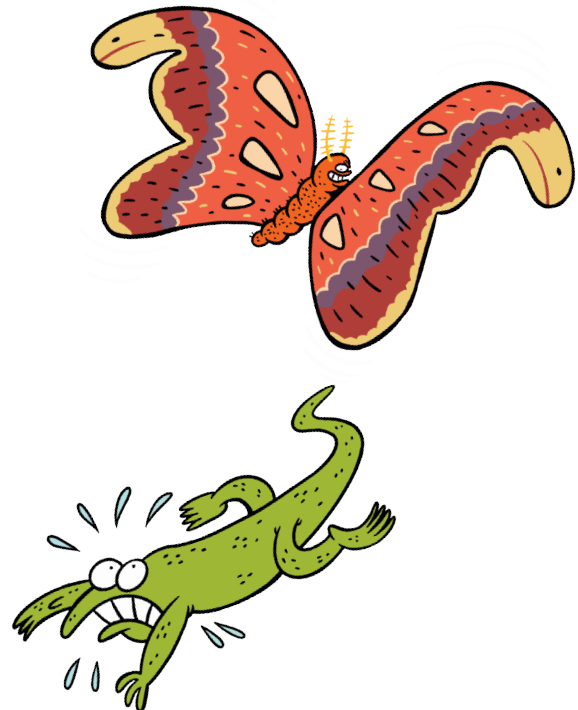
When you explore things by size, it helps to have a standard to relate size—like the Handy Dandy Banana Scale found in *Big as a Giant Snail*. Ask students to come up with their own unit of measurement. It can be something that measures length or height or something that shows the weight of an animal. You could even use something fantastical, such as a measurement unit for how bright an animal's colors are. Have students describe their unit of measurement, give it a name, and share a few examples of how it works.



As Jess Keating points out in *Gross as a Snot Otter*, what people consider gross changes over time. For example, in Scotland, haggis is considered a delicacy, but many Americans would turn their nose up at the idea of eating a sheep's stomach and lungs. Have students take another look at the gross animals in the book. Ask them to put a positive spin on one animal and its behavior (or secretions!), and create a persuasive advertisement that convinces readers that gross is good!

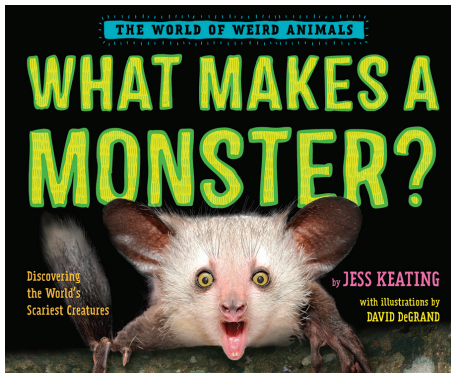


Cute animals already make people smile. Have students write clever captions for the photographs or illustrations of the animals in *Cute as an Axolotl*. The caption might be in the form of a headline, describing what's happening in the picture in a new way, or it could take the form of a speech or thought bubble. Get them to test their material on a fellow student and fine-tune their work before turning in a final draft.

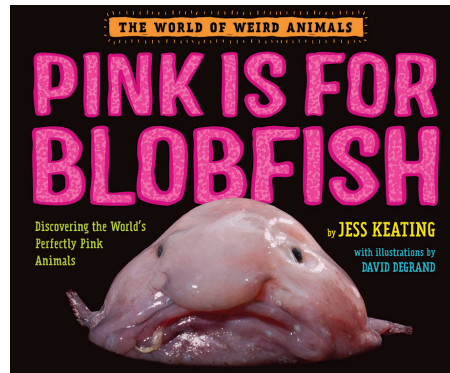




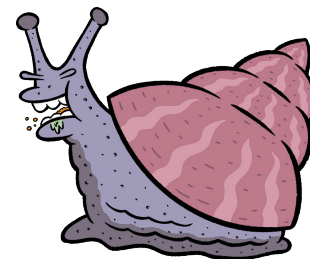
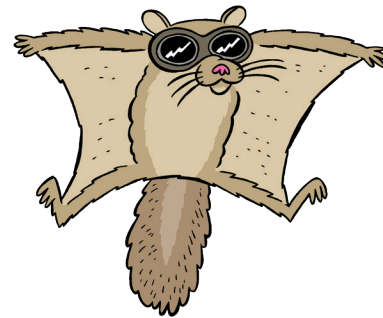
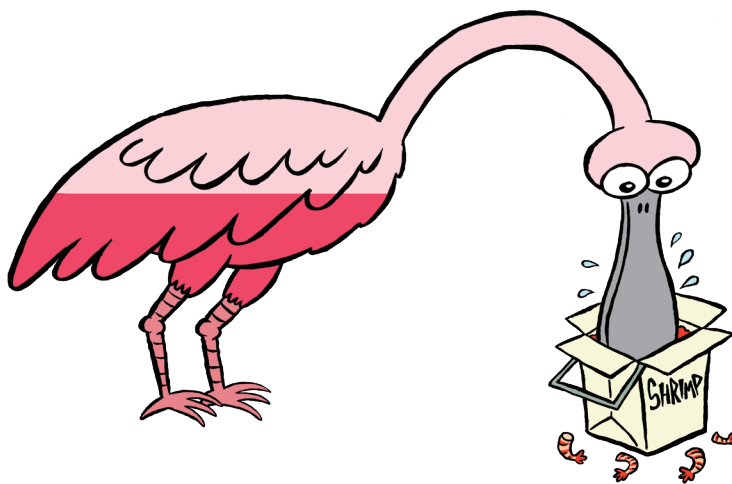
## Activities (continued)



In *What Makes a Monster?*, Jess Keating offers pairings for famous monsters that were inspired by nature, such as the vampire bat and Dracula. Ask students to take a closer look at the animals featured in this book and choose characteristics and behaviors to create a monster of their own! Students should give their monster a name and provide a physical description and information about its behavior, plus a drawing of their creation. Display the monsters and see if other students can figure out which animal inspired each!



Kermit the Frog, from *Sesame Street*, thought he had it tough being green. Have students listen to "(It's Not Easy) Bein' Green" and provide them with the lyrics ([kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/movies/being-green/index.htm](https://kids.niehs.nih.gov/games/songs/movies/being-green/index.htm)). Ask students to choose an animal from *Pink Is for Blobfish* and write song lyrics for "(It's Not Easy) Bein' Pink" from that animal's imagined perspective. Students can make a simple puppet of the animal to perform the song or use Blabberize ([edu.blabberize.com](https://edu.blabberize.com)) to create animation and record vocals.



## That's Classified!

The following activities can be used for all the books in the series or they can be adapted to focus on one or two titles.

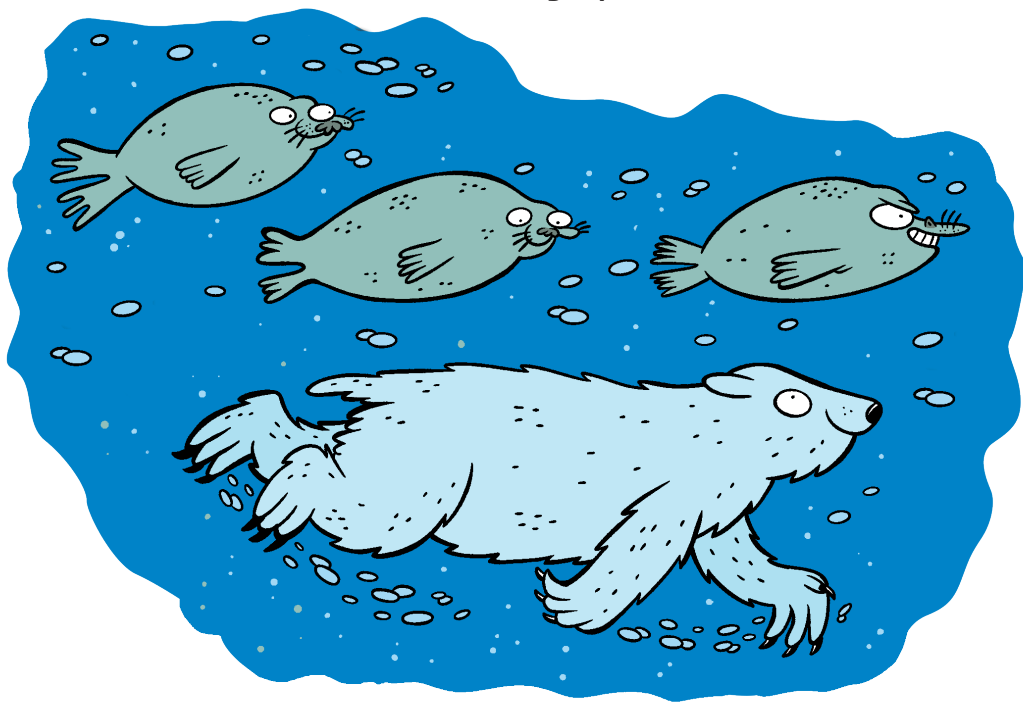
Jess Keating has classified the animals in her books as "weird." She also found more things those specific animals had in common and organized them as cute, gross, pink, monsters, and by size. Help students use their judgment and observations to develop their own classification systems and better understand scientific classifications.

Show students that there are many ways to classify animals. Use all the books in the series and ask students to sort and classify groups of animals by finding two things they have in common. For example, the prairie dog (*What Makes a Monster?*) and the Siberian chipmunk (*Gross as a Snot Otter*) both have fur and live on land. Ask students what other animals could be classified as furry land dwellers. Work together to create charts of the different classifications students make.

Ask students how scientists classify animals. What do they look for? Scientists classify animals based on their features. Classifying animals helps scientists keep track of all the animals in the world and better understand how living things are similar to or different from each other. The classification system scientists use is made up of many different groups. Start with a discussion of vertebrates (animals with a backbone) and invertebrates (animals without a backbone) and the different animals in each group. Animals with backbones include mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and fish. A few of the many invertebrate animals include insects, spiders, worms, echinoderms, crustaceans, and squid. Some 97 percent or more of animals on Earth are invertebrates. Encourage students to research what other features scientists use to classify animals.

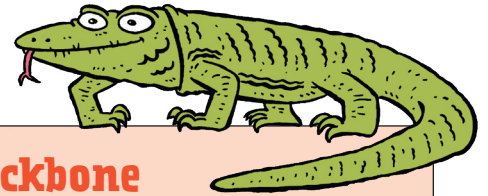
Put students in small groups and provide each group with one of the *World of Weird Animals* titles. Students should compare the information in the book with the classification information on the following page to determine which group an animal belongs in.

When groups have finished, compile all the classifications into one table and vote on which animal group has the weirdest animals!





# That's Classified! (continued)



## Vertebrates: Animals with a backbone

|                   |   |                       |              |
|-------------------|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| <b>Amphibians</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Moist skin</li> <li>Have gills as larvae; breathe air as adults</li> </ul> | Young hatch from eggs | Cold-blooded |
| <b>Birds</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feathers, wings, and beaks</li> </ul>                                      | Young hatch from eggs | Warm-blooded |
| <b>Fish</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scales and fins</li> <li>Use gills for breathing underwater</li> </ul>     | Young hatch from eggs | Cold-blooded |
| <b>Mammals</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fur or hair</li> </ul>   | Live birth*           | Warm-blooded |
| <b>Reptiles</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scales</li> </ul>  | Young hatch from eggs | Cold-blooded |

\*A small group of Australian mammals known as monotremes actually lay eggs! This includes the platypus and the echidna.

## Invertebrates: Animals without a backbone

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Arachnids</b><br>(scorpions, spiders, ticks)                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eight (8) legs in pairs</li> <li>No antennae</li> </ul>                                     |  |
| <b>Crustaceans</b><br>(shrimp, crab, lobster)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ten (10) or more legs in pairs</li> <li>Two (2) pairs of antennae</li> </ul>                |  |
| <b>Echinoderms</b><br>(starfish, sea urchins, sand dollars)                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hollow, flexible tube feet</li> <li>Radial symmetry</li> </ul>                              |  |
| <b>Insects</b><br>(beetles, bees, butterflies, crickets)                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Six (6) legs in pairs</li> <li>One (1) pair of antennae</li> <li>Some have wings</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>Other invertebrates</b><br>(jellyfish, squid, worms, slugs, centipedes, and more!) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No antennae</li> <li>Generally soft bodied</li> </ul>                                       |  |

Art © 2021 by David DeGrand

## Resources

- Classifying Animals with BrainPOP Jr: [jr.brainpop.com/science/animals/classifyinganimals](http://jr.brainpop.com/science/animals/classifyinganimals)
- Classifying animals with DK Find Out: [dkfindout.com/us/animals-and-nature/animal-kingdom/classifying-animals/](http://dkfindout.com/us/animals-and-nature/animal-kingdom/classifying-animals/)

## Modifications and extensions

- To help younger students better understand what classification is, start with this "Modeling Classification" activity from the Encyclopedia of Life: [education.eol.org/lesson\\_plans/2-5\\_ScienceSkills\\_BioblitzSkillbuilder4.pdf](http://education.eol.org/lesson_plans/2-5_ScienceSkills_BioblitzSkillbuilder4.pdf).
- Some students may be interested in learning more about taxonomic rank. Use the species' scientific names provided in the books to launch a discussion about genus and species.

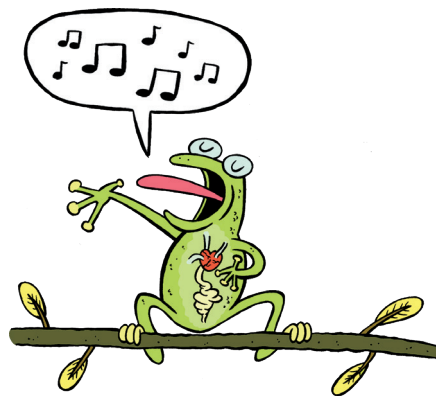
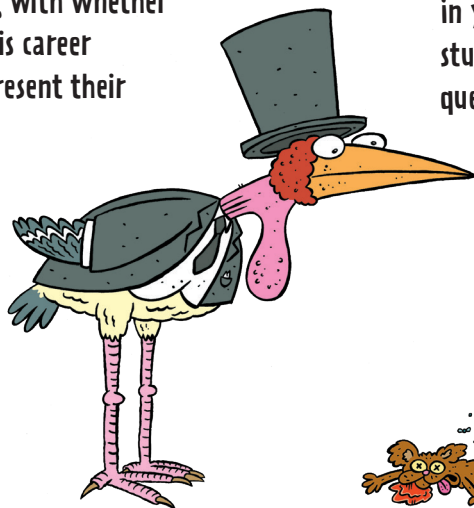
# Weirdologist

After you've shared books in the World of Weird Animals series, ask students why they think the author knows so much about weird animals. Is she a "weirdologist"? Explain that author Jess Keating is a zoologist, and get kids to share what they know about zoology and what zoologists do.

Jess Keating has always loved animals so when she attended a university she decided to get her master's of science in zoology. One of her favorite jobs was at a wildlife rehabilitation center.

Ask students to think about all the careers that work with animals. (*Pink Is for Blobfish* includes a list to get you started.) Together, make a list with brief definitions, and ask students to share what they know about each job. Ask students to choose one animal-related career they are most interested in. Offer books and guide students to websites that can provide more information about those careers. Ask students to research:

- How do people who have these jobs help animals?
- What kind of animals do people in this job work with?
- Are there parts of this job that are not related to animals?
- What do you think would be the most exciting or interesting part of this job?
- Have students write a short report to share what they learned along with whether they are interested in this career and why. Students can present their reports to the class.



## Resources

- Animal Careers from Cornell University: [animalcareers.cornell.edu/careers.html](http://animalcareers.cornell.edu/careers.html)
- National Museum of Natural History Scientist Spotlight Videos: [naturalhistory.si.edu/education/teaching-resources/scientist-spotlight-videos](http://naturalhistory.si.edu/education/teaching-resources/scientist-spotlight-videos)
- OLogy! From the American Museum of Natural History: [amnh.org/explore/ology](http://amnh.org/explore/ology)
- UnZOOsual Careers Webinar Series from Smithsonian's National Zoo: [youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9S\\_88he0gqghD2\\_99sGwVQp1tPkR4f22](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL9S_88he0gqghD2_99sGwVQp1tPkR4f22)

## Modifications and extensions

- After learning about various animal-related careers, younger students could imagine themselves in a career of their choice and draw a picture that shows what they would do in this job.
- Contact people who work with animals or study animals. Invite them to be virtual or in-person guests in your classroom to talk about their careers. Have student research your guest's career and develop some questions to ask.



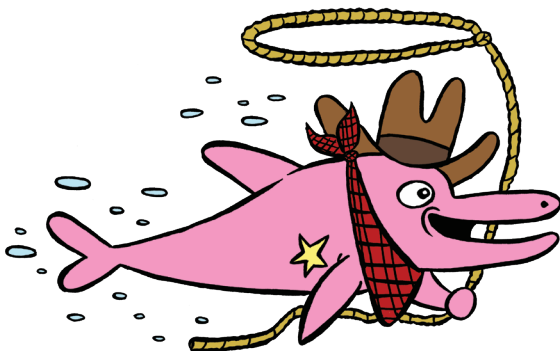
# Author, Author!

The books in the World of Weird Animals series are great mentor texts. Talk with students about what makes these books fun and interesting to read: How is the information in the book organized? What features help the reader learn about the topic? What do you notice about the writing style? How do the photographs, cartoons, and text work together? How does the author use description?

Look to the books for inspiration as you create your own class-written title to add to the collection! Brainstorm a concept for this new book. Do students want to spotlight animals that are all the same color, like *Pink Is for Blobfish*? Or highlight spooky animals, sneaky animals, or super smart animals?

Have students do some initial research to select an animal that fits the focus and create a list so everyone knows who is working on what. Students who have selected the same animal may want to work together or choose another animal. Encourage students to share relevant books, images, and information they find with each other. They are looking for:

- Animal name and species name
- An image of their animal
- Size
- Diet
- Habitat
- Predators and threats
- Information about the animal that explains why it fits into this book
- Information about what is unique about this animal



When students are ready to write, have them follow Jess Keating's format. They should also include an illustration that shows what is unique about this animal.

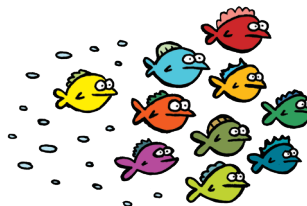
Design and save the class book as a pdf so each student can have their own digital copy, but also print and bind a copy to include in your classroom or school library. Hold a publishing party and invite parents and guests to celebrate your students' work!

## Resources

- Teaching Nonfiction Text Structure from NSTA: [nsta.org/teaching-nonfiction-text-structure](https://nsta.org/teaching-nonfiction-text-structure)

## Modifications and extensions

- Younger students could work in pairs to research and develop a page for the class book. Some students may benefit from a template.
- Ask students to think about other nonfiction text structures they have encountered. Are there features, such as organizing alphabetically or adding an index, that they want to include in their class book?
- Support students who may want to use a text structure that they feel better suits their selected topic by having them write their own book or work in a small group with others with similar ideas.
- The videos on Jess Keating's YouTube channel "Animals for Smart People" ([youtube.com/channel/UC31PBmBfs\\_2ndHPLd9fkjZw](https://youtube.com/channel/UC31PBmBfs_2ndHPLd9fkjZw)) are also great mentor texts for creating informational videos. If you have the technology available, have students follow this format to create their own video about the animals they researched.



# Vote for the Weirdest Animal

After reading and learning more about lots of weird animals, which animal do students think is the weirdest? Let students campaign and vote for their favorite!

Start with a discussion about the difference between fact and opinion. Read aloud again from any of the books in the series, and discuss what is a fact that can be proven with evidence and what is the author's opinion. Remind students that even though they may agree with the author's opinions about which animals are gross, cute, or look like monsters, that doesn't make those ideas facts.

Ask students what they know about voting and what role they think facts and opinions play in voting. Talk about how when people vote—whether it is for what to have for dessert or which person should be president—they are giving their opinion about what they believe or think about something or someone. Having lots of facts about what they are voting on can help them make smart voting choices.

To vote on the weirdest animal, first make sure that students have discussed and defined what *weird* means. Have students work in small groups to choose one animal to nominate. Groups can nominate an animal from the series or another animal that they are familiar with. To nominate an animal, groups must come up with a list of facts about the animal and opinions about why those facts make the animal weird. Students can share their feelings about why they think their candidate is the weirdest or seek opinions from other sources.

Ask student groups to create campaign posters or presentations that share images or drawings of the animal, facts about their animal, and opinions about what makes their animal the weirdest. Make sure that everyone gets a chance to read the facts and opinions about all the animal candidates. Provide a ballot with the names of the animal candidates, and have students vote! Create a graph that displays the students' votes as you tally them, then celebrate the weirdest animal!

## Modifications and extensions

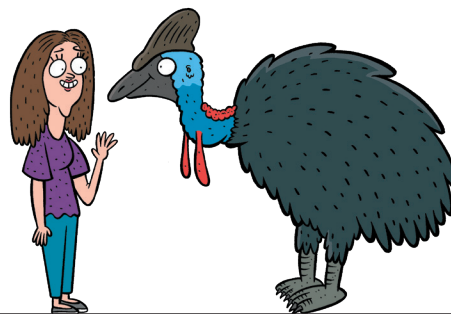
- For younger students, you can work together to find facts and opinions about two candidates before casting their vote to choose the weirdest animal.
- Use Blabberize ([edu.blabberize.com](http://edu.blabberize.com)) to have student groups upload an image of their candidate and make their candidate “speak” about their attributes, or use Voki ([voki.com](http://voki.com)) to have student groups create a character to provide opinions in a talking animation “celebrity endorsement” of their candidate.
- If students have worked to classify animals featured in the series, they may want to spread the glory around by voting for the weirdest vertebrate, invertebrate, land animal, aquatic animal, or other categories.
- For fun, read and discuss this *New York Times* article: “Sneezing Dogs, Dancing Bees: How Animals Vote” ([nytimes.com/2020/03/02/science/animals-voting-elections.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/02/science/animals-voting-elections.html))





# How Do You Compare with a Weird Animal?

Choose an animal you just learned about in one of the books, and fill in the columns with the appropriate information. Based on your observations, what similarities and/or differences do you see between yourself and the animal?



|                                 | <b>Animal Name</b> | <b>Your Name</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| Size/height                     |                    |                  |
| Diet                            |                    |                  |
| Habitat                         |                    |                  |
| Predators and threats           |                    |                  |
| Behavior                        |                    |                  |
| Special abilities               |                    |                  |
| (Draw a picture or add a photo) |                    |                  |

# Get Weird in the Classroom

## Wall of Weird

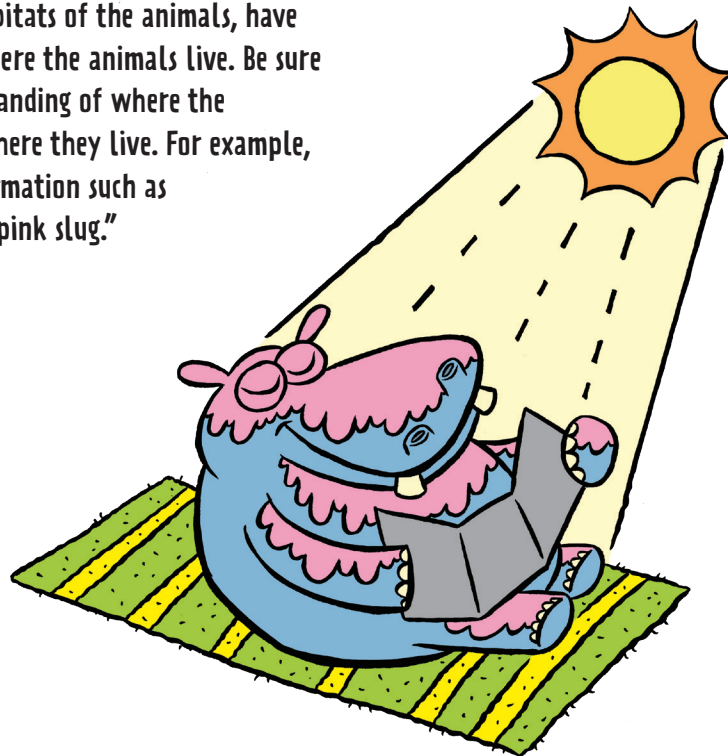
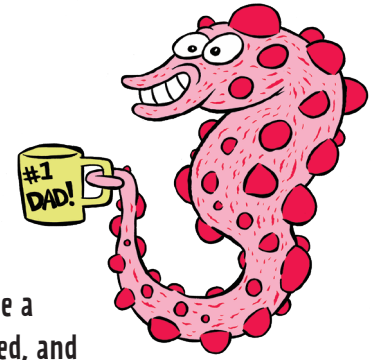
The World of Weird Animals is sure to spark students' curiosity. Create a display that encourages students to write down things they are now wondering about on sticky notes and place them on the wall. Your Wall of Weird can also be a space where students can share interesting facts they know or have learned. Make time every week to look at questions on your Wall of Weird and give students agency to explore, research, and share what they learn.

## Where in the World?

Weird animals are everywhere in the world. We know where many of them are because scientists search for them, and volunteers help keep track of where the animals are living. Add a large world map to your classroom wall. As students read books in the series and learn more about the habitats of the animals, have them indicate on the map where the animals live. Be sure students have a good understanding of where the animals live in relation to where they live. For example, your map might include information such as "10,000 miles to the nearest pink slug."

## Weird Moves

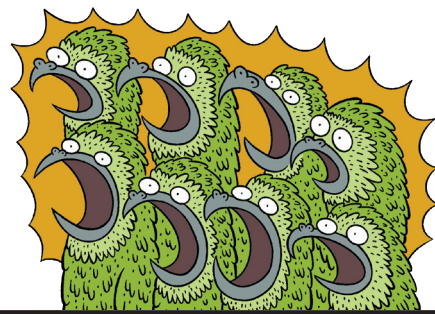
Movement activities are great to give everyone a break, get students focused, and reinforce or emphasize an idea or concept. Talk about how people move and all the words we use to describe the movement—*walk, run, skip, hop, jog, shuffle, swim, crawl, climb*. Ask students to think about how animals move. How is it similar or different from people? Why? Choose some of the animals featured in the series and ask students to take a close look at their appendages. Ask students to think about how the animals' legs and feet or other appendages help them move. Have students demonstrate what that animal's movement might look like! Find videos of the animals in motion and have students watch and then revise their moves as needed.



RACHAEL WALKER ([belleofthebook.com](http://belleofthebook.com)) created this guide. She consults on a wide variety of educational programs and multimedia projects and develops educational materials and reading resources for children, parents, and teachers.



# Watch Jess Keating's Author Video, Including a Bonus Activity!

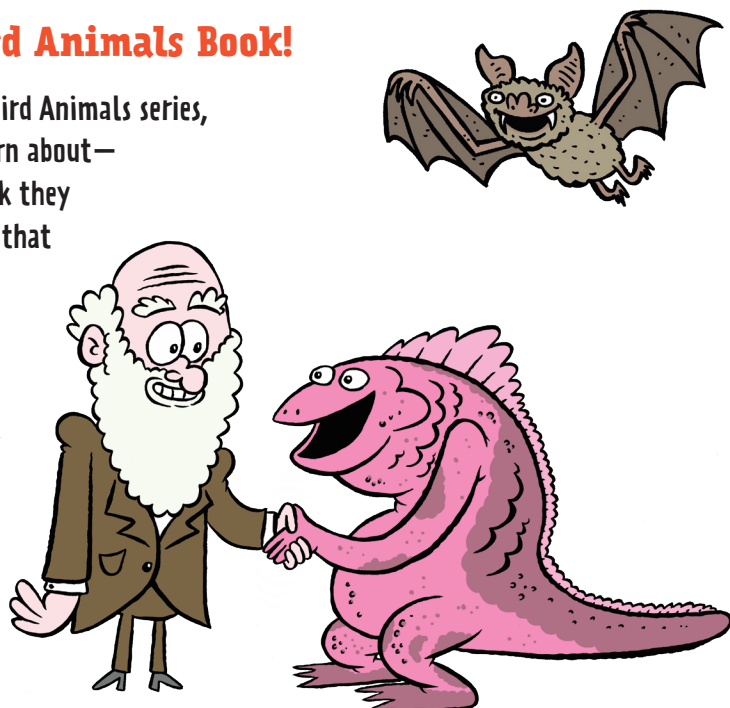


Click to hear JESS KEATING speak about the series and share additional activities!

## Create Your Own World of Weird Animals Book!

As you read through the books in the World of Weird Animals series, take note of which animals you really love to learn about—maybe they freak you out, or maybe you just think they are cool. Do a little more research on the animals that interest you most, and compile facts about them into your very own version of a World of Weird Animals book.

Jess would love to see what you come up with; she can be tagged on Twitter @Jess\_Keating.

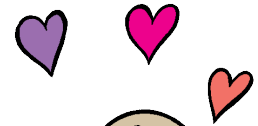


# Praise for the World of Weird Animals series

## *Pink as a Blobfish*

"A playful introduction to the kookier corners of the animal kingdom."

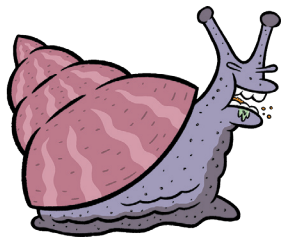
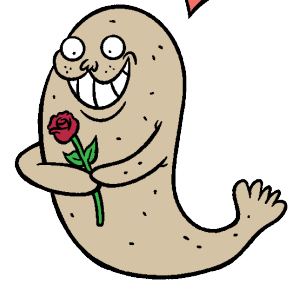
—*Booklist*



## *What Makes a Monster?*

"A great addition for collections."

—*School Library Journal*



## *Cute as an Axolotl*

"Fun, endlessly interesting, and, yes, cute."

—*Booklist*

## *Gross as a Snot Otter*

"Book-bait for middle-grade readers that oozes eww appeal."

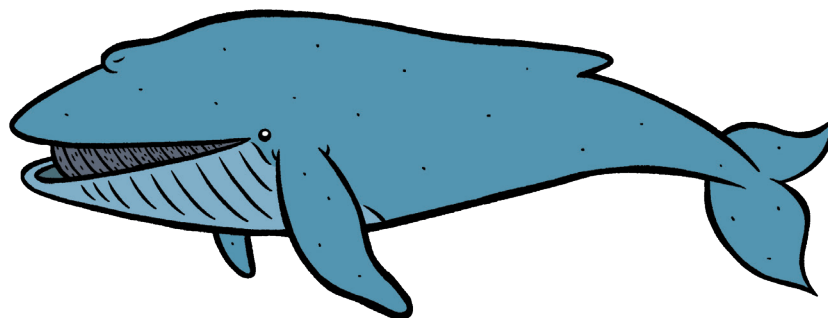
—*Kirkus Reviews*



## *Big as a Giant Snail*

"These huge animal profiles offer enormous appeal."

—*Booklist*



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